

Donald Gramm (1927-1983)

During Donald Gramm's career there were no peers among bass-baritones. As a regular member of the Metropolitan Opera Company (debuting in 1964) he had regularly appeared with leading Opera companies and major symphony orchestras throughout the world. Born in Milwaukee, he began to study piano at the age of eight, organ at thirteen and voice at sixteen. Seven years later he made his New York debut.

Eugene Istomin

The remarkable versatility of Eugene Istomin distinguishes him as one of the very few American pianists to have achieved world-wide recognition as recitalist, as soloist with every major orchestra in the world, and to be equally acclaimed for his virtuoso performances with the Istomin-Stern-Rose Trio.

Today, with many world tours and countless United States tours to his credit, he remains one of our busiest pianists.

Anita Darian

A native of Detroit Anita Darian is well-known in opera, television and as soloist with symphony orchestras. She has been featured soloist with the Cleveland, the Miami and the New York Philharmonic Orchestras. A former student of Jennie Tourlè, she has also served as an artist at the American Opera Center.

John Stewart

John Stewart is an exciting artist who has had repeated success as a leading tenor of the New York City, The San Antonio, The Santa Fe and The Houston Opera Companies.

After his appearance in "Orfeo," the New York Times wrote: "He sang sensitively yet with refreshing, robust virility... an excellent tenor."



Donald Gramm

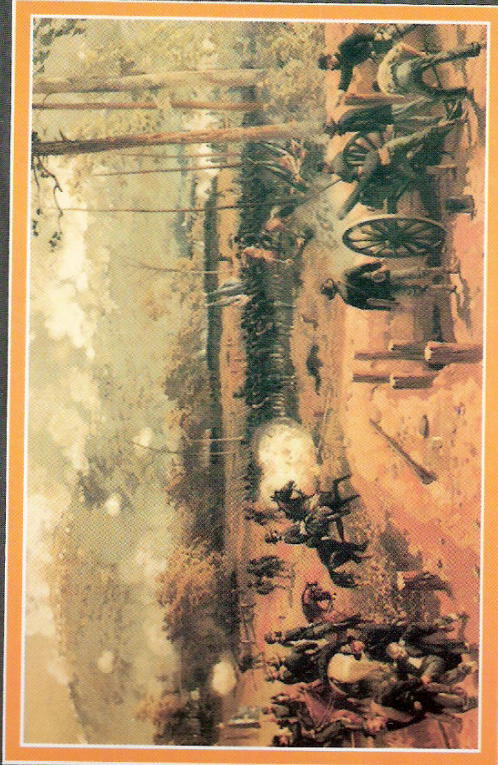
Ned Rorem

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"Ned Rorem, a Pulitzer Prize winner in music (1976), is also the author of twelve books, including *The Paris Diary*, *The Nantucket Diary*, *Setting The Tone*, and *Setting The Score*."

Ned Rorem

WAR SCENES • FIVE SONGS
FOUR DIALOGUES FOR TWO VOICES & TWO PIANOS



Donald Gramm, Bass-Baritone
Eugene Istomin, Piano

"Has it really been twenty-two years since these works were recorded? I am thrilled by the present reissue on the Phoenix label, not only for myself but because it offers a rare preservation of the extraordinary art of the late Donald Gramm.

—Ned Rorem, 1991

WAR SCENES For Voice And Piano

WORDS BY WALT WHITMAN

The texts for the cycle, WAR SCENES, were very freely excised from Walt Whitman's diary of the Civil War titled "Specimen Days." The music was designed for Gerard Souzay who first performed it, with pianist Dalton Baldwin, in Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C., October 19, 1969. The published score contains the following dedication:

*"To those who died in Vietnam, both sides, during
the composition: 20-30 June 1969."*

1. A NIGHT BATTLE

...What scene is this? — is this indeed *humanity*, these butchers' shambles? There they lie, in an open space in the woods, three hundred poor fellows, the groans and screams, the odor of blood mixed with the fresh scent of the night, that slaughterhouse! O well it is their mothers cannot see them. Some have their legs blown off, some bullets through the chest, some indescribably horrid wounds in the face or head, all mutilated, sickening, torn, gouged out, some mere boys — they take their turns with the rest...

