

Texts and Translations for *Alive in Song*

Program note for “Climbing”:

From nursery rhymes to lullabies, children’s songs are a universal part of our lives. The melodies and lyrics continue to play in our minds well into adulthood, serving to transport our grown selves directly to the realm of youthful imagination. In *Verses for Children*, a child’s voice narrates with playfulness and wonderment as they observe the world around them. In all of the songs, I try to capture the innocence of the child-speaker by composing melodies reminiscent of the children’s songs we know and love.

“Climbing” is one of my favorites in the set—I have fond memories of playing make believe with my brother and cousins, climbing the trees in our grandparent’s yard! I hope this song rekindles fond memories of your own childhood, no doubt filled with wonder and a song in your heart! —Erik Franklin, composer

Climbing

Poetry by Amy Lowell

High up in the apple tree, climbing I go,
with the sky above me, the earth below.
Each branch is the step of a wonderful stair,
which leads to the town I see shining up there.

Climbing, climbing, higher and higher,
the branches blow and I see a spire,
the gleam of a turret, the glint of a dome,
all sparkling and bright, like white sea foam.

On and on, from bough to bough,
the leaves are thick, but I push my way through;
Before, I have always had to stop,
but today I am sure I shall reach the top.

Today to the end of the marvelous stair,
where those glittering pinnacles flash in the air!
Climbing, climbing, higher I go,
with the sky close above me, the earth far below.

Æbleblomst

Poetry by Ludvig Holstein

Du fine hvide Æbleblomst!
Hvem gav dig dette Lykkeskær!
Ak, jeg er Solens Hjertsenskær!
Hvar fik du denne Purpurglød,
Some brænder i din fine Hud?
Ak, jeg er Solens Foraasbrud!
Velsignet af min Brudgoms Kys
Jeg lever i hans Aandedrag
En kor lyksalig Foraarsdag.
Og naar hans sidste varme Kys
I Aftenrøden strejfer mig
Så hvisker jeg: Jeg elsker dig!
Og lukker mig og bøjer mig
Og drysser over Græsset ud
Mit hvide Flor, mit Bryllupsskrud.

You fine, white apple blossom,
who gave you such a happy glow?
Ah, I am the sun’s heartshine!
Where did you get this purple glow
which ornaments your fine skin?
Ah, I am the sun’s spring bride!
Blessed by my groom’s kiss
I love through his breath,
the gentle breeze of one short, blissful spring day.
And his last warm kiss of the day,
in the red evening, meets my lips,
and then I whisper: I love you.
And he comes close to me, bends over me,
and spreads out over the grass
the white flowers of my wedding dress.

Sommersang

Poetry by Ludvig Holstein

Fylt med Blomster blusser
Æbletræets Gren.
Atter Himlen
dyb og varm og ren.
Over Markens Blommer
brummer Humlebien
honningtung og ør.
Ak, så blev det Sommer!
Vandrer du langs Stien
drømmende som før?

Blomsters blide Dufte
bæres vidt om Vang.
Gøg fra fjerne Skove
kukker Dagen lang,
Hørte du i Dalen,
hvor de klare Kilder
klinger gennem Krat
Sang af Nattergalen,
lange Løb af Triller
i den lyse Nat?

Vestens Brise bruser
Gennem Korn og græs,
Slettelandets bølger
lover rige Læs.
Himlens milde Byger
deres gyldne Grøde
bringer fjernt og nær.
Blomsterstøvet ryger,
dufter dig imøde
over rug som drær.

Ak, så blev det Sommer!
Smægtende påny.
Skønhedsdrømmen stiger
op mod Himlens Sky.
Svanevid den svømmer
som et dejligt Smykke
i det dybe Blå. --
Hele Jorden drømmer
om et Dyb af Lykke
som den ej kan nå.

Nimmersatte Liebe

Poetry by Eduard Mörike

So ist die Lieb'! So ist die Lieb'!
Mit Küssen nicht zu stillen:
wer ist der Tor und will ein Sieb
mit eitel Wasser füllen?
Und schöpfst du an die tausend Jahr',
und küssest ewig, ewig gar,
du tust ihr nie zu Willen.

Die Lieb', die Lieb' hat alle Stund
neu wunderbarlich Gelüsten;

Filled with flowers,
the apple tree blazes
against the sky,
blue and warm and deep.
Over the field's flowers
buzz the bumble bees,
honey-drunk and full.
Ah, then it was Summer!
Do you still wander along the stones
as dreamily as before?

The scent of the flowers blows
far and wide along the Vang.
The cuckoo from a far-off forest
cuckoos all the day long.
Do you hear in the dales
where the clear spring
carries along its banks
the song of the nightingale—
a long run of trills
in the bright night?

