

From Depths of Grass

*Seven texts of Dylan Thomas
for medium/high voice and piano*

RUSSELL NADEL

(2004)

Duration: c. 12'00"

Program Notes:

I have always been attracted to the poetry of Dylan Thomas, so when I decided to write this, my first song cycle, I naturally turned to him as a potential source of texts. I was delighted to find these seven wonderful, refreshingly brief poems hidden away in an appendix under "Early Poems (*written before the poet's sixteenth birthday*)" in the appendix of a book of Thomas' poetry. Indeed, six of these seven texts were written while Thomas was still fourteen years old (he wrote "To a Spring-Spirit" shortly after his fifteenth birthday). I still think it's remarkable that he had such a mastery of the English language at such a young age, and I was glad that the texts seemed so well suited for musical setting.

Performance Notes:

Accidentals apply for the entire measure.

Arpeggiations should take place on the beat; grace notes should take place before the beat.

Range:



– *Russell Nadel*
November 2004

Texts:

I. To the Spring-Spirit

And when it was spring I said,
 'Linger not deeper in the coloured trees,
But beautifully flake your head
 With foam flung by the flowering seas.'

And you arose from depths of grass
 That whispered with the wind and wept,
Saying you would let the chill seas pass,
 Seeking no further than your petals that still slept.

And I forgot the driftless foam, and sand,
 Idling with the radiance of the hours
Among the quiet trees. And hand in hand
 We strangely sang among the feathery flowers.

II. Of Any Flower

Hourly I sigh,
For all things are leaf-like
And cloud-like.

Flowerly I die,
For all things are grief-like
And shroud-like.

III. The Elm

They are all goddesses;
Nodding like flowers,
They are further and more delicate
Than the years that dwindle;
They are deeper in darkness
Than the hours.

Celestial,
Slenderly lethal things,
Beautifully little like clouds:
Leaf driftwood that has blown.

IV. The Oak

Fierce colours fled about the branches,
Enveloping the ragged leaves unseen and strewn.

Hazardous reflections dipped in evening
Hover, making the forest fluctuantly vague.

Something austere hides, something uncertain
Beneath the bark calls and makes quiet music.

V. The Pine

Virgate and sprung of the dusk,
The pine is the tree of the breeze,
And the winds that stream through the ribboned light
And the motley winds from the seas.

VI. Clown in the Moon

My tears are like the quiet drift
Of petals from some magic rose;
And all my grief flows from the rift
Of unremembered skies and snows.

I think, that if I touched the earth,
It would crumble;
It is so sad and beautiful,
So tremulously like a dream.

VII. To a Slender Wind

Chrysolith thy step,
And on a jewelled pool
Faint arrowy moonstone on a tear-culled cadence,
Like fragmentary rain
Shaken silkily from star-scaled boughs.

Each note of thy dusky song
Is a petal that has delicate breath
And is azure;
And is more beautiful than the drift of leaves.

From Depths of Grass

I. To the Spring-Spirit

Dylan Thomas*

RUSSELL NADEL

Lento con rubato *mf* *3* **Allegro leggiero** ($\text{♩} = 100$)

And when it was spring I said,

Lento con rubato **Allegro leggiero** ($\text{♩} = 100$)

p

con Ped.

6 *più p*

11 *mf* *3* *3* *3* *f*

'Lin - ger not dee - per in the co - loured trees, But

p *mf* *3*

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17

mf

beau - ti - fully flake your head With foam flung by the flower - ing seas.' _____

>mp *f* *p* *mp*

24

Drammatico

8va⁻ *dp^v* **Drammatico**

f *mf* *cresc.*

29

mf *f* *mp sub.*

And you a - rose from depths of grass That whis - pered with the wind and

f *p sub.* *ff*

35

più f

cresc.

wept, — Say ing you would let — the chill seas pass, See-king no

p *più f* *mf cresc.* *f*

41

f *rit.*

fur - ther — than your pe - tals that still slept.

mp *f* *mf* *f* *p sub.* *cresc.* *rit.*

Meno mosso, con rubato (♩ = 76)

48

p

And I for - got the drift - less foam, — and sand, —

Meno mosso, con rubato (♩ = 76)

f *p* *pp*

II. Of Any Flower

Lento (♩ = 60)

Musical score for the first system of "Of Any Flower". It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The tempo is Lento (♩ = 60). The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings: *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The instruction *sempre legatissimo* is written above the piano part. The bass clef part includes a *mf* marking and a *Ped.* (pedal) marking. The system concludes with a *sim.* (ritardando) marking.

Musical score for the second system of "Of Any Flower". It includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo remains Lento. The key signature has three flats. The time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Hour - ly I". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano), *mf** (mezzo-forte), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The instruction *sempre legatissimo* is written above the piano part, and *mp dolce* is written above the vocal line.

Musical score for the third system of "Of Any Flower". It includes a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo remains Lento. The key signature has three flats. The time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "sigh, — For all things are leaf - like and cloud - like." The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings: *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The instruction *mf* is written above the piano part.

* Bring out the middle voice here.

16 *mp* *f* *mp*
Flower-ly I die For all things

21 *dolce, semplice* *mp* *pp*
are grief-like And shroud-like.

26 *rit.* *mp* *p* *dim. al fine*
p *8vb*

III. The Elm

Moderato (♩ = 84)

mp

con Ped.

f

4

mf

They are all

p

7

god - des - ses; Nod - ding like flo - wers,

mf

10

Musical score for measures 10-13. The vocal line is in 2/4 time. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with sixteenth-note patterns and a left hand with a sustained bass line. Dynamics include *pp* and *mf*.

