

PHCD

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NED ROREM

ARIEL

Five Poems of Sylvia Plath

For Soprano, Clarinet and Piano

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4 Poppies in October 2:47 5 Lady Lazarus 5:34

Phyllis Curtin, soprano Joseph Rabbai, clarinet Ryan Edwards, piano

GLORIA

For Two Voices and Piano

Phyllis Curtin, soprano Helen Vanni, mezzo-soprano Ned Rorem, piano
Total