The westerly breezes bluster
among the grain and grass.
The plain's wheat
promises a rich harvest.
Heaven's mild showers
sprout golden grain
far and wide.
The flower's smoky pollen
drifts to you gently
over the field like dew.

Ah, then it was Summer!
But it is already vanishing.
A beautiful dream
that floats up toward the heavens
of a white swan that swims along
like a piece of jewelry
on the deep blue of the water.
All the world is an image
showing a depth of happiness
that I cannot fully grasp.

Such is love! Such is love!
Not to be quieted with kisses:
Who is such a fool as to fill a sieve
with only water?
And were you to work for a thousand years,
always, always kissing,
you could never satisfy her.

Love, love has every hour
some wonderful new desire;

wir bissen uns die Lippen wund,
Da wir uns heute küssten.
Das Mädchen hielt in guter Ruh',
wie's Lämmlein unterm Messer;
ihr Auge bat: "Nur immer zu!
Je weher, desto besser!"

So ist die Lieb'! und war auch so,
wie lang es Liebe gibt,
und anders war Herr Salomo,
der Weise, nicht verliebt.

Neue Liebe

Poetry by Eduard Mörike

Kann auch ein Mensch des andern auf der Erde ganz,
wie er möchte, sein?
– in langer Nacht bedacht ich mirs und musste sagen, nein!

So kann ich Niemand's heissen auf der Erde,
Und Niemand wäre mein?
– aus Finsternissen hell in mir aufzückt ein Freudenschein:

Sollt' ich mit Gott nicht können sein,
so wie ich möchte, mein und dein?
Was hielte mich, dass ichs nicht heute werde?

Ein süßes Schrecken geht durch mein Gebein!
Mich wundert, dass es mir ein Wunder wollte sein,
Gott selbst zu eigen haben auf der Erde!

Memories

Text by Charles Ives

A. Very Pleasant

We're sitting in the opera house;
We're waiting for the curtain to arise
with wonders for our eyes;
We're feeling pretty gay,
and well we may,
"O, Jimmy, look!" I say,
"The band is tuning up
and soon will start to play."
We whistle and we hum,
beat time with the drum.

We're sitting in the opera house;
We're waiting for the curtain to arise
with wonders for our eyes,
a feeling of expectancy,
a certain kind of ecstasy,
expectancy and ecstasy... Sh's's's. "Curtain!"

B. Rather Sad

From the street a strain on my ear doth fall,
a tune as threadbare as that "old red shawl,"
it is tattered, it is torn,
it shows signs of being worn,

we bit our lips sore
today when we were kissing.
The girl takes it calmly,
like a lamb under the knife;
her eyes pleading: "Go on, go on!
The more it hurts the better!"

Such is love, and was always so,
as long as love has existed,
and the wise old sage, Lord Solomon himself,
did not love any other way.

Can one ever belong to another here on earth,
wholly, as one would wish to be?
Long I pondered this at night and had to answer, no!

So can I belong to no one here on earth,
and can no one be mine?
– From dark recesses in me a bright flame of joy flashes:

Could I not be with God,
just as I would wish, mine and thine?
What could keep me from being so today?

A sweet tremor pervades my very frame!
I marvel that it should have ever seemed a marvel
to have God for one's own on earth!

it's the tune my Uncle hummed from early morn.
'Twas a common little thing and kind 'a sweet,
but 'twas sad and seemed to slow up both his feet;
I can see him shuffling down
to the barn or to the town,
a humming.

Program note for “November Blues”:

“November Blues” is part of a set of songs in-progress on the last four months of the year. The lyrics are from a poem by Philip S. Bryant, Professor of English and African Studies at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota. Painting the text colorfully and cleverly, the song contains several jazz and blues musical idioms. As the singer croons “All the cake has been eaten, and the party is over” the piano melodramatically sings a musical quotation reharmonized. Also, the pace accelerates while parallel jazz harmonies spiral down sequentially as “all the air has gone out of the balloon.” The song ends with anticipation of more to come as “flakes of snow will be falling soon.” —Joshua Fishbein, composer

November Blues

Poetry by Philip S. Bryant

Finally, all the air
Is let out of the balloon
As flakes of snow
Will be flying soon
And all that's left
Of our glorious fall
Is piled under leaves
Blown cold and raw
And now the sky
Is cloudy and gray
And there's not much left
For us to say
On this chilly, windy, November day
As things from now on
Will grow darker and colder
All the cake has been eaten,
And the party is over.
So pull on your coat,
Mittens and gloves
And hold on tight
To the one that you love
For all the air has gone
Out of the balloon
And flakes of snow
Will be falling soon.

I Want to Die While You Love Me

Poetry by Georgia Douglas Johnson

I want to die while you love me,
while yet you hold me fair,
while laughter lies upon my lips,
and lights are in my hair.