Such is the camp of the wounded. The clear-obscure up there, those buoyant upper oceans, a few large placid stars beyond, coming languidly out, then disappearing — the melancholy, draped night above. And there, upon the roads and in those woods, that contest, never one more desperate in any age or land...

...What history can ever give — for who can know — the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies? Who knows the many conflicts in flashing moon-beam's woods, the writhing squads, the cries, the din, the distant cannon, the cheers and calls and threats and awful music of the oaths,

the indescribable mix, the officers' orders, the devils fully rous'd in human hearts, the strong shout, *Charge, men, charge?*

...And still again the moonlight pouring silvery soft its radiant patches over all. Who paint the scene, the sudden partial panic of the afternoons, at dusk?

2. A SPECIMEN CASE

...Poor youth, so handsome, athletic, with profuse shining hair. One time as I sat looking at him while he lay asleep, he suddenly, without the least start, awaken'd, open'd his eyes, gave me a long steady look, turning his face very slightly to gaze easier — one long, clear, silent look — a slight sigh — then turn'd back and went into his doze again. Little he knew, poor death-stricken boy, the heart of the stranger that hover'd near.

3. AN INCIDENT

In one of the fights before Atlanta, a rebel soldier, of large size, evidently a young man, was mortally wounded top of head, so that the brains partially exuded. He lived three days, lying on his back on the spot where he first dropt. He dug with his heel in the ground during that time a hole big enough to put in a couple of ordinary knapsacks. He just lay there in the open air, and with little intermission kept his heel going night and day. Some of our soldiers then moved him to a house, but he died in a few minutes.

4. INAUGURATION BALL

At the dance and supper room I could not help thinking what a different scene they presented to my view a while since, fill'd with a crowd of the worst wounded of the war. Tonight, beautiful women, perfumes, the violins' sweetness, the polka and the waltz; then the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of wounds and blood, and many a mother's son amid strangers, passing away untended there...

5. THE REAL WAR WILL NEVER GET IN THE BOOKS

And so goodbye to the war. I know not how it may have been to others. To me the main interest was in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and even the dead on the field... The points illustrating the latent character of the American young were of more significance than the political interests involved. Future years will never know the seething hell of countless minor scenes. The real war will never get in the books, perhaps must not, and should not be. The whole land, North and South, was one vast hospital, greater (like life's) than the few distortions ever told. Think how much, and of importance, will be — has already been — buried in the grave.

FIVE SONGS TO POEMS

BY WALT WHITMAN

These five songs were all composed in the summer of 1957 in Hyères, France. They were commissioned by Walder Luke Burnap who premiered them, self-accompanied at the virginals, in New York the following spring.

AS ADAM, EARLY IN THE MORNING

(Publ. Peters)

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 on my Body.

O YOU WHOM I OFTEN AND SILENTLY COME

(Publ. Peters)

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.

TO YOU

(Publ. Elkam-Vogel)

Stranger, if you passing meet me
and desire to speak to me,
Why should you not speak to me?
And why should I not speak to you?

LOOK DOWN, FAIR MOON

(Publ. Boosey & Hawkes)

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

GLIDING O'ER ALL

(Publ. Boosey & Hawkes)

Gliding o'er all, through all,
Through Nature, Time, and Space,
As a ship on waters advancing,
The voyage of the soul — not Life alone,
Death, many deaths I'll sing.

FOUR DIALOGUES

For Two Voices And Two Pianos

WORDS BY FRANK O'HARA

The late Frank O'Hara conceived the words to *The Quarrel Sonata* (as he first called it) expressly to be set by me for the unique combination of two voices and two pianos. This was accomplished early in 1954, mostly in London and Paris. The premiere took place on March 23rd of the following year at a private concert in the Contessa Pecci Blunt's Roman palazzo. This lavishly sommolent old-world decor seemed gorgeously anachronistic to our gift non-poetry and vulgar music which, in their comic-strip tightness, pre-dated Pop Art by a decade.

Not as Pop Art, however, so much as vaudeville is my feeling for these Dialogues, they being of a nameless genre that falls somewhere between concert cantata and staged opera.

