are flung into the winds that mile on mile
pour northward from the Miami gardens
where my dead mother lies and red the rose
and the hibiscus bloom, but there is no
fancy to me more fair and dear in those
distances than the presence of Sally-O.

Paul Goodman

29 Youth, Day, Old Age, and Night
Youth, large, lusty, loving, youth, full of grace,
force, fascination,
Do you know that Old Age may come as after you
with equal grace, force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid, day of the immense sun,
action, ambition, laughter,
The Night follows close with millions of suns,
and sleep and restoring darkness.

Walt Whitman

28 O you whom I often and silently come
O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I
may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the
same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your
sake is playing within me.

Walt Whitman

29 Full of life now
Full of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.
When you read these I that was visible

am become invisible.
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems,
seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you
and become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you,
(But not too certain but I am now with you.)

Walt Whitman

28 As Adam early in the morning
As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep;
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I
pass;
Be not afraid of my body.

Walt Whitman

28 Are you the new person?
Are you the new person drawn toward me?
To begin with take warning,
I am surely far different from what you suppose:
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?

Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd
satisfaction?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
Do you see no further than this façade,
This smooth and tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground
toward a real heroic man?
Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all
maya, illusion?

Walt Whitman

Selected Songs
The Nightingale
Orchids
The Waking
Nantucket
Sally’s Smile

Carole Farley, soprano
Ned Rorem, piano
Ned Rorem (b. 1923)  
Selected Songs

Having written hundreds of songs, in this medium Rorem rivals Charles Ives in quantity and originality. There are composer's songs; there are songs for one voice; there are songs for two voices; there are songs for three voices; there are choirs. Ned Rorem's songs are both highly literary and cultivated, yet more conservative in his songs than in his chamber music or orchestral works; these gems have the unique and unmistakable Ivesian irreverence. Rorem's songs are in the tradition of poems by Verlaine and Rimbaud, expressed with a special insight into each poem. His choice of poems and specific poems reveals much about his own thinking. In an essay of 1969 Rorem wrote as follows: How do you choose poems for setting to music? Formerly by what's called inspiration, the yen for self-expression that has nothing to do with talent. Today I choose them according to pre-set requirements. My approach-far too slow, or soft, or loud, or even a set requirement in regard to whom I'm musicalizing it for, and to whether it's to be a sequence or standing alone. Yes, I am drawn to poems which, as we Quakers say, speak to my condition, and whatever my songs are worth, I've never set a bad poem.

As early as 1959 Ned Rorem was publishing essays describing his philosophy and ideas in articles entitled "Song and Singer" and "Writing Songs". He described the intricate, delicate relation between music and text, and the influence of prosody, mood and rhythm, as well as the poem's imagery. For Rorem, the final product, the song, becomes a "greater magnitude than either the text or music alone."

In his numerous books of diaries, which are delightful to read and continue to be published year after year, readers experience an uncanny obsession with details: the aroma of a Paris morning decades ago, someone's persistent perfume, the colour of a friend's eyes, a glance from a stranger fleetingly seen only once. During this era Rorem's music, orchestras throughout the world under such conductors as Stokowski, Bernstein, Ormandy, Mitropoulos, Reiner, Previn and Serebrier. He has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, and in 2000 he was named President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His writing success has been equally successful, including the best selling The Paris Diary, The New York Diary, The Nanucket Diary, Music and People, and the most recently published Lyrical Life. In the later years of this production, Ned Rorem was keen to include, for the first time, the complete collection of the Roethke songs. He suggested many of the other songs in this recording, to suit Carole Farley's dramatic and expressive qualities. The order of the songs was chosen by both artists. This collection encompasses over four decades, from some of the earliest songs of 1947 to 1990. The following list indicates the date of composition of each song and the poet's name.

The color texts are clear and communicative, their emotion heightened by the music. Composers of diverse schools respect and admire his output because he has kept alive a tradition otherwise relegated mostly to music theater or popular songs. Rorem's strengths lie in his uncanny facility with language, his deep understanding of the texts, and his ability to compose fluid, emotively singable vocal lines.

Ned Rorem in 1923 in Indiana, Ned Rorem studied at Northwestern University, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Juilliard School. In 1949 he went for a summer holiday to Paris, and remained there for eight years. While in France he wrote a full-length opera, a Fulbright Fellowship, and later a Guggenheim Fellowship. Upon returning to America in 1958, he held positions as composer-in-residence at the universities of Buffalo and Utah, and has been teaching composition at the Curtis Institute of Music for several decades. His music has been performed by most major orchestras throughout the world under such conductors as Stokowski, Bernstein, Ormandy, Mitropoulos, Reiner, Previn and Serebrier. He has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, and in 2000 he was named President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His writing success has been equally successful, including the best selling The Paris Diary, The New York Diary, The Nantucket Diary, Music and People, and the most recently published Lyrical Life. In the later years of this production, Ned Rorem was keen to include, for the first time, the complete collection of the Roethke songs. He suggested many of the other songs in this recording, to suit Carole Farley's dramatic and expressive qualities. The order of the songs was chosen by both artists. This collection encompasses over four decades, from some of the earliest songs of 1947 to 1990. The following list indicates the date of composition of each song and the poet's name.

