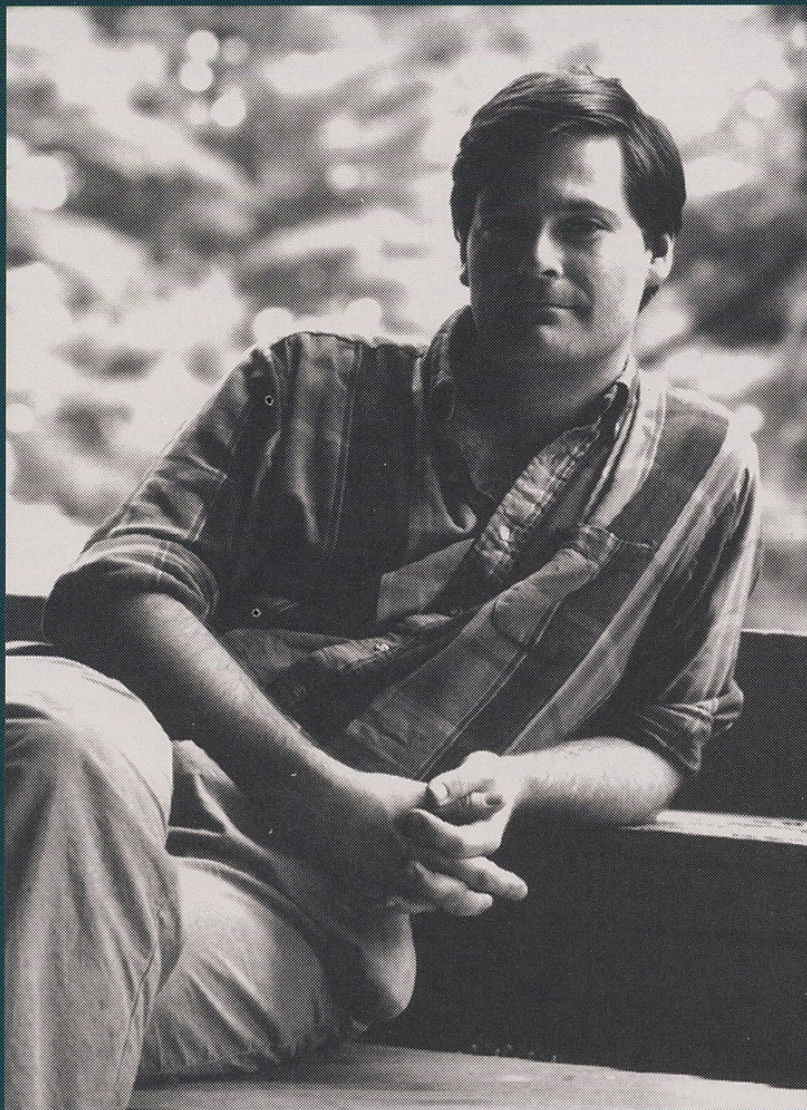


SONGS

ARSIS



DARON
HAGEN

Susan Crowder
soprano

Bradley Moore
piano

Sara Stern
flute

Songs by Daron Hagen

Susan Crowder, soprano Bradley Moore, pianist
Sara Stern, flutist

LOVE SONGS (1988)

1	I Am Loved	1:52
2	Little Uneasy Song	2:07
3	Ah! Sun-Flower	1:19
4	Lost Love	1:41
5	Washing Her Hair	2:18
6	Requiem	2:07
7	The Satyr	1:02
8	Sonnet	3:07

ECHO'S SONGS (1983)

9	Never Pain to Tell Thy Love	1:59
10	"I Am Not Yours"	1:07
11	A Dream Within a Dream	3:00
12	Echo's Song	2:06
13	I Am Rose	0:21
14	Lost	1:01
15	why did you go	1:03
16	Since You Went Away	1:10
17	Thou Wouldst Be Loved	1:28
18	Look Down, Fair Moon	0:57
19	The Mild Mother	1:53

DEAR YOUTH (1990)

20	The Bonnie Blue Flag	1:28
21	I Stop Again	1:17
22	The Picture Graved Into My Heart	2:32
23	The Trouble was Tom . . .	0:42
24	The Lord Knows . . .	1:02
25	O, for Such a Dream	3:10
26	Christmas Night	2:00
27	. . . Silently Dispersing	1:56

MERRILL SONGS (1995)

28	A Downward Look	3:04
29	body	1:03
30	The Instilling	2:34
31	On the Block: <i>Mantel Clock</i>	2:16
32	Vol. XLIV, No. 3	1:37
33	On the Block: Lamp, Terracotta Base	1:52
34	Pledge	3:42
35	An Upward Look	2:40

Total CD Time: 64:49

Artful Simplicity: The Songs of Daron Hagen

by Russell Platt

Daron Hagen is the finest American composer of vocal music in his generation, and it has been my pleasure to know him these last eight years. In a sense we had met before our first encounter in New York in 1988, since we had both, at different times, been students of Ned Rorem at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Rorem is one of America's supreme masters of the art song, and his lessons were clear and direct. Music comes from language, and no one is going to provide us with an American song repertory unless we do it ourselves; never presume to repeat a word in singing that the poet has not repeated on the page; and always compose with the principle of economy uppermost in your mind. Daron, a musician of tremendous facility, came to Curtis with these instincts inborn, as his earliest songs show. I suspect Ned's job was to urge him on paths his heart already knew, not to radically change his already growing style. It is the fruit of that still-evolving style that we examine here, and enjoy.

