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# Ned Rorem

Poems of **L**ove and the **R**ain

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**F**our **M**adrigals

18 - 21 6:28

**F**rom an **U**nknown **P**ast

22 - 28 9:46

Total Timing 41:21

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COMPACT  
disc  
DIGITAL AUDIO

Produced for CD by **Jeffrey Kaufman**  
CD Preparation: **New York Digital Recording**  
Original Recording Engineer: **Jerry Newman**

Cover: *Man Ray "Rayograph"*

Graphic Design: *Donald J. Munz*

# Ned Rorem

Poems of **L**ove and the **R**ain  
**F**rom an **U**nknown **P**ast • **F**our **M**adrigals



**B**everly **W**olff, **M**ezzo **S**oprano  
**M**odern **M**adrigal **Q**uartet - **N**ed **R**orem, **P**iano

## Ned Rorem

Ned Rorem was born in Indiana in 1923, and spent most of his first sixteen years in Chicago. His formal musical education was at Northwestern, Curtis Institute, and Juilliard from where he received a master's degree. In 1949 he went to France for a summer vacation but remained eight years, subsisting in part on a Fulbright Fellowship and, later, a Guggenheim Fellowship.

In 1958 he returned permanently to America where, for two years, he was composer-in-residence at Buffalo University. He held a similar position at the University of Utah during 1965-1966.

Rorem has received three Ford Foundation Grants (one for his opera MISS JULIE), and one from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. He has been commissioned by the major soloists of today, and his orchestral works have been performed throughout the world by such conductors as Stokowski, Bernstein, Ormandy, Mitropoulos, and Reiner. He has composed three symphonies, six operas, numerous concertos, several ballets and other music for theatre. He has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, but is probably best known for his songs whose publications number into the hundreds.

Ned Rorem has carved for himself a second career, that of author, having published some twenty essays on subjects musical and otherwise, personal journals ('*The Paris Diary*', '*The New York Diary*', '*The Nantucket Diary*'), and a volume entitled '*Music and People*'.

## Beverly Wolff

The delight of audiences and critics, Beverly Wolff is a name to be reckoned with. As opera singer, concert soloist and recitalist she has sung with the New York City Opera, The Washington Opera Society, New England Opera Theatre among others, and has appeared frequently with the Philadelphia, Boston, New York Philharmonic, Cleveland and Pittsburgh orchestras. Miss Wolff has recorded Douglas Moore's '*Carry Nation*', the title role of which she created in its world premiere at the University of Kansas and again with the New York City Opera Company in New York.

## Modern Madrigal Quartet

Lois Winter, Helene Miles, Phillip Olson and Michael Stewart created the Modern Madrigal Quartet. They are all busy professional singers, active in concert, radio, television and their voices are known by hundreds of thousands. This is their first recording as a group.

## Notes by the Composer

When the Ford Foundation in 1962 commissioned an extended work for mezzo-soprano and piano, I became suddenly free to indulge a fantasy that had long plagued me. After years of writing a hundred miscellaneous songs, or cycles based on random selections of poetry, I felt a conflicting frustration: that I had said all I had to say in this small form, yet that I had said nothing. If a poem were good, really good, wasn't there more than one way of musicalizing it? Perhaps not, since most composers' settings of the same verse turn out to be much the same *kinds* of setting. I had toyed with the notion of how it might be for a single composer to set one poem several times, in different speeds and styles, draining the words of their multiple implication. But the fantasy seemed impractical since nobody sang any songs much anymore. So I stopped writing them. Now my enthusiasm rekindled, with money and a stylish performance in view, I began the big bizarre affair that turned into *Poems Of Love And The Rain*.

What on the surface appeared gimmicky, was to me a legitimate if unprecedented device. I wished for the singer to arrive on the stage one person, and to leave it another. The metamorphosis would occur midway, through a new viewpoint on an old obsession. My predetermined theme of unrequited love with rainy variations seemed appropriately "emotional" for song in general, and for the mezzo timbre in particular.

To realize the device I chose eight American poems and put each to music twice, as contrastingly as possible. To these I added a pivotal Interlude to be sung but once, plus a Prologue and Epilogue of almost identical music — except the Epilogue is a half-tone lower. Thus, while each poem is repeated, none of the music is. The sequential arrangement of the seventeen songs is pyramidal: one to nine and back again. If they occurred in space rather than time they would correspond to our symmetrical moon whose dark side becomes always visible as in some giant mirror.