The Waking (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
Root Cellar (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
My Paper Wife (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
I strolled across an open field (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
A Marriage (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
The Serpent (Theodore Roethke) 1970-72  
Night Crow (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
Snake (Theodore Roethke) 1959  
The Little Lost Lullaby (Theodore Roethke) 1949  
The Nightingale (1500 AD) 1959  
Nanstecker (William Carlos Williams) 1978-79  
Lullaby of the Woman of the Mountain (Phidyline: Pears) 1951  
Love in a Life (Robert Browning) 1951  
What if some little thing... (Edmund Spenser) 1949  
Visits to St. Elizabeth's (Elizabeth Bishop) 1949  
Spring with Words on a Stoney Evening (Robert Frost) 1947  
Spring (Gerard Manley Hopkins) 1947  
See how they love me (Howard Morse) 1956

Carole Farley's essay on Rorem's songs declares that... singers favor his evocative music because his songs feel comfortably on the voice. Listeners feel involved because...
Ned Rorem (b. 1923)
Selected Songs

Having written hundreds of songs, in this medium Rorem rivals Charles Ives in quantity and originality. The composer has written at least three hundred
songs, and his music is filled with ideas. He is one of the most prolific composers of the twentieth century. His output includes opera, ballet, chamber music, vocal music, and orchestral works. Rorem's music is characterized by a rich harmonic language and a strong sense of melody.

In an essay of 1960 Rorem wrote as follows: How do you choose poems for setting to music? Formerly by what's called inspiration, the yen for self-expression that has nothing to do with talent. Today I choose them according to pre-set requirements. My approach—fast or slow, or led to a given poem varies according to whom I'm musicalizing it for, and to whether it's to be a sequence or standing alone. Yes, I am drawn to poems which, as we Quakers say, speak to my condition, and whatever my songs are worth, I've never set a bad poem.

As early as 1959 Ned Rorem was publishing essays describing his philosophy and ideas in articles entitled "Song and Singer" and "Writing Songs". He described the intricate, delicate relation between music and text, and the influence of prosody, mood and rhythm, as well as the poem's imagery. For Rorem, the final product, the song, became a work of art, and the composer's emotions are revealed in the text. His vocal music is filled with ideas, and his output includes opera, ballet, chamber music, vocal music, and orchestral works. Rorem's music is characterized by a rich harmonic language and a strong sense of melody.

The Waking (Theodore Roethke) 1959
Root Cellar (Theodore Roethke) 1959
My Paper Waltz (Theodore Roethke) 1959
I strolled across an open field (Theodore Roethke) 1959
Monoon (Theodore Roethke) 1959
Orchids (Theodore Roethke) 1959
The Serpent (Theodore Roethke) 1970-72
Night Crow (Theodore Roethke) 1959
Snake (Theodore Roethke) 1959
Little (Theodore Roethke) 1941
The Nightingale (1500 AD) 1959
Nantucket (William Carlos Williams) 1978-79
Lullaby of the Woman of the Mountain (Padubale: Pierce) 1951
Love is a life (Robert Browning) 1951
What if some little thing... (Edmund Spenser) 1949
Visits to St. Elizabeth's (Elizabeth Bishop) 1959
Spring Woods on a Stoney Evening (Robert Frost) 1947
Spring (Gerard Manley Hopkins) 1947
See how they love me (Howard Moses) 1956

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Now sleeps the crimson petal (Alfred Lord Tennyson) 1963
I am Rose (Gertrude Stein) 1963
Ask me no more (Alfred Lord Tennyson) 1963
Fare-Far Away (Alfred Lord Tennyson) 1963
Early in the morning (Robert Hillyer) 1958
Alleluia 1946
Such beauty as hurts to behold (Paul Goodman) 1957
Sally's Smile (Paul Goodman) 1953
Youth, Darkness, Age, and Night (Whalt Whitman) 1954
O you whom I often and silently cone (Whalt Whitman) 1957
Full of life now (Whalt Whitman) 1989
As Adam early in the morning (Whalt Whitman) 1957
Are you the new person? (Whalt Whitman) 1957