Born in Wisconsin in 1961, Hagen has since become one of the best-known of younger American composers, a reputation that was being built while his musical studies (at Curtis, and at the Juilliard School) were not yet finished. Song has been a central focus of Hagen's output, and that output has been immense: he has composed over 300 songs since his teenage years. Like most of the notable song composers of the Western tradition, Hagen is a gifted pianist, and if his piano parts can range from a Schubertian simplicity to a Straussian lushness, they always keep the singer's role first and foremost — the words are always clear. (Which of the younger Americans can match Hagen in prosody?) The good Gallic values of freshness, clarity and consistently elegant craftsmanship — starting, arguably, in Gounod and continuing forth through Poulenc and Rorem — find their mark in Hagen too, but are mixed with limited elements of American jazz and music theatre that betray him as a child of the suburban 1970s. The absorption of these materials doubtless helped along Hagen's gift for economy, while his superb general musicianship ensured that they would not limit his curiosity or his range — as if a young Fauré had to cut his teeth playing cocktail piano in Milwaukee. But this deeply American mixture shows that Hagen can't quite enjoy his French sexiness to the full but must temper it with a certain Protestant sense of shame, hard to pin down but impossible to ignore, seen not only in the choice of texts but also in the piano parts, which recede to the simplest gestures as much as they might show off their "chops." Perhaps because Hagen's music is consistently accessible, a certain perception has arisen in some quarters that it must be always friendly and unchallenging, but this is hardly fair. There is much darkness here, flickering here and there through the early cycles, gathering in *Dear Youth* and finding its final, measured culmination in the *Merrill Songs*.

The cycle *Love Songs* (1984-87) was premiered on April 29, 1988 by soprano Carol Chickering and pianist Robert Kopelson at CAMI Hall in New York City, in a concert of Perpetuum Mobile, a new music series Hagen ran throughout the 1980s. The texts Hagen chose are all contemporary but for

William Blake's "Ah! Sun-Flower," but its inclusion sets the tone for the cycle: this is truly a voyage from innocence into experience, with the McFall "Sonnet" a grand postlude. The set is inscribed as a gift "for Ned Rorem, on his 63rd birthday," but it is as much a declaration of independence as a tribute to an older master. How appropriate that the cycle's opening flourish in "I am Loved" should take off from the motif which opens "The Dancer," the last song of Rorem's great cycle *The Nantucket Songs*.

Allegro frescamente (♩ = 116) ***f***

Voice: I am loved.

Piano: ***ff***

Hagen's chordal pattern is a different one, but the debt is clear; Hagen contrasts repetitions and developments of the motif with quieter sections in warm, patient harmony, and brings it back triumphantly at the close. Hagen's text, a diary entry of his mother's, is all optimism, the fervent love of a young marriage; the final, *parlando* exclamation is a kind of signature appropriate to this confidential message.

The "Little Uneasy Song" of poet Reine Hauser (its dedicatee) is marked "Drowsy," and Hagen sets the scene with an ostinato — an effective symbol for nature's indifference to the poet's ruminations — and with a cozy scheme of third-related triads dominating the harmonic fabric. The song opens up in the middle section, the piano moving faster while the voice/protagonist sings in broader, grander gestures; her defense of romantic innocence ("I just want to hear the sun's sweet sound") is genuinely touching. Blake's "Ah! Sun-Flower" is deceptively friendly, an accompaniment pattern of freely constructed open fourths and fifths clouding the G major harmony until the close.

A mood of encroaching gloom is heightened in the next three songs. "Lost Love" and "Requiem" are highly physical love poems, fashioned in the strangely evocative high-school English of Ze'ev Dunei, an Israeli news cameraman whom Hagen met at Yaddo. The first features a subtle development

of C minor and E major tonalities, while the second is directly bitonal, with a constant mixture of E and B flat major triads, joined in its opening piano gesture. (This tritonal clash was a major structural element of Hagen's opera *Shining Brow*, where it symbolized the conflict between architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his lover Mamah Cheney.) Both offer generously sensual word setting — the low plunge on "big water," the drawn-out rhythms of remembrance still smelling "the fresh coffee" — and trace a formal method which Hagen will use not only in the concluding "Sonnet" but in the *Merrill Songs*: telling a story in song by way of a miniaturized strophic technique, in which phrase sections have similar beginnings but varied developments. The centerpiece of this group, Sarah Gorham's "Washing Her Hair," has a casual, conversational feel, but we are gradually made aware of illness, a family scene loving but tense. The vocal part moves in close intervals and is highly syllabic in word setting, while Hagen's accompaniment is sketched in warm, jazz-inflected extended triads.