They are furt - ther and more

14

Musical score for measures 14-18. The vocal line continues in 2/4 time. The piano accompaniment features more complex sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamics include *mf*.

de - li - cate Than the years that dwin - dle;

19

Musical score for measures 19-22. The vocal line changes to 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment features sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamics include *mf dim. molto* and *pp*. A tempo change instruction is present: (feel in ♩. time) - - - - -

They are dee - - per

22

in dark - ness Than the

25

hours.

rit.

rit.

pp

mf

f

28

Meno mosso (♩ = 66)

p

Ce - le - stial, Slen-der-ly

Meno mosso (♩ = 66)

mp

p

p

8va

slow roll

slow roll

IV. The Oak

Largo molto (♩ = 44)

sfp *fp* *sf*

Fierce co-lours_ fled_ a-bout the bran-ches,—

ppp *sim.*

*Ped. sempre al **

4

mf

Poco più mosso (♩ = 52)

En - ve-lo-ping the rag-ged leaves un-seen and strewn.

Poco più mosso (♩ = 52)

mp < mf *mp*

con Ped. ad lib.

7

Tempo I

fmp

Tempo I

Ha zar-dous___ re-flec-tions_ dipped in eve-ning_

f *p* *pp* *sim.*

Ped. sempre

11

p

Molto più mosso (♩ = 72)

Ho-ver, ma-king the fo-rest fluc-tu-ant-ly vague.

Molto più mosso (♩ = 72)

8va
8vb
l.v. all to *
espr.
p
* con Ped. ad lib.

15

rit.

Tempo I

p

Some-thing au-ster e hides,

f
mf sub.
p
mf
rit.
Tempo I
8va
Ped. sempre

20

mp

sfz

some-thing un-cer-tain be-neath the bark calls

mp
sfz
pp
8va
8vb

V. The Pine

Moderato (♩ = 60, ♩ = 90)

mf non marc.

Vir - gate and

mf

pp

p

p sempre

sprung of the dusk, The pine is the

mf

pp (come un eco)

p

tree of the breeze, And the winds that stream through the

f

poco

mf

13 *mp* *f*

rib - boned light And the mot - ley

cresc. *f*

16 *poco rit.* *A tempo* *rit.*

winds from the seas.

poco rit. *A tempo* *p* *pp* *8va* *come lontano*

pp *ppp*

VI. Clown in the Moon

Lento (♩ = 60)

p *mf* *mf*

My tears are like the quiet drift Of

Lento (♩ = 60)

mf *p* *pp* *mf* *mf*

con Ped.

5 *mf* *f*

pe-tals from some ma-gic rose;— And all my grief flows— from the rift

mf *p* *mf sub.* *mf* *f* *p*

10 *mf dim.* *p*

Of un-re-mem-bered skies and snows._____

mp *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf*

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-4) is in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and features a 3/4 time signature that changes to 4/4 and back to 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Lento' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The voice part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, then moves to piano (*p*), pianissimo (*pp*), and back to mezzo-forte (*mf*). The second system (measures 5-9) continues the vocal line with dynamics ranging from mezzo-forte (*mf*) to forte (*f*). The piano accompaniment includes a piano (*p*) section and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) section with a 'sub.' (sustained) marking. The third system (measures 10-14) features a vocal line starting with mezzo-forte (*mf*) and a dynamic marking of 'dim.' (diminuendo), followed by piano (*p*). The piano accompaniment includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) section and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) section. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

14

mf

I think, that if I

19

f

p

touched the earth, It would crum - ble; It is so sad and

25

rit.

pp

beau - ti - ful So trem - u - lous - ly like a dream.

VII. To a Slender Wind

Moderato, flowing ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 56$)

mp
sempre legatissimo

p
8^{vb}
con Ped.

Detailed description: This block shows the piano introduction. It consists of two staves. The upper staff is in bass clef with a 2/2 time signature. It begins with a whole note chord of G2, B1, and D2, followed by a series of chords and moving lines in 3/2 and 2/2 time. The lower staff is also in bass clef and contains a series of whole notes, some with a 'p' dynamic marking. A dashed line below the lower staff is labeled '8^{vb} con Ped.', indicating an 8-octave pedal point.

5 *mf giusto*

Chry-so - lith thy step, And on a jew-elled pool Faint ar-row-y

pp ma distinto

(8)

Detailed description: This block covers measures 5 through 8. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains the vocal line. The lyrics are: 'Chry-so - lith thy step, And on a jew-elled pool Faint ar-row-y'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains the piano accompaniment. The dynamics are marked 'pp ma distinto'. A dashed line at the bottom is labeled '(8)', indicating the end of the first system.

9
moon stone_ on a tear-culled ca-dence, Like_ frag - men-ta-ry rain, Sha-ken

mp pp mf

(8)

Detailed description: This block covers measures 9 through 12. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains the vocal line. The lyrics are: 'moon stone_ on a tear-culled ca-dence, Like_ frag - men-ta-ry rain, Sha-ken'. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains the piano accompaniment. The dynamics are marked 'mp', 'pp', and 'mf'. A dashed line at the bottom is labeled '(8)', indicating the end of the second system.

14 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

sil - ki - ly from star-scaled boughs.

ppp

p

18

Each note of thy dusk - y song is a

mp

mp *distinto*

8va

23 *f* *mf* *mp* *poco*

pe - tal that has de - li - cate breath And is a - zure;

f *mp* *poco*

mf *poco* *poco*

28 **Meno mosso** *mp* **rit.**

And is more beau - ti - ful than the drift of leaves.

11'44"