Herbert Kraft

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Carole Farley

The American soprano Carole Farley studied with William Shriner at Indiana University and at the Munich Musikschule with Marianne Szech and in New York with Cornelius Reid, making her stage début in Linz in 1969. She made her Metropolitan Opera début in 1977 in the title rôle of Luna, a rôle she has repeated more than a hundred times in four languages, German, English, French and Italian, including the British première with the Welsh National Opera in 1971 and the three-act version of the opera in Zurich in 1979. She is a regular guest of the world’s foremost opera houses, including the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Canadian Opera, Opera de Paris, Stadt Köln, New York City Opera, National Opera, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires and in Zurich, Düsseldorf, Paris, Turin, Lyon, Brussels, Nice and Florence. Her varied repertoire includes Monteverdi’s Poppea, Massenet’s Manon, the Salome of Richard Strauss and principal rôles in over 75 operas including Mozarts Idomeneo, Verdis La Traviata, Strauss Die Frau ohne Schatten and Wagner’s Parsifal. She has also appeared in major highlights in her career include the acclaimed Paris production of The Merry Widow and the Lyubimov-staging of Luna for Turin, which was awarded the Abbati Prize for best production of an opera in Italy. She has claimed the rôle of Jenny in Kurt Weill’s Mahagonny as her own, following huge successes in Buenos Aires. Her performances of Poulen’s Le Voix Humaine and Menotti’s The Telephone have also been filmed for Decca CD-Videos co-production with the BBC. Carole Farley has appeared with most of the leading orchestras in the USA and with leading orchestras in Europe, in collaboration with conductors of the greatest distinction such as Zubin Mehta, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Antal Dorati, Andrzej Kostelanetz and Semyon Bychkov. She has recorded several recordings for major record companies, including Masscheron’s The Vampire and also released a number of French and Russian songs. She has also recorded songs by Delius and Grieg, and has been awarded the Grand Prix du Disque and Diapason d’Or. In 1994 Carole Farley returned to the Metropolitan Opera to sing the title rôle in Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk by Shostakovich and has continued in an exceptionally wide repertoire that has ranged from Wagner to Lehár, Berg, Richard Strauss and Janáček.

Ned Rorem

The American composer Ned Rorem was born in Richmond, Indiana, in 1923. As a child he moved with his family to Chicago with his piano teacher, who wrote to Debsky and Ravel, an experience which he said ‘changed my life forever’. At seventeen he entered the Music School of Northwestern University, two years later receiving a scholarship to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. He went on to study composition with Bernard Wanger on at Juillard. Afterwards he worked as Virgil Thomson’s assistant and then his piano teacher had moved to France and lived there until 1958. Currently living in New York and Nantucket, Rorem’s seventy-fifth birthday in 1998 was celebrated with the première of a new song cycle Evidence of Things Not Seen, which was hailed by Chamber Music magazine as a ‘masterpiece’. Ned Rorem has received numerous honours and prizes; in 2000 he was elected President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Ned Rorem (né en 1923)

Mélodies choisies

Avec des centaines de mélodies à son actif, Rorem peut rivaliser avec Charles Ives à la fois pour la quantité et pour la qualité. Imbues d’une irrévérence tout ivernienne, ses mélodies sont de la pure poésie. Rorem est un homme létré de grande culture, et chaque mélodie présente une réponse particulière sur un poème. De plus, le choix des textes et de poèmes révèle la propre pensée du compositeur.

“Comment choisir un poème pour une mise en musique? Autrement, c’est le fait de l’inspiration, ce de la manière de regarder un poème, de voir avec le talent. Aujourd’hui je les choisis selon des exigences présentées. Ma façon d’aborder un poème donné - rapide ou lent, ouvert ou ferme - dépend de la personne du chanteur et de l’esprit, de l’emphase de la poésie à un cycle, qui est à la fois, vers la poésie, qui, comme nous le disons, nous autres Quakers, parle à ma condition, et, quelque soit la valeur de mes mélodies, je n’ai jamais choisi un mauvais poème.”

Dès 1959, Ned Rorem publie des essais et des articles exposant sa philosophie. Il décrit la relation complexe et délicate entre la musique et le texte, et expose la manière dont il utilise la prosodie, l’atmosphère et le rythme, tout comme les images poétiques. Pour le compositeur, le produit fini, la mélodie, prend “une ampleur plus grande que la musique seule ou le texte seul.”

Dans ses nombreux journaux, qui, publiés régulièrement, ne peuvent que ravir tout lecteur, Rorem révèle une obsession avec les détails. Pour ce qui est de sa propre musique, il mentionne souvent la date et l’heure de chaque composition. Il décrit la personnalité que ses journaux, sa musique laisse libre cours à l’imagination de l’auditeur. Carole Farley a pu profiter des explications du compositeur, travaillant étroitement avec lui pour l’enregistrement de ces mélodies. Élève de Pierre Bernac et grande connaissance de la musique française, Farley est devenue un partenaire musical idéal pour Rorem. Ses divers enregistrements de mélodies de Debussy, Satie, Fauré, Poulsen et Milhaud, ont davantage préparé pour le style de Ned Rorem, tout comme les mises en musique récentes de mélodies de Kurt Weill et Prokofiev.

Lorsque Time Magazine écrivait que Rorem est “certainement le meilleur compositeur actuel de mélodies savantes”, il n’avait pas encore composé certains de ses milliers de mises en musique et des plus puissantes. Outre trois symphonies, six opéras, plusieurs concertos, de nombreuses œuvres pour voix et orchestre, des œuvres chorales, de la musique de chambre, plus de cent et plus de cent vingt mises en musique de vers, la musique de Rorem semble être un fil conducteur particulier, constamment figurant entre des œuvres plus amples. Bon nombre de ses mélodies furent inspirées par l’art et la musique dans les quatuors de Schnittke, de Gubaidulina et de Shostakovich dans lesquels il accompagne une partition de piano qui possède une puissante vitalité à part entière. Rorem affecte une coloration de jazz, des accords de septième, de neuvième et d’octavième (Art Adams early in the morning, Night Crow and Early in the morning) - c’est l’influence de Virgil Thomson. Le résultat est une musique vraiment originale et tout americaine, dont l’impact s’accroît avec les ans pour devenir en vérité interprétée.