"The Satyr," to another Gwen Hagen text, is an intermezzo, rough and fast: the young bride's optimism has turned to satire. Hagen instructs the pianist to play "atop the keys," in the manner of a prancing debauch, and the harmony is astringent, except for a delicious and deliberate eleventh-chord cliché.

Quick and Sharp (♩ = 152) ***p***

Voice: For all his de-bauch-er-ies

Piano: ***f*** atop the keys ***p*** sub.

With all hope lost, the final "Sonnet" asks, How are we to live? Fully, Hagen and McFall respond, no matter what. The tempo scheme and the carefully timed double climax suggest a three-part form, but the song is actually through-composed in that Hagen takes his opening piano idea into ever more interesting developments. What starts as sexy seventh-chord Poulenc ends up being infected with the sumptuous Straussian disease of dissonant polytonality — Germanic shame and French *savoir-faire* uneasily coexist. In the cycle's final bars major triads descend from above in the manner of *Der Rosenkavalier*, but the sweetness is mixed with pain, as an A sharp (B flat) poisons the E major close, struggling to the last.

Hagen's *Echo's Songs* (1973-79) are next on the disc, but their compositional vintage is earlier, most being products of the composer's Curtis years. (They were premiered on January 17, 1983 at Curtis Hall by soprano Karen Hale, the work's dedicatee, with the composer at the piano.) If the *Love Songs* are a mature statement on the trials of the heart, then the *Echo's Songs* sound like the settings of a talented young man exploring his feelings and testing his craft. There is tragedy here, as in the final two songs, but the temporal distance of the texts (all the poets are long since deceased) gives it an idealized tone. The Whitman and Sandburg texts have probably been used by hundreds of young composers for student songs — the difference being that Daron's actually hold the stage, and have retained their charm. Some of them must have been written for Ned Rorem — though with Rorem you were always expected to assign yourself, as Daron certainly did.

The first song, Blake's "Never Pain to Tell Thy Love," has a warmly elegant but anguished mood not too distant from that of another Curtis master, Samuel Barber, whose operatic vocal style is evoked in the final phrase; as the text intensifies, there is a limited use of bitonal sonorities. Another English setting, that of the Ben Jonson poem which gives the suite its title, is bluesy yet chaste, in a blurry E flat minor, while the spare, bright textures of "I Am Not Yours" have an oblique charm that gives it a tactful distance from Sara Teasdale's slightly overheated text. The two Edgar Allan Poe settings are among the earliest in the set — indeed, Hagen has acknowledged "Thou Wouldst Be Loved" of 1979 as his first song, written as a junior in high school. This song is nothing if not the product of a typical Midwestern boyhood of Lutheran hymns and afterschool music theatre productions, but already the details hold up: the way a simple parallel chord progression (suggested by Blitzstein) will repeatedly close a phrase, and in the ironic *parlando* setting of the last few words — questioning whether love is as simple a "duty" as the poet says it is. A touch of cocktail piano remains in the 1981 setting of "A Dream Within a Dream," but it is a more sophisticated song in every way, a deft and poignant development of a single idea in which the voice and piano converse with one another.

The fifth and sixth songs also form a pair, being charmingly cool deployments of technique. Hagen of course knows Rorem's famous setting of Gertrude Stein's "I Am Rose," so he went about making his own version in a completely different way. Rorem's little girl, with her sensual knowledge melodically expressed, is on the verge of womanhood, but Daron's hasn't gotten braces yet. The vocal part is fixated on D, like a toddler still learning words, and the piano part, officially in four-four time, actually splits its notes into dancing groups of three — it could be a Bach invention, a game of hopscotch, or a Scots jig. As "I Am Rose" is in a pure G major, so "Lost" is set in a white-note A minor just this side of *Les Six*. A chain of desolate falling fifths begins in the high right hand of the piano and continues into the depths; the pathetic main image of the poem ("like some lost child") is made memorable in a repeated four-note motif.

The tiny settings of e. e. cummings and Shu Ch'i-siang couldn't be more spare, and are Asian in spirit or in fact, being intense examinations of the possibilities of cherished little objects. (Yes, Daron is a cat lover.) The setting of "Look Down, Fair Moon" has the stridency of a Kabuki incantation, with a

highly disciplined vocal line dominated by reversed dotted rhythms. The framing device of the piano arpeggio

Numb, sluggish, always harsh ♯ = c.64

ff *fp* *ff*

brittle and abrasive

Look — down, — fair — moon — and bathe this scene —

is reminiscent of certain passages in Rorem's 1969 *War Scenes*, but the song takes on an added interest when we compare it to Rorem's 1957 setting of the same poem. That setting, in its purple lushness, mourns for the beautiful young dead, while Daron's, in its numbing ritual, ironically infers that the same scene will be repeated again and again. It segues into the final song, on the anonymous medieval poem "The Mild Mother," one of the suite's most impressive numbers. Its use of quartal harmony, unique to the piece, as well as the short-long rhythms of the piano part allude to Messiaen, though his rigid Catholic spirit is filtered through the smoky ease of American jazz. The soprano's line is slung low, as if carrying a heavy load, though her anguish is tellingly expressed in the octave glissando and the strongly marked notes of her final words.