The form is strict sonata whose four sections relate the old comedy of boy meets girl. The meeting is on a subway whose mechanism is evoked by the instruments while the voices flirt noisily. The second scene is of courtship in a car parked at an airport where the pianos waltz lazily as the soprano yields to the tenor. Without pause the third number unleashes a conjugal fight dented by keyboards clattering, lady screaming, man grumbling. Finally they separate, and from Spain to New York sing over the ocean to each other, wondering at love, at jealousy, at what to do now. But all ends in silence.

—NED ROREM

THE SUBWAY

Man:

"Hurricane Kills Thousand in Altona!"

"Mayor Buys Milk in Schenectady"

"Behaviorism Taught in Late June"

"A Slump Foreseen in Electricity"

Oh papers! Papers! papers! of my delight!

Why wasn't the late edition ready tonight?

Woman: Oh blue grass of my ancestors, ouch!

I beg your pardon, sir, I'm not a couch!

Your foot? your foot? The delicate foot

of your hand on my arm's made all me a foot!

Man: What is your name? I must have you!

Woman: Must have you! I must have you—

Man: No, no, no, no, no.

Woman: Must, must, must, must, can you see?

Man: What stop is this? Which one, can you see?

Woman: It's Sheridan Square, no, it's Avenue B.

Man: No, darling, it's Grand Army Plaza and we're there!

Woman: Where? No, I'm not, where? where? where?

Man:

There! My darling place, there! here! there! here!

Will you come? It's where I've parked my car.

We'll drive to the airport and park and park and park!

Will you come? Oh be my love for a night in the air

where the stars are like garters and all is fair!

Woman: No, I can't, I must have dinner with my mother,

Man: and,

Woman: and afterwards I have to go to symphony with brother,

Man: and,

Woman: and you must stop this or I'll probably smother,

Man: and,

Woman: and I am already engaged to be married to another.

Man: Then you'll come?

Woman: Yes, I'll come.

THE AIRPORT

Woman: What a lovely car! What a lovely parking lot!
You see? The stars are as big as garters!
Man: There's a lot I have to say to you, my darling.
Look at those garters!
Both: You're burning like fire
and it's you I desire
but I'd burn in the fire
and it's me you desire
but I fear the fire
don't fear the fire
and I fear your desire
don't fear my desire
and I fear my own fire
and you fear your desire
but I fear most the fire
and not your desire
and not your desire
and desire the fire!

THE APARTMENT

Woman: It's wonderful to be so happy together
it makes you drink tea and feel about the weather
it's marvelous still to be thrilled when you enter
on top of a hill think you are the center
are you happy with me I'm happy with you
I look at a bee and it looks like a screw
you are the lord of all I survey
I'm not your bawd but you are my Bey.
Man: Ah! Ah!
Woman: Did you wrinkle this newspaper?
Man: Darling, I wouldn't!
Woman: Did you think it a career?
Man: Darling, you shouldn't!
It causes me pain; you create a disturbance.
I wanted to look up my shares of insurance,
whether they thrive or languish in durance,
Now I am livid; my love's in abeyance!
Why don't you go away? and good riddance!
Woman: If you say that one more time I'll scream!

Man: If you threaten once more that you're going to scream!
Woman: Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!
Man: This can't last
it's no good
she has her mood
I was born
for a different reason
off Cape Horn
in the stormy season
did you imagine
I could adore
when Chinese and Cajun
pamper and bore
you win the bet
I'm off to Siam
I'll climb to Tibet
the eternal I am
You are beautiful
I am strong
you are dutiful
I am wrong
I'm going to leave you
you must remain
I won't deceive you
I'm going to Spain.
You hateful man!
leave while you can.

IN NEW YORK AND SPAIN

Woman: I wonder
if he ever
sinks with fever
head on knee
what a blunder
does he never
the deceiver
think of me
is he well
or is he ill
down in hell
or up here still
How I wish
he were back
what of the trouble
worse the lack
and my heart
is growing
I'm very lonely
in my way
Man: I wonder
if she ever
drinks with Steven
dansant tea
what a bounder
does he never
try to grieve her
talk of me
does she stare
is she sweet
to her feet
to her feet
How I wish
I could attack
this world this bubble
and go back
but the heart
must go this way
though it's lonely
in its way