Dans un récent document dédié à Rorem, Carole Farley déclare que “les chanteurs préfèrent sa musique évocatrice, car ses mélodies s’adaptent confortablement à la voix. Les auditeurs se sentent engagés dans une expérience de transformation, une émotion rehaussee par la musique. Des compositeurs de diverses écoles respectent et admirent son œuvre, car il a maintenu en vie une tradition autrement devenue le propre du théâtre musical ou des variétés. Le cœur de Rorem réside en sa surprenante facilité avec le langage, sa profonde compréhension des textes, et sa capacité de composer des lignes vocales qui sont fluides et éminemment chantables.”

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The American composer Ned Rorem was born in Richmond, Indiana, in 1923. As a child he moved to Chicago with his family; by the age of seven, his piano teacher had inspired him to Des Moines and Ravel, an experience which he said ‘changed my life forever’. At seventeen he entered the Music School of Northwestern University, two years later receiving a scholarship to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. He went on to study composition with Bernard Wagner at Juilliard. Afterwards he worked as Virgil Thomson’s assistant in return for a small fee and orchestration lessons. In 1949 he moved to France and lived there until 1958. Currently living in New York and Nantucket, Rorem’s seventy-fifth birthday in 1998 was celebrated with the première of a new song cycle Evidence of Things Not Seen, which was hailed by Chamber Music magazine as ‘a masterpiece’. Ned Rorem has received numerous honours and prizes; in 2000 he was elected President of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Ned Rorem (né en 1923)

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Ned Rorem (b. 1923)

Canciones seleccionadas

Después de haber escrito cientos de canciones, Rorem rivaliza en este medio con Charles Ives en cuanto a cantidad y originalidad. Aquí concluye la comparación. Aunque Ives fue mucho más conservador en sus canciones que en su música de cámara o sus obras orquestales, estas joyas poseen la única e inconfundible irreverencia ivesiana. Las canciones de Rorem habitan en el mundo de la poesía. Personalidad exquisitamente literaria y cultivada, Rorem infunde a cada una de sus canciones una inmersión especial en cada poema. Su elección de los poetas y de los poemas específicos resulta muy reveladora sobre su propia manera de pensar.

En un ensayo de 1980, Rorem escribía lo siguiente: “¿Cómo se eligen los poemas para ponerles música? Inicialmente por eso que se llama inspiración, el deseo irrefrenable de expresión personal que no tiene nada que ver con el talento. Hoy los elijo según unos requisitos preestablecidos. Mi acercamiento —rápido o lento, suave o fuerte— a un poema dado varía en función de para quién le estoy poniendo música, y si va a formar parte de una secuencia o va a estar aislado. Si, me siento atrapado por la poesía que, como dicen los cuqueros, le habla a mi condición, y al margen del valor de mis canciones, nunca he puesto música a un mal poema”.

Ya en una fecha tan temprana como 1959 Ned Rorem estaba publicando ensayos que describían su filosofía y sus ideas en artículos titulados "Song and Singer" (Canción y cantante) y "Writing Songs" (Escribir canciones). Describía la intrincada y delicada relación existente entre música y texto, y la influencia de la prosodia, la atmósfera y el ritmo, así como las imágenes del poema. Para Rorem, en el productio final, la canción, se convierte en "una magnitud mayor que tanto el texto como la música por separado”.

En sus numerosos libros de diarios, que son deliciosos de leer y que sigue publicando año tras año, Rorem demuestra una extraña obsesión por los detalles: el aroma de una mañana parisina de hace décadas, el persistente perfume de algodón, el color de los ojos de un amigo, una mirada de un extraño vista fugazmente una sola vez. Al hablar de su propia música, Rorem insiste en que en cada composición, el tiempo que hacía y su estado de ánimo en el momento de escribir la obra. Está claro que su música es una declaración al menos tan personal como sus muy reveladores diarios. Con su música es mucho lo que queda en manos de la imaginación del oyente. El intérprete tiene la ventaja de las extensas explicaciones de Rorem y su capacidad para describir sus intenciones musicales con una prosa clara. Carole Farley tuvo también la ventaja de trabajar estrechamente con el compositor durante los ensayos y la grabación de estas canciones. Al haber estudiado con Pierre Bernac, el íntimo amigo e intérprete de Poulenc, y haber asimilado el arte de la canción francesa, Farley se convirtió en una de las colaboradoras musicales ideales de Rorem. Sus diversas grabaciones de canciones de Debussy, Satie, Fauré, Poulenc y Milhaud la prepararon aún más para el lenguaje de Ned Rorem, al igual que su más reciente serie de canciones de Kurt Weill y Prokofiev.