Dear Youth (1990) was commissioned by the trio Sonus (soprano Robin Bourguignon, flutist Billie Witte, and pianist Randall K. Sheets) and premiered by them on March 10, 1991 at the Dumbarton Methodist Church in Baltimore. Hagen is a confirmed Civil War buff, and after considering and rejecting the prospect of a cycle on a war poet like Whitman, decided to set excerpts of letters by American women of the era who were directly or tangentially involved. (Significantly, Hagen composed the piece at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts in Sweet Briar, a short distance from some of the largest battles of the Civil War.) In some ways it is an idealized family parlor piece of the time — Cousin Ann joins in on flute — simple and polite. But the expert musical treatments of the texts give them a layered richness they could never have had originally, and the result is a work of generous humanity, comforting and wise.

Hagen's structure for the cycle is not as end-oriented as *Love Songs*, but tighter than that of the

With dignity and sweep ($\text{♩} = 54$)

Fl.

Sop.

Come bro - thers! ral - ly for the right!

pp cresc. p mp mf

cresc. p cresc. mp cresc.

8va ...

3

** 3 simile*

"I Stop Again" and "The Picture Graved Into My Heart" are both on texts from letters of Hannah Ropes, a famous wartime nurse. The first is a calm and intimate duet for the soprano and flute, taken up entirely with scalar transformations of a four-note motif heard at the outset; the composer gives the last three words an optimum of harmonic tension. The motif's shape persists into the opening accom-

The fifth song is an introduction for the sixth, both on fragments of a letter from one Ann Smith to her husband David, "Aug. 16, 1864"; they form a more dramatically intense counterweight to the pair of Ropes settings heard earlier. "The Lord Knows" is marked "freely effusive," but as Paul Kreider has pointed out, "strict adherence to the rhythm is vital" for effective performance. It quickens on "restless," gets kittenish with a naughty B flat blue note on "I wouldn't care," jumbles its rhythms confusedly on the next sentence, then waits out a bar before having the singer responsibly recover her social voice ("At least I Hope..."): Hagen has truly caught the life of the words. It continues directly into "O, for Such a Dream," perhaps the most moving song of the cycle. The lonely wife seems to accompany herself at the keyboard, with the flute playing the role of her absent husband — it has a folk-opera mood. The harmonic idiom at the start couldn't be more basic, but becomes enriched as the singer's thoughts grow more intimate, with the flute quickening its pulse to a state of rapture, an imagined consummation. We then pull back from the brink to "the reality of absence," and to a tragic reinterpretation of the opening music.

Hagen composed *Dear Youth* as he was starting in on his grand opera *Shining Brow*. In the *Merrill Songs* of 1995 he returned to art song full force, but by this time both composer and the mission had changed. (The songs were commissioned by William Weaver, the noted authority on Italian opera, in memory of James Merrill, specifically for Hagen and the countertenor Charles Maxwell, who pre-

miered them on a Clarion Music Society concert at the Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse in New York, October 31, 1995.) By this time Hagen (with the collaboration of the noted poet Paul Muldoon) had not only written *Shining Brow* but also the *Muldoon Songs* and *The Waking Father* — a masterpiece of choral music, commissioned by The King's Singers — and was beginning the scabrous chamber opera *Vera of Las Vegas*. Consequently, the *Merrill Songs* are the work of a composer who has little to prove professionally, and who can simply be himself. The James Merrill texts, taken from the great poet's final, posthumously published collection *A Scattering of Salts*, are amazing for what they leave *unsaid* about the most painful of subjects: death, old age, divorce, the deterioration of the body. Hagen responds with music of extreme economy that is nonetheless full of feeling, which seeks, above all, to create a world of the poet and to let him speak. (Appropriately Hagen makes frequent use of the classicizing strophic technique discussed earlier.) The result is a poignant landscape of life's ebbing in which we notice the slightest change: what we lose in variety we make up for in refinement.

In "A Downward Look" the old poet seems to gaze down from heaven — though it must be a cruising airliner, since his "wrinkled baby hand" still controls his fate. But the image is unsettling and strong, and to match its strange serenity Hagen has written a nearly monorhythmic song whose dragging motif sounds like the tolling of a distant bell. It could almost be thought of as a monoharmonic song as well, since each bar's sonority is based on sevenths or ninths. Next is a courtly little moonplay in an imagined theatre, the "body" being both celestial and human and which "shines no longer." The piano right hand suggests a Bach invention, but the doleful thirds in the left drag it down: little Rose has grown up. Though officially in D and then B major, the song's tone is wistful and resigned, with only a touch of levity. Like the first song, "The Instilling" uses an ostinato element — a fixed rhythmic pattern with seven pitches, meant to suggest an EKG on a screen — but the word setting has a more conventional feel, allowing us to hear in a more familiar tone the sad exploration of Merrill's bodily "Pantheon."