I want to die while you love me,
I could not bear to see
the glory of this perfect day
grow dim or cease to be.

I want to die while you love me,
Oh, who would care to live

till love had nothing more to ask
and nothing more to give.

I want to die while you love me,
and bear to that still bed
your kisses, turbulent, unspent
to warm me when I'm dead.

Watch and Pray

Traditional Spiritual

Mama, is Massa goin' to sell us tomorrow?
Yes, Yes, Yes.
Oh, watch and pray.
Is he a-goin' to sell us down to Georgia?
Yes, yes, yes.
Oh! down to Georgia,
Watch and pray.
Oh, mama
Don't you grieve after me.
Oh, watch and pray.

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Lyrics by Thomas A. Dorsey

Precious Lord, take my hand,
lead me on, let me stand
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through the storm, through the night,
lead me on to the light.
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone.
Hear my cry, hear my call
Hold my hand, lest I fall,
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When the darkness appears and the night draws near
And the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand,
Guide my feet, hold my hand,
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

Alma mia

Poetry by Maria Grever

Alma mía sola
Siempre sola
Sin que nadie comprenda, tu sufrimiento
Tu horrible padecer

Fingiendo una existencia siempre llena
De dicha y de placer

Si yo encontrara un alma como la mía
Cuántas cosas secretas, le contaría
Un alma que al mirarme sin decir nada
Me lo dijese todo con su mirada

My soul, alone
Always alone
Without anyone to understand your suffering
Your horrible suffering

Feigning an existence
Of constant joy and pleasure

If I found a soul like mine
How many secret things I would tell it
A soul that just by looking at me, without saying anything
Would tell me everything with just a look

Un alma embriagase con suave aliento
Que al besarme sintiera lo que yo siento
Y a veces me pregunto, qué pasaría
Si yo encontrara un alma como la mía

A soul that could intoxicate with a soft breath
That with a kiss could feel what I feel
And sometimes I wonder what would happen
If I found a soul like mine

Cuando acaba de llover

Poetry by León Benarós

Cuando acaba de llover se alegran los arbolitos.
Verdes se ven y tan frescos los trebolitos.
Todo es de buen parecer cuando acaba de llover.
Cuando acaba de llover se mecen las campanillas.
Lindas se ven las retamas, tan amarillas.
Cuando acaba de llover el alma se me serena
y siento que me amanece la dicha plena.
Todo es de buen parecer cuando acaba de llover.

After the rain the trees rejoice.
The clover looks green and fresh.
Everything looks good after the rain.
After the rain the bells swing themselves.
The shrubs look pretty and so yellow.
After the rain my soul finds peace
And I feel full joy being born in me.
Everything looks good after the rain.

Silence

Poetry by Emily Dickinson

Silence is all we dread.
There's Ransom in a Voice —
But Silence is Infinity.
Himself have not a face.

Program note for "I'm Nobody":

"The bounciness and humor of this song provided just the right contrast to the opening of my *Four Dickinson Songs*, which was very wistful, and the third song, which was very serious. My compositional process is always the same—I try to create dramatic music that will honor the words and the singer. Also, I was writing this for a particular soprano, Karen Bogan, who had great flexibility, so I particularly crafted the humorous melismas near the end (on the word "admiring") for her skills." —Lori Laitman, composer

I'm Nobody

Poetry by Emily Dickinson

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you - Nobody - too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise - you know!

How dreary - to be - Somebody!
How public - like a Frog -
To tell one's name - the livelong June -
To an admiring Bog!

Will there really be a morning?

Poetry by Emily Dickinson

Will there really be a "Morning"?
Is there such a thing as "Day"?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water lilies?
Has it feathers like a bird?
Does it come from famous places
Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some Scholar! Oh, some Sailor!
Oh some Wise Man from the skies!
Please to tell a little Pilgrim
Where the place called "Morning" lies!

Joy

Poetry by Langston Hughes

I went to look for Joy,
Slim, dancing Joy,
Gay, laughing Joy,
Bright-eyed Joy—
And I found her
Driving the butcher's cart
In the arms of the butcher boy!
Such company, such company,
As keeps this young nymph, Joy!

—brief intermission—

Excerpts from *The Madman*, a song cycle by Timothy Amukele based on the book *The Madman: his parables and poems* by Khalil Gibran.

The Madman

You ask me how I became a Madman?
This is my story.
One day long before many gods were born,
woke up and I found all my masks were gone.
They were gone.
I ran naked through the crowded streets,
I ran naked through the . . . crying thieves, thieves.
The cursed thieves.