Cuando la revista Time escribió que Rorem es ‘...indudablemente el mejor compositor vivo de canciones de concierto’, habría de estar aún algunas de sus mejores y más poderosas obras. Aparte de tres sinfonías, seis óperas, varios conciertos, numerosas obras para voz y orquesta, música de cámara y coral, varios ballets y música incidental para obras de teatro, sus canciones parecen un hilo especial, que surge constantemente entre las composiciones de mayores dimensiones. Muchas de las canciones de Rorem estuvieron inspiradas por el arte de grandes cantantes como Ellen Faull, Donald Gramm, Phyllis Curtin y David Lloyd. Su estilo tan personal revela un interés por la polifonía, el ingenio y la transparencia de Poulenc y Ravel, incluso Satie, y un esfuerzo concienzudo por construir un acompañamiento de piano que posea una poderosa vida propia, y que difiere de manera extraordinaria de canción a canción. Aféltase a esta paleta la tendencia de Rorem a valerse frecuentemente...

Version française: Jeremy Drake

Ned Rorem (b. 1923)
Canciones seleccionadas

Después de haber escrito cientos de canciones, Rorem se ha especializado en este medio con Charles Ives en cuanto a suavidad y originalidad. Aquí concluye la comparación. Aunque Ives fue mucho más conservador en sus canciones que en su música de cámara o sus obras orquestales, estas joyas poseen la única e inconfundible inervenencia ivesiana. Las canciones de Rorem habitan en el mundo de la poesía. Personalidad exquisitamente literaria y cultivada, Rorem infunde a cada una de sus canciones una inmersión especial en cada poema. Su elección de los poemas y de los poemas específicos resulta muy reveladora sobre su propia manera de pensar.

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de coloridos jazísticos, el empleo de los aconsejadores de la época, novena y undécima (As Adam early in the morning, Night Crew and Early in the morning), la influencia de su juventud asociada con Virgil Thomson, y lo que tenemos es una música verdaderamente original y americana, una producción que parece estar ganando en impacto con el paso del tiempo, convirtiéndose realmente en intemporal.

En su ensayo sobre las canciones de Rorem, Carole Farley escribe que los cantantes favorecen su música evocadora porque sus canciones se sienten cómodamente en la voz. Los oyentes se sienten involucrados porque los textos son claros y comunicativos, su emoción se ve reforzada por la música. Los compositores de diversas escuelas respetan y admiran su producción porque ha mantenido viva una tradición relegada por lo demás fundamentalmente al teatro musical o las canciones populares. La fuerza de Rorem radica en su asombrosa facilidad con el idioma, su profunda comprensión de los textos y su capacidad para compor línneas vocales fluidas y eminentemente cantables.


Desde el comienzo de esta producción, Ned Rorem tuvo muchas ganas de incluir, por vez primera, la colección completa de las canciones de Roethke. Fue él quien sugirió muchas de las otras canciones de esta grabación para que se ajustaran a las características dramáticas y expresivas de Carole Farley. El orden de las canciones fue elegido por ambos artistas. Esta colección abarca más de cuatro décadas, desde algunas de las primeras canciones de 1947 hasta 1990.

Herbert Kraft Traducción: Luis Gago

[1] The Waking
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I feel fate in what I cannot fear.
I learn by going where I have to go.
We think by feeling. What is there to know?
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
Of those so close beside me, which are yon?
God bless the ground! I shall walk softly there,
And learn by going where I have to go.
Light takes the tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly worn limbs climb up a winding stair;
I wake to sleep and take my waking slow.
Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.
This shacking keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And it is near,
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go.

Theodore Roethke

[2] Root Cellar
Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch,
Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chunks in the dark,
Shoots dangled and drooped,
Lolling obscenely from mildewed crates,
Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes.
And what a congress of stinks!
Roots ripe as old bait,
Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich,
Leaf-mold, manure, lime, piled against slippery planks.
Nothing would give up life:
Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.

Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.
We roamed until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.
The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle.
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.
You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

Theodore Roethke

[4] I strolled across an open field
I strolled across an open field;
The sun was out;
Heat was happy.
This way! This way!
The wren's throat shimmered,
Either to other,
The grass was humming.
The stones sang,
The little ones did,
And flowers jumped
Like small hares.
A ragged fringe
Of daisies waved;
I wasn't alone
In a grove of apples
Far in a wood
A nestling sighed;
The dew loosened
Its morning smells.
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Light takes the tree; but who can tell us how?
The lowly wren climbs up a windying stair;
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Great Nature has another thing to do
To you and me; so take the lively air,
And, lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaming keeps me steady. I should know.
What falls away is always. And is near,
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.
I learn by going where I have to go.