"On the Block: *Mantel Clock, Imitation Sèvres*" is a song about youth and age. Hagen deliberately quotes himself here. The vocal part's semi-strophic verses each begin with a quote or slight variation of the tune of Mamah Cheney's big aria, "There Is No Balm in Gilead," from the close of Act I of *Shining Brow*, and uses a diminution of it in canon for the little piano interludes. Meanwhile Hagen accompanies the voice with a quote from Ned Rorem's "Go Lovely Rose," from *The Nantucket Songs*, which uses Edmund Waller's poem about the brevity and fulfillment of human beauty. Songs five and six are a pair, both being essentially accompanied recitative. "Vol. XLIV, No. 3" supposedly concerns a magazine called *Microcosmics Illustrated*, but really seems to depict the "sack" of Merrill's "Patrician cells" by innumerable viruses; adventurous vocal cadenzas are separated by grim cascades of major sevenths. In "On the Block: Lamp, Terracotta Base, U. S., ca 1925" the piano flourish has been unleashed, and the animal breaks out of its cage, pounding away in tritones whose pitch groups have been carefully selected. Here the strophic idea has been given an interesting twist, since each of the song's three sections is shorter than the last.

"Pledge" is the beginning of the end. Hagen recalls music from his opening song to frame at both ends this story of a prim Wasp divorce set at blazing sundown. Hagen sets that scene with music

appropriate to the cocktail hour but as spare as possible, permitting no enjoyment. "An Upward Look" — from the grave? — makes an unequivocal conclusion to the cycle and to this disc, but tends toward the complex irony of Britten and Shostakovich. (In tribute to Merrill and Weaver, Hagen has marked it "*Nobile, con dignità*.") Merrill's poem is simultaneously about resignation to death and the crucial regeneration of life, and Hagen slams out a dizzying pattern of major triads kept nailed down by the voice's firm determination. As the first song suggested bells, so does this one, with the pounding fifths of the left hand marking a funereal tread. But the song ends in triumph, and in a grand coda Hagen sets his proclamatory vocal part against a chain of twelve triads whose roots descend in altered thirds down towards the final G major. It is a last gift of order from this weighty little cycle, and leaves us wondering where Hagen will next take his proud journey of music and words.

— Russell Platt

The music of American composer Russell Platt has been honored with awards from ASCAP, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the American Composers Forum. His criticism has appeared in such publications as Opera News, The New Yorker, and the major newspapers of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The above notes are © 1997, Russell Platt, used here by permission.

Further reading may be found in The Art Songs of Daron Aric Hagen, a forthcoming doctoral dissertation by Professor Paul K. Kreider, Department of Music, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada.

LOVE SONGS (1988)

1 I Am Loved

I am loved. There's a fundamental consistency in his love for me. There are many times when he's not *there* for me, but I feel a strong undercurrent of sincere faith even at those times...

I can love him with a great rush of tenderness or only disinterestedly. But there's the essential knowledge that what we have is *good* and growing. I am loved. Isn't it strange!

— Gwen Hagen, *Notes* (1951)

2 Little Uneasy Song

A big bee thumps against my northern window
this morning.
I saw a man with an enormous belly
mowing the lawn into stripes and packages.
I heard their buzzing all day making
sandwiches...

What does the sun offer when it reappears
after a whole day of greyness followed by
dusk?
How can you smile so sincerely?
I just want to hear the sun's sweet sound.

The droning, the greyness, the long afternoon,
nothing in the mail, and the querulous boy
quarrels with his sister the next yard over
who wacked the newspaper in the wrong
direction

before you walked in not making a sound.
— *Reine Hauser (1985)*

3 Ah! Sun-Flower

Ah!! Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done:

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow
Arise from their graves and aspire
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.
— *William Blake, Songs of Experience*

4 Lost Love

...And more I remember
days far away:
You were by my side
in the sun-bleached city.

Time went by the sea-shore,
near your body in high waves:
You were by my side
and the small water became big water.