Men and women laughed at me.
Some ran hiding, fearing me.
When I reached the market place,
someone pointed and said, "He's a mad man, a mad man!"
As I looked to find the offending face,
the sun bent way down low and kissed my face,
first time in my life felt his warm embrace
and I wanted my masks no more, no more.

Blessed, blessed are the thieves who stole my masks.

You ask me how I became a Madman?
This is my story.

My Friend

My friend I am not what I seem.
What you see is a garment I wear
to protect me from your questionings,
and protect you from my negligence.
The real me dwells in silence, unapproachable, alone.

When you say the wind is blowing,
I say yeah yeah yeah yeah
but oh my mind is drifting, drifting away at sea alone.
When it is day with you, it is night with me,

yet we only speak of noon and spring.
For you cannot hear the songs of my darkness,
so I'd rather be with night alone.

He would rather be with night alone.

When you go into your heaven I descend to hell,
but you keep calling me, calling me, calling "My companion, my friend."
But I would not have you see my Hell, the flame would burn thy eyes,
No, I would not have you see my Hell, I love it too well to have you visit.

He would rather be in hell alone.

You claim to love beauty and righteousness, and I for thy sake pretend it so,
you claim to be cautious, good and wise, and I for thy sake pretend it so,
but how do I make thee understand? My friend, you are not my friend—
though we are walking hand in hand, my friend, you are not my friend.

I would rather be alone.

Though we are walking hand in hand, my friend, you are not my friend.
Though we are sitting side by side, my friend, you are not my friend.
Though we are talking face to face, my friend, you are not my friend.
Though we are walking hand in hand, my friend, you are not my friend.

The Good God and the Evil God

The good God and the evil God met on the mountain top.
The good God said, "Good day to you."
The evil God did not answer.
The good God said, "You're in a bad, bad humor today."
"Yes!" said the evil God, "for of late I've often been mistaken for you,
of late I've often been called by your name. Of late I've been treated as if I were you
and it ill pleases me."
"Oh, it's no big deal, for of late, I've often been mistaken for you,
for of late, been treated as if I were you.
For of late I, I . . ."
The evil God walked away, cursing the stupidity of man.

War

One night a feast was held in the palace
and there came a man and prostrated himself before the prince.
All of the feasters looked upon him,
one eye was missing and the empty socket bled.
The prince inquired of him, "What has befallen you?"
And the man replied: "Oh Prince, I am a thief
and on this moonless night, I went to rob the money changers shop,
but I made a mistake and entered the weaver's shop.
It was such a mess, and in the dark I ran into the weaver's loom
and my eye (Oh Prince!), my eye was torn, my livelihood gone,
so I ask for justice, justice upon the weaver."

War is an eye for an eye for an eye.
War is justice for the thief.
War is an eye for an eye for an eye.
War is justice for the thief.

Then the prince sent for the weaver, and the weaver came,
and it was decreed that he should lose his eye.

“Oh Prince,” said the weaver, “the decree is just
and yet I need both eyes to see both sides of the cloth I weave.
But I have a neighbor, cobbler by trade,
he’ll fix your shoes, he’ll make them new.
Everybody knows to fix your shoe, everybody knows one eye will do.”

Then the prince sent for the cobbler and the cobbler came
and they plucked out one of his eyes and justice was satisfied.
A knife for the cobbler, an eye for the prince,
relief for the weaver and justice for the thief.

War is an eye for an eye for an eye.
War is justice for the thief.
War is an eye for an eye for an eye.
War is justice for the thief.

Don’t Feel No-Ways Tired

Traditional Spiritual

I am seeking for a city, Hallelujah,
For a city into the Kingdom, Hallelujah.

There’s a better day a-comin’, Hallelujah.
When I leave this world of sorrow, Hallelujah,
For to join the holy number, Hallelujah.

I don’t feel no-ways tired.
Come too far from where I started from;
Nobody told me the road would be easy;
I don’t believe He brought me this far to leave me.
Oh Lord, I don’t feel no-ways tired, Children.
Oh, Glory Hallelujah.
For I hope to shout glory when this world is on fire.
Oh, Glory Hallelujah!

Ride Up in the Chariot

Traditional Spiritual

Gonna ride up in the chariot, soon-a in the mornin’,
Ride up in the chariot, soon-a in the mornin’
and I hope I’ll join the band.

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me.
and I hope I’ll join the band.

Gonna walk and talk with Jesus, soon-a in the mornin’,
Walk and talk with Jesus, soon-a in the mornin’,
and I hope I’ll join the band.

Oh, Lord, have mercy on me.
and I hope I’ll join the band.

Gonna chatter with the angels, soon-a in the mornin’,
Chatter with the angels, soon-a in the mornin’,
and I hope I’ll join the band.

Oh Lord, have mercy on me.
and I hope I’ll join the band.