## Poems of Love And Rain

1. PROLOGUE: FROM *The Rain* 1:03
2. Stop All the Clocks 2:50
3. The Air Is the Only "Why" :46
4. Lov's Stricken "Why" :46
5. The Apparition :58
6. Do I Love You — part 1 1:14
7. in the rain :53
8. Song for Lying in Bed During a Night Rain 2:04
9. Interlude 3:38
10. Song for Lying in Bed During a Night Rain (conclusion) 1:11
11. in the rain 1:39
12. Do I Love You — part 2 :29
13. The Apparition 2:14
14. Love's Stricken "Why" :34
15. The Air Is the Only 1:14
16. Stop All the Clocks 1:39
17. EPILOGUE: from *The Rain* 1:21

### 1. & 17. Prologue And Epilogue

"Everywhere, the impossible is happening; two things, the rain and the landscape, are occupying the same place at the same time."

from THE RAIN by Donald Windham

From the chapter "The Rain" in the book  
EMBLEMS OF CONDUCT  
Poem © Copyright 1964 by Charles Scribner's Sons.

### 2. & 16. Stop All The Clocks

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy  
bone,  
silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.  
Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scibbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,  
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the  
public doves,  
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton  
gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and  
West,

My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last forever:  
I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every  
one;  
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;

Pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods:  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

*W.H. Auden*

Poem © Copyright 1945 by W.H. Auden

### 3. & 15. The Air Is The Only

The air is the only  
Lonely bearer  
Of the one breath  
Of Love's wayfarer.  
The seas too wet to forgive. Forget  
Change changes:  
But sing flesh,  
Sinew and bone,  
And mostly blood,  
The fine wood  
In which we live  
The dead and alive,  
The hollow vein  
And love's rain.

*Howard Moss*

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### 4. & 14. Love's Stricken "Why"

Love's stricken "Why"  
Is all that love can speak —  
Built of but just a syllable  
The hugest hearts that break.

*Emily Dickinson*



5. & 13. **The Apparition**

My pillow won't tell me  
Where he is gone,  
The soft-footed one  
Who passed by alone.

Who took my heart, whole,  
With a tilt of his eye,  
And with it my soul,  
And it like to die.

I twist, and I turn,  
My breath but a sigh.  
Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn?  
He walks by. He walks by.

*Theodore Roethke*

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6. & 12. **Do I Love You**

**Part I**

Do I love you more than a day?  
Days used to be faint hours to endure.  
Now, through our love, I feel each hour  
on this spinned world about the sun.

Embodied time, I live creation  
Through you. And I love you more than a day.

**Part II**

Do I love you more than the air?  
Air used to seem just nothingness.  
Through our love, now it seems no less  
than God's air airing your life's breath;

Too rich for space; too dear for death  
Through you. And I love you more than  
the air.

*Jack Larson*

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7. & 11. **In The Rain**

in the rain —  
darkness,  
the sunset being sheathed i sit  
and think of you  
the holy city which is your face  
your little cheeks the streets of smiles  
your eyes half-thrush  
half-angel

and your drowsy lips where float flowers  
and there is the sweet shy pirouette  
your hair  
and then your dancesong soul.  
rarely beloved  
a single star is uttered  
and i think of you.

*e. e. cummings*

Poem © Copyright 1925, 1953 by E.E. Cummings.

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8. & 10. **Song For Lying In Bed During  
A Night Rain**

How can I wash the lightning away that shines  
on your closed eyes?

How can I tell the thunder to lie as calm as  
your hand?

How can I know two sounds as dry as your  
voice before love and after?

How can I fear what I have never seen in your  
face?

Street noises ascend from the city beneath us  
as the rain falls  
—sounds that merge and blur through my  
gabled window  
to reflect the danger all my asphalt  
nightmare's proffer  
without the slow pulse beside me of your  
sleep.

But who are these bleeding strangers, naked  
as shadow,  
who stalk at our bedside, calling your name?  
When I look their faces are terrible as  
lightning  
exposing an instant the white harvest of your  
breast.

Why do they curse our handclasp, as though  
we hoarded

what falls like rain from their wounds?

Why do you lie unmoved as mounds of  
fruit and take their kisses  
as so much wetness to redden the white  
of your face?

**Conclusion:**

How can the rain wash away such stains as  
your lips wear?

How can I tell their sears to grow smooth as  
your skin?

How can I know two sounds as dry as your  
voice before fear and after?

How can I love what I have never seen in  
your face?

*Kenneth Pitchford*

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9. **Interlude**

The element of air was out of hand.

The rush of wind ripped off the tender leaves  
And flung them in confusion on the land.

We waited for the first rain in the eaves.

The chaos grew as hour by hour the light  
Decreased beneath an undivided sky.

Our pupils widened with unnatural night,

But still the road and dusty field kept dry.

The rain stayed in its cloud; full dark  
came near:

The wind lay motionless in the long grass.

The veins within our hands betrayed our fear.

What we had hoped for had not come to pass.