Many stamps have been added to my passport
since those tender days:
The sea disappeared,
the sun died away
and the skyscrapers hid your body.
— *Ze'ev Dunei (1986)*

5 Washing Her Hair

She stooped over the tub, her back naked,
spine rising to her scalp like a child's
set of beads. I lathered her thin, dark hair,
rinsed it, watched it clump in the drain. Foliage
hung in the window, steam dispersing its
vividness
like a watercolor. It wasn't real. It was theatre —
the careful way we prepared her bed, changed
her clothes, the neighbors appearing, Magi
with their bright baskets of cheese. In the hallway
I listened to conversations with her friends,
themselves a little closer to the end — the
religious uncle
who clasped her hands with joy. My mother was
elated.
Confused, embarrassed, I had heard something
not meant for me, and so returned to folding her
towels,
my part. The cleansing that said,
You look better today. This will help.
— *Sarah Gorham (1985)*

6 Requiem

I remember a day, far away,
in a city kissed by the waves of the sea.
I can see your body in the afternoon light,
when the sun came through the
shutter cracks.
I still smell the fresh coffee on the balcony
overlooking the beach.
I hear the sweet music escorting the day,
when it came to its last beat.
— *Ze'ev Dunei (1986)*

7 The Satyr

For all his debaucherie he was a
young god. A satyr, perhaps, but slim and
so graceful, compelling even in his vulgarity.
But now he's becoming fat, and there's
something obscene about a fat satyr.
And once his lips may have tasted of a
secret and forbidden wild honey — now
the complacent flavor of pot roast.
— *Gwen Hagen, Notes (1954)*

8 Sonnet

After a Fairy Tale by Oscar Wilde

Loving the idea of love, a nightingale
pressed her chest to the thorn of a rosebush
so a rose might bloom as red as her blood.
The harder she pressed, the sweeter she sang
until in the purest ecstasy of song,
her heart and the thorn of the rosebush met.

A man picked the rose for a woman he loved,
but the woman disdained it. The man discarded
the rose near the wheels of a cart. He went
back to his books. He forgot about love
with a valid excuse. Love, let us be neither
the man nor the woman, but the nightingale:
the sharper the pain, the greater the song,
the deeper the red: the miraculous blossom.
— *Gardner McFall (1984)*

ECHO'S SONGS (1983)

9 Never Pain to Tell Thy Love

Never pain to tell thy love
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears —
Ah, she doth depart.

Soon as she was gone from me
A traveller came by
Silently, invisibly —
O, was no deny.

— *William Blake*

10 "I Am Not Yours"

I am not yours, not lost in you,
Not lost, although I long to be
Lost as a candle lit at noon,
Lost as a snowflake at sea.

You love me, and I find you still
A spirit beautiful and bright,
Yet I am I, who long to be
Lost as a light is lost in light.

Oh plunge me deep in love — put out
My senses, leave me deaf and blind,
Swept by the tempest of your love,
A taper in a rushing wind.
— *Sara Teasdale*

11 A Dream Within a Dream

Take this kiss upon thy brow!
And in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow —
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if Hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less *gone*?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand —
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep — while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *all* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

— Edgar Allen Poe

12 Echo's Song

Slow, slow, fresh fount,
keep time with my salt tears,
yet slower yet,
oh faintly gentle springs;
list to the heavy part the music bears,
woe weeps out her division when she sings,

Droop herbs and flowers
Fall grief in showers.
Our beauties are not ours...
O, I could still
like melting snow upon some craggy hill

Drop, drop, drop, drop,
since nature's pride
is now a withered daffodil.

— Ben Jonson

13 I Am Rose

I am Rose my eyes are blue
I am Rose and who are you
I am Rose and when I sing
I am Rose like anything.

— Gertrude Stein

14 Lost

Desolate and lone
All night long on the lake
Where fog trails and mist creeps,
The whistle of a boat calls and cries
unendingly,

like some lost child
in tears and trouble
hurting the harbor's breast
and the harbor's eyes.

— Carl Sandburg

15 why did you go

why did you go
little fourpaws?
you forgot to shut
your big eyes.

where did you go?
like little kittens
are all the leaves
which open in the rain.

little kittens who
are called spring,
is what we stroke
maybe asleep?

do you know? or maybe did
something go away
ever so quietly
when we weren't looking.

— e e cummings

16 Since You Went Away

After you were gone
The moon came up and shone
In the vacant window.
I thought of you as a flower
Carried off by the wind,
That went its way,
And can never turn back.

— The Poetess Shu Ch'i-siang
(trans. Kenneth Rexroth)

17 Thou Wouldst Be Loved

Thou wouldst be loved
then let thy heart
from its present pathway part not.
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou art not.
So with the world, thy gentle ways,
thy grace, thy more than beauty,
shall be an endless theme of praise
and love, a simple duty.

— Edgar Allen Poe

18 Look Down, Fair Moon

Look down, fair moon and bathe this scene
Pour softly down night's nimbus floods
on faces ghastly, swollen purple,
On the dead with their arms toss'd wide
Pour down your unstinted nimbus, sacred moon.

— Walt Whitman

19 The Mild Mother

Jesu Christ's mild Mother stood,
beheld her Son against the cross
that He was nailed on.
The Son hung; the Mother stood and beheld
her child's blood
how it of His wounds ran.

— Anonymous 16th century

DEAR YOUTH (1990)

20 The Bonnie Blue Flag

Come, brothers! rally for the right!
The bravest of the brave
Sends forth her ringing battle cry
Beside the Atlantic wave!
She leads the way in honor's path;
Come brothers, near and far,
Come rally round the Bonnie Blue Flag
That bears a single star.