Theodore Roethke

2 Root Cellar
Nothing would sleep in that cellar, dank as a ditch,
Bulbs broke out of boxes hunting for chinks in the dark;
Shoots dangled and drooped,
Lolling obscenely from mildewed crates,
Hung down long yellow evil necks, like tropical snakes.
And what a congress of stinks!
Roots ripe as old bait,
Pulpy stems, rank, silo-rich,
Leaf-mold, manure, lime, piled against slippery planks.
Nothing would give up life:
Even the dirt kept breathing a small breath.

Theodore Roethke

3 My Papa’s Waltz
The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother’s countenance
Could not unbrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle.
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

Theodore Roethke

4 I strolled across an open field
I strolled across an open field;
The sun was out;
Heat was happy.
This way! This way!
The wren’s throat shimmered,
Either to other,
The watches are singing.
The stones sang,
The little ones did,
And flowers jumped
Little green gage
A ragged fringe
Of daisies waved;
I wasn’t alone
In a grove of pines
Far in a wood
A nestling sighed;
The dew loosened
Its morning smells.
I came where the river
Ran over stones:
My ears knew
An early joy.
And all the waters
Of all the streams
Sang in my veins
That summer day.

Theodore Roethke

Memory

In the slow work of dream,
We breathe in unison,
The outside dies within,
And she knows all I am.

She turns, as if to go,
Half bird, half animal.
The wind dies on the hill.
Love's all. Love's all I know.

A doe drinks by a stream,
A doe and its fawn.
When I follow after them,
The grass changes to stone.

Theodore Roethke

Orchids

They lean over the path,
Adder-mouthed, Swaying close to the face,
Coming out, soft and deceptive,
Limp and Damp, delicate as a young bird's tongue;
Their fluttery fledging lips
Move slowly,
Drawing in the warm air.

And at night,
The faint moon falling through white-washed glass,
The heat going down
So their musky smell comes even stronger,

Drifting down from their mossy cradles:
So many devouring infants!
Soft luminescent fingers,
Lips neither dead or alive,
Loose ghostly mouths breathing.

Theodore Roethke

Night Crow

When I saw that clumsy crow
Flap from a wasted tree,
A shape in the mind rose up:
Over the gulfs of dream
Flew a tremendous bird
Further and further away
Into a moonless black
Deep in the brain, far back.

Theodore Roethke

Snake

I saw a young snake glide
Out of the mottled shade
And hang, limp on a stone:
A thin mouth, and a tongue stayed,
In the still air.

It turned; it drew away;
Its shadow bent in half;
It quickened and was gone.

I felt my slow blood warm.
I longed to be that thing,
The pure, sensuous form.
And I may be, some time.

Theodore Roethke

Little Elegy

Without you
No rose can grow;
No leaf be green
If never seen.
Your sweetest face;
No bird have grace
Or power to sing;
Or anything
Be kind, or fair,
And you nowhere.

Elinor Wylie

The Nightingale

The little pretty nightingale
Among the leaves so green
Would I were with her all the night!
But ye know not whom I mean,
But ye know not whom I mean!

The nightingale sat on a brier
Among the thorns so keen
And comforted my heart's desire
But ye know not whom I mean.
Ye know not whom I mean.

It did me good on her to look;
She was all clothed in green.
Away from me her heart she took
But ye know not whom I mean.

"Lady," I cried with rueful moan,
Mind ye how true I have been.
For I loved but you alone
Yet ye know not whom I mean
Yet ye know whom I mean.

About 1500 A.D.

Nantucket

Flowers through the window
Lavender and yellow
Changed by white curtains —
Smell of cleanliness —

Sunshine of late afternoon —
On the glass tray
A glass pitcher, the tumbler
Turned down, by which
A key is lying — And the immaculate white bed.

William Carlos Williams
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Ran over stones:
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On the glass tray
a glass pitcher, the tumbler
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a key is lying—And the
immaculate white bed.

William Carlos Williams
Spend my whole day in the quest, - who cares? But 'tis twilight, you see, - with such suites to explore, Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune.

Robert Browning

What if some little pain... What if some little pain the passage have, That makes false flesh to fear the bitter wave? Is not short pain well home, that brings long ease, And lays the soul to sleep in quiet grave? Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas, Ease after war, death after life doth greatly please.

Edmund Spenser

Visits to St. Elizabeth's This is the house of Bedlam. This is the man that lies in the house of Bedlam. This is the time of the tragic man that lies in the house of Bedlam. This is a wrist-watch telling the time of the talkative man that lies in the house of Bedlam.

Padraic Pearse

Love in a Life Room after room, I hunt the house through We inhabit together. Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her - Next time, herself! - not the trouble behind her Left in the curtain, the coach's perfume! As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew; You looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears, And door succeeds door; I try fresh fortune - Range the wide house from the wing to the centre. Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.