*Theodore Roethke*

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<p>For a degree at Juilliard one must take non-musical courses. Having passed the entrance exams with flying colors I was not required to attend musical classes except in piano and composition. What I therefore recall most clearly of that illustrious school in 1946-48 are studies in Sociology, American History, Physical Education and, yes, Hygiene (which taught that the human diet needs copper as well as iron, copper being obtained both through apricot and through milk stored in brass vats)!. Also two semesters of World Literature which, if nothing else, did inspire some musical output including songs on texts sacred and profane. Among the latter are the <i>Four Madrigals</i>, my first attempts for unaccompanied vocal ensemble. They were written in the autumn of 1947, and are dedicated respectively to Hugh Ross (who conducted their premiere at Tanglewood the following summer), to Rufus my father, Gladys my mother, and to my teacher Bernard Wagenaar. The C.M. Bowra versions of the Sappho fragments are as follows (retyped from a tattered school book, <i>Greek Literature In Translation</i>, in the margins of which I nostalgically find scribbled my almost-completed melodies):</p>	<p>21. (2:33) <b>AN ABSENT FRIEND</b></p> <p>A glorious goddess in her eyes Were you, her comrade, and your songs Above all other songs she'd prize.</p> <p>With Lydian women now she dwells Surpassing them, as when day dies The rosy-fingered moon excels</p>	<p>The host of stars, and light illumines The salt sea and the cornland glows With light upon its thousand blooms. In loveliness the dew spills over And with new strength revives the rose, Slim grasses and the flowering clover. But sadly up and down she goes, Remembering Atthis, once her lover, And in her heart sick longing grows.</p>
<p>18. (2:17) <b>PARTING</b></p> <p>Truly I want to die. Such was her weeping when she said Good- bye.</p> <p>These words she said to me: "What sad calamity! Sappho, I leave you most unwillingly."</p> <p>To her I made reply: "Go with good heart, but try Not to forget our love in days gone by. Else let me call to mind, If your heart proves unkind, The soft delightful ways you leave behind. Many a coronet Of rose and violet, Crocus and dill upon your brow you set: Many a necklace too Round your soft throat you threw, Woven with me from buds of ravishing hue,</p>	<p>22. (1:39) <b>THE LOVER IN WINTER</b> <b>PLAINETH</b> <b>FOR THE SPRING</b></p> <p><i>16th Century [?]</i> <i>(to Georg Redlich's memory)</i></p> <p>Western wind, when will thou blow The small rain down can rain? Christ, if my love were in my arms And I in my bed again!</p>	<p>The seven songs comprising <i>From An Unknown Past</i> were composed in 1951 during three July days at the Provencal chateau of my friend Marie Laure de Noailles. Like the Madrigals they were conceived for unaccompanied 4-part mixed chorus, but may also be performed — as they are here — by solo voices. The title comes from the uncertain authorship of most of these poems:</p>
<p>19. (:17) <b>FLOWERS FOR THE GRACES</b></p> <p>Weave garlands, maidens, from the strands Of dill, and with soft gentle hands Set the delicious leafage round your head. The Goddess and the happy Graces Love to look on flower-crown'd faces, But turn aside from the ungarlanded.</p> <p>20. (1:16) <b>LOVE</b></p> <p>Love has unbound my limbs and set me shaking, A monster bitter-sweet and my unmaking.</p>	<p>23. (1:18) <b>HEY NONNY NO!</b> <i>Christ Church MS.</i> <i>(to Marie Laure)</i></p> <p>Hey nonny no! Men are fools that wish to die! Is't not fine to dance and sing When the bells of death do ring? Is't not fine to swim in wine, And turn upon the toe, And sing hey nonny no! When the winds blow and the sea flows? Hey nonny no!</p>	<p>Hey nonny no! Men are fools that wish to die! Is't not fine to dance and sing When the bells of death do ring? Is't not fine to swim in wine, And turn upon the toe, And sing hey nonny no! When the winds blow and the sea flows? Hey nonny no!</p>

24. (1:16) **MY BLOOD SO RED**

*Anonymous*

*(to Julien Green)*

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

25. (:18) **SUSPIRIA**

*Anonymous*

*(to Nadia Boulanger)*

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

26. (1:48) **THE MIRACLE**

*About 1600*

*(to Nora and Georges Auric)*

Behold a wonder here!  
Love hath received his sight!  
Which many hundred years  
Hath not beheld the light.  
Such beams infused be  
By Cynthia in his eyes,  
As first have made him see  
And then have made him wise.  
Love now no more will weep  
For them that laugh the while!

28. (1:19) **CRABBED AGE AND YOUTH**

*Shakespeare [?]*

*(to Guy Ferrand)*

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

Nor wake from them that sleep,  
Nor sigh for them that smile!

So powerful is the Beauty  
That Love doth now behold,  
As Love is turned to Duty  
That's neither blind nor bold.  
Thus Beauty shows her might  
To be of double kind:  
In giving Love his sight  
And striking Folly blind.

27. (1:06) **TEARS**

*John Dowland's Third and Last Book  
of Songs or Aires, 1603*

*(to the memory of Don Dalton)*

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

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