— Annie Chambers Ketchum, ca. 1862

21 I Stop Again

I stop again, Alice, to close the eyes of a German
boy who has no one in this country to mourn for him.
His parents live in the Fatherland, and all the record
there will be is a number on his grave.

— Letter of Hannah Ropes, September, 1862

22 The Picture Graved into My Heart

Two hands, small, thin and white, tremulous, reaching after things invisible, have laid in mine hour after hour today; two eyes like live coals roll, gleam, recede in terror..., or soften to tears before mine; two cheeks, purple with fever, a sweet mouth and beardless chin, teeth a girl might envy, and a wide fair brow, from which light brown hair ... falls away — this is the picture graved into my heart....

The hair at length is smoothed, a lock cut from it ... [for] his mother, and the limbs straightened. [Oh], the wondrous manly beauty.... — *Letter of Hannah Ropes, December 27, 1862*

23 The Trouble was Tom...

The trouble was Tom was in love with one of the twins but she wasn't in love with him. The other twin was in love with Tom but Tom was not in love with her. They all just stayed good friends for the rest of their lives. The girls never married. They remained true to one another for the rest of their lives.

— *Anonymous, ca. 1865*

24 The Lord Knows...

The Lord knows best what will end this terrible strife and I pray he will guide the people accordingly. I am almost getting reckless sometimes. I think if you were only out I wouldn't care what they did. Is not that most too selfish? At least I hope they will be able to do as will cause the least bloodshed.

— *Letter of Ann Smith to her husband David, August 16, 1864*

25 O, for Such a Dream

I dreamt last night that you were home. I was outdoors and went to the door and called you out to look at something. It was cold weather and moonlight — You had on a large sacque coat. You opened it and put it round me and we walked together but I don't know how far we went. O, for such a dream to come to pass. Will it, can it ever be? If I could only feel in reality the real security which I felt in that dream, but alas it was only a dream and has fled to leave the reality of absence still continued and to be endured yet a year. And now there are to be thousands more dragged from their homes.

— *Letter of Ann Smith to her husband David, August 16, 1864*

26 Christmas Night

This is Christmas night and I am all alone and lonely. ... There is nothing to be heard except the che[e]rful little cricket and the fearse bark of the watchful dog. ... I hope this awful war will soon close and wee will be happy wonse more.

— *Martha Ingram, to her husband George, December 25, 1862, Hillsborough, Texas*

27 ...Silently Dispersing

I pass my days — and my nights, partly — at this window. I am sure our army is silently dispersing. Men are going the wrong way all the time. They slip by now with no songs or shouts. they have given the thing up.

— *Diary entry, March 30, 1865, Mary Boykin Chestnut, Chester, South Carolina*

MERRILL SONGS (1995)

28 A Downward Look

Seen from above, the sky
Is deep. Clouds float down there,

Foam on a long, luxurious bath.
Their shadows over limbs submerged in "air,"

Over protuberances, faults,
A delta thicket, glide. On high, the love

That drew the bath and scattered it with salts

Still radiates new projects old as day,
And hardly registers the tug

When, far beneath, a wrinkled, baby hand
Happens upon the plug.

29 body

Look closely at the letters. Can you see,
entering (stage right), then floating full,
then heading off — so soon —
how like a little kohl-rimmed moon
o plots her course from b to d

— as y, unanswered, knocks at the stage
door?

Looked at too long, words fail,
phase out. Ask, now that *body* shines
no longer, by what light you learn these lines
and what the *b* and *d* stood for.

30 The Instilling

All day from high within the skull —
Dome of a Pantheon, trepanned — light shines
Into the body. Down that stair

Sometimes there's fog: opaque red droplets check
The beam. Sometimes tall redwood-tendoned

glades
Come and go, whose dwellers came and went.
Now darting feverishly anywhere,
Manic duncecap its danseuse eludes,

Now slowed by grief, white-lipped,
Grasping the newel bone of its descent,

This light can even be invisible

Till a deep sparkle, regular as script,
As wavelets of an EKG, defines
The dreamless gulf between two shoulder blades.

31 On the Block: *Mantel Clock, Imitation Sèvres*

Time, passing, glances at the clock
Perhaps with pity —who's to say?
Still rose and ormolu, its hands
Clasped in dismay...

"Stay then, thou art so fair," he smiles,
To put the pretty thing at ease.
"I will, *I have*," the latter sighs.
"Now what, please?"

Teach me to tick without the touch
I took my life from — ah, those years!"
It's dusk; the dial brims with faint
firefly tears.

The arbiter reviews a face
Flawless in all its partial knowing:
"Child think well of me, or try.
I must be going."