These are the years and the walls of the ward, the winds and clouds of the sea of board sailed by the sailor wearing the watch that tells the time of the cranky man that lies in the house of Bedlam. This is a Jew in a newspaper hat that dances weeping down the ward over the creaking sea of board beyond the sailor watching his watch that tells the time of the cruel man that lies in the house of Bedlam. This is a world of books gone flat. This is a Jew in a newspaper hat that dances weeping down the ward over the creaking sea of board of the batty sailor that winds his watch that tells the time of the busy man that lies in the house of Bedlam. This is a boy that pats the floor to see if the world is there, is flat, for he is a widower, Jew in the newspaper hat that dances weeping down the ward waltzing the length of a weaving board by the silent sailor that hears his watch that ticks the time of the tedious man that lies in the house of Bedlam. These are the years and the walls and the door that shut on a boy that pats the floor to feel if the world is there and flat. This is a Jew in a newspaper hat that dances joyfully down the ward into the parting seas of board past the staring sailor that shakes his watch that tells the time of the poet, the man that lies in the house of Bedlam. This is the soldier home from the war. These are the years and the walls and the door that shut on a boy that pats the floor to see if the world is round or flat. This is a Jew in a newspaper hat that dances carefully down the ward, walking the plank of a coffin board with the crazy sailor that shows his watch that tells the time of the wretched man that lies in the house of Bedlam.

Elizabeth Bishop

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening Whose woods these are I think I know. His house is in the village though; He will not see me stopping here To watch his woods fill up with snow. My little horse must think it queer To stop without a farm-house near Between the woods and frozen lake The darkest evening of the year.

He gives the harness bells a shake To ask if there is some mistake. The only other sound's the sweep Of easy wind and downy flake. The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, And miles to go before I sleep, And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost
Spend my whole day in the quest, - who cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see, - with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune.

Robert Browning

What if some little pain...
What if some little pain the passage have,
That makes him flinch to fear the biter wave?
Is not short pain well home, that brings long ease,
And lays the soul to sleep in quiet grave?
Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life doth greatly please.

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I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her -
Next time, herself - not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the coach's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-veined blossom cream:
You looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try fresh fortune -
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.

These are the years and the walls of the ward,
The winds and clouds of the sea of board
sailed by the sailor
wearing the watch
that tells the time
of the cranky man
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a Jew in a newspaper hat
that dances weeping down the ward
over the creeping sea of board
beyond the sailor
winding his watch
that tells the time
of the cruel man
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a world of books gone flat.
This is a Jew in a newspaper hat
that dances weeping down the ward
over the creeping sea of board
of the batty sailor
that winds his watch
that tells the time
of the busy man
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is a boy that pats the floor
to see if the world is there, is flat,
for the widowed Jew in the newspaper hat
that dances weeping down the ward
waltzing the length of a weaving board
by the silent sailor
that hears his watch
that ticks the time
of the tedious man
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

These are the years and the walls and the door
that shut on a boy that pats the floor
to feel if the world is there and flat.
This is a Jew in a newspaper hat
that dances joyfully down the ward
into the parting seas of board
past the starring sailor
that shakes his watch
that tells the time
of the poet, the man
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

This is the soldier home from the war.
These are the years and the walls and the door
that shut on a boy that pats the floor
to see if the world is round or flat.
This is a Jew in a newspaper hat
that dances carefully down the ward,
walking the plank of a coffin board
with the crazy sailor
that shows his watch
that tells the time
of the wretched man
that lies in the house of Bedlam.

G. Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening
Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farm-house near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives the harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost
Spring
Nothing is so beautiful as spring -
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look like low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so ring and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy pear-tree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden. - Have get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy child, thy choice and worthy
The winning.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Now sleeps the crimson petal
Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor whisks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The firefly wakens; wakens thou with me.
Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.
Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.
Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.
Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake.
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Far-Far-Away
What sight so lured him thro' the fields he knew
As where earth's green stole into heaven's own hue,
Far-far-away?

What sound was dearest in his native dell?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells
Far-far-away.

What vague world whisper, mystic pain or joy,
Thro' those three words would haunt him when a boy,
Far-far-away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath
From some far dawn beyond the doors of death
Far-far-away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of Birth,
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far-far-away?

What charm in words, a charm no words could give?
O dying words, can Music make you live
Far-far-away?

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Early in the morning
Early in the morning
Early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day,
As they lowered the bright awning
At the outdoor café
I was breakfasting on croissants
And café-au-lait
Under greenerly like scenery,
Rue François Premier.

They were hosing the hot pavement
With a dash of flashing spray
And a smell of summer showers
When the dust is drenched away.
Under greenerly like scenery,
Rue François Premier.

I was twenty and a lover
And in Paradise to stay,
Very early in the morning
Of a lovely summer day.

Robert Hillyer

Alleluia
Alleluia, etc.

Such beauty as hurts to behold
Such beauty as hurts to behold
Such beauty as hurts to behold
And so gentle as savels the wound; I am shivering though it is not cold and dark as in a swoon.

My ears are ringing, a vital fire
Has stunned my hands and feet,
I am empty of desire
And at peace as on a height.

This lust that blooms like red the rose
Is none of mine. But as a song
Is given to its author
Knows not the next note yet sings along.

You ask what am I muttering
Stupified, it is a prayer
Of thanks that there is such a thing
As you in the world there.