32 Vol. XLIV, No. 3

Room set at infrared,
Mind at ultraviolet,
Organisms ever stranger,
Hallucinated on the slide, fluoresce:

Chains of gold tinsel, baubles of green fire
For the arterial branches —
Here at *Microcosmics Illustrated*, why,
Christmas goes on all year!

Defenseless, the patrician cells await
Invasion by barbaric viruses,
Another sack of Rome.
A new age. Everything we dread.

Dread? It crows for joy in the manger.
Joy? The tree sparkles on which it will die.

**33 On the Block: Lamp, Terracotta
Base, U.S., ca.1925**

If when you're old and musing
Upon my whats and whys
Another one should flicker
Its last before your eyes

Don't worry, they give out, too,
Those burning filaments,
Imagination's debris
Englobed still in a sense

Briefly too hot to handle,
Too dim a souvenir,
Then, for the deft unscrewing
Unless you first, my dear,

Feel for what it shone from,
Ribbed clay each night anew
Hardened to its mission:
Light for the likes of you.

34 Pledge

House on alert.
Sun setting in a blaze
Of insight kisses both book and budvase
Where they hurt.

Did the page-turner yawn and slacken,
Or an omen flip by unread?
Prime cuts that once bled
Now blacken.

Her brimming eyes say
More than they see.
He is all worried probity
About to get its way.

Dance steps the world knows curiously well
Ease them asunder —
Friends "rallying around her,"
His "move to a hotel."

Which one will get
the finger-wagging metronome,
Which one make a home
For the aged cricket

Who sang togetherness ahead
From a hearth glowing bright?
It's dark now. I write
Propped up in a bed:

"You who have drained dry
Your golden goblet are about to learn —
As in my turn
Have I —

How life, unsweetened, fizzing up again
Fills the heart.
I drink to you apart
In that champagne."

35 An Upward Look

O heart green acre sown with salt
by the departing occupier

lay down your gallant spears of wheat
Salt of the earth each stellar pinch

flung in blind defiance backwards
Now takes its toll Up from his quieted

quarry the lover colder and wiser
hauling himself finds the world turning

toys triumphs toxins into
this vast facility the living come
dearest to die in How did it happen

In bright alternation minutely mirrored
within the thinking of each and every

mortal creature halves of a clue
approaching earthlights Morning star

evening star salt of the sky
First the grave dissolving into dawn

then the crucial recrystallizing
from inmost depths of clear dark blue

At the age of 15, **DARON HAGEN**'s orchestral music attracted the attention of Leonard Bernstein, whose enthusiastic comments led to Hagen's eventual enrollment at the Curtis Institute of Music. While still a student at the Curtis Institute, his music was introduced by the Philadelphia Orchestra. Before graduating from Juilliard, Hagen had begun fulfilling commissions from the New York Philharmonic and other major American orchestras.

Daron Hagen has served as composer in residence for the Long Beach (CA) Symphony, the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, and he has been the recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation Residency at Bellagio, Italy. He has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts and other organizations and he is a member of the Corporation of Yaddo. He currently teaches composition at the Curtis Institute of Music and has taught at Bard College, New York University and the City College of New York. His work has received numerous prizes and awards, including the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award, the Bearns Prize of Columbia University, the Charles Ives Scholarship of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Barlow Endowment International Composition Prize, multiple BMI and ASCAP prizes, as well as multiple residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Tanglewood, and the Atlantic Center for the Arts.



Susan Crowder made her professional singing debut in her native city of Atlanta with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Robert Shaw. In addition to winning prizes in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and Birmingham Opera Vocal Competition, Ms. Crowder has performed with such groups as the Atlanta Opera Company, Atlanta Repertory Opera and Choral Guild of Atlanta. Under the direction of William Noll, she recorded Stravinsky's *Les Noces* and Carl Orff's *Catulli Carmina*. In the Washington area, Ms. Crowder has appeared as soloist with the Choral Arts Society under the direction of Norman Scribner. She is a frequent recitalist in the Washington area.



Bradley Moore made his debut in 1993 with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D. C., having won the National Symphony Orchestra's Young Soloists' Competition in 1992. He has also appeared with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra and the College of Charleston Summer Festival Orchestra, and has performed recitals in Washington, D. C., London, and New York. Mr. Moore has been heard on the McGraw-Hill Young Artists' Showcase on WQXR-FM, New York, and, as pianist and music director, he has been involved in productions of Bizet's *Doctor Miracle*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro*.



Sara Stern has performed much of this century's solo and chamber music, and has premiered and recorded exceptional new works as solo flutist with the 20th Century Consort at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Ms. Stern has also served as principal flute for the John F. Kennedy Center's Terrace and Eisenhower Theater Orchestras. A series of appearances with the Emerson String Quartet has established her as an artist of major stature, and she has presented solo recitals at Carnegie Hall and at the Kennedy Center. She is currently principal flute with the Virginia Chamber Orchestra. "Stern & Levalier," a duo with National Symphony Orchestra principal harpist Dotian Levalier, has concertized extensively in the U.S. and abroad for over a decade.

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