Paul Goodman

Sally's Smile
Sara has smiled upon me such a smile
That caution and impatience both my wardens
I strove against the stream and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main;
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

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As where earth’s green stole into heaven’s own hue,
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Alfred Lord Tennyson

Why should I be warmer
In the sunlit room
Though a lone room
And the warm sun

Gertrude Stein

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

Alfred Lord Tennyson

How should I answer
Who would I live
I am Rose
I am Rose
You should live
I am Rose

Gertrude Stein

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,
With love to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answered thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
Love to hollow cheek or faded eye:
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal’d;

Gerard Manley Hopkins

38 See how they love me
See how they love me,
Green leaf, gold grass,
Sweating my blue wrists
Tick and are timeless.

See how it woos me,
Old sea, blue sea,
Curving a half moon
Round to surround me.

See how it wants me,
High sky, blue sky,
Letting the light be
Kindled to warm me.

Yet ye rebuke me,
O love, love I
Only pursuit. See
How they love me.

Howard Moss
are flung into the winds that mile on mile
pour northward from the Miami gardens
where my dead mother lies and red the rose
and the hibiscus bloom, but there is no
fancy to me more fair and dear in those
distances than the presence of Sally-O.

Paul Goodman

[ Youth, Day, Old Age, and Night
Youth, large, lusty, loving, youth, full of grace,
force, fascination,
Do you know that Old Age may come after you
with equal grace, force, fascination?

Day full-blow-nd and splendid, day of the immense sun,
action, ambition, laughter.
The Night follows close with millions of suns,
and sleep and restoring darkness.

Walt Whitman

[ O you whom I often and silently come
O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I
may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the
same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your
sake is playing within me.

Walt Whitman

[ Full of life now
Full of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.
When you read these I that was visible

am become invisible.
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems,
seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you
and become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you.
(But not too certain but I am now with you.)

Walt Whitman

[ As Adam early in the morning
As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh’d with sleep;
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I
pass;
Be not afraid of my body.

Walt Whitman

[ Are you the new person?
Are you the new person drawn toward me?
To begin with late warning,
I am surely far different from what you suppose:
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?
Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy’d
satisfaction?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
Do you see no further than this facade,
This smooth and tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground
forward to a real heroic man?
Have you no thought 0 dreamer that it may be all
may, illusion?

Walt Whitman

• With special thanks to the Old Church, Nantucket •

8.559004
ROREM (b. 1923)
Selected Songs

1. The Waking * (Theodore Roethke) 2:44
2. Root Cellar * (Theodore Roethke) 2:00
4. I strolled across an open field (Theodore Roethke) 1:12
5. Memory * (Theodore Roethke) 1:06
6. Orchids (Theodore Roethke) 1:56
7. The Serpent (Theodore Roethke) 1:56
8. Night Crow * (Theodore Roethke) 1:33
9. Snake * (Theodore Roethke) 0:58
10. Little Elegy (Elinor Wylie) 1:24
11. The Nightingale (Anon. c. 1500) 1:11
12. Nantucket (William Carlos Williams) 1:12
13. Lullaby of the Woman of the Mountain 2:01
(Padraic Pearse)
14. Love in a life (Robert Browning) 3:29
15. What if some little pain... (Edmund Spenser) 1:47
16. Visits to St. Elizabeth's (Elizabeth Bishop) 3:31
17. Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening 1:43
(Robert Frost)
18. Spring (Gerard Manley Hopkins) 1:50
19. See how they love me * (Howard Moss) 1:38
20. Now sleeps the crimson petal (Alfred Lord Tennyson) 2:51
21. I am Rose * (Gertrude Stein) 0:21
22. Ask me no more (Alfred Lord Tennyson) 2:56
23. Far-Far-Away (Alfred Lord Tennyson) 1:46
24. Early in the morning * (Robert Hillier) 1:35
25. Alleluia 2:22
26. Such beauty as hurts to behold (Paul Goodman) 2:11
27. Sally's Smile * (Paul Goodman) 0:48
28. Youth, Day, Old Age, and Night * (Walt Whitman) 2:04
29. O you whom I often and silently come * 0:25
(Walt Whitman)
30. Full of life now (Walt Whitman) 1:46
31. As Adam early in the morning * (Walt Whitman) 1:24
32. Are you the new person? (Walt Whitman) 2:31

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Cover Art: The Nightingale by H.C. Andersen - print by Esteban Fekete
(The Art Archive / Dagli Orti) • American flag, folk artist, 1880s.

AMERICAN CLASSICS

Universally recognized as the greatest American composer of art songs, Ned Roerm's strengths lie in his uncanny facility with language, his deep understanding of the texts, and his ability to compose fluid, eminently singable vocal lines. Singers favour his evocative music because his songs feel comfortable in the voice. Listeners feel involved because the texts are clear and communicative, their emotions heightened by the music. Composers of diverse schools respect and admire his output because he has kept alive a tradition otherwise relegated mostly to music theatre or popular songs. From among his hundreds of songs, we have put together these selections which include some of Ned Roerm's own favourites.

Carole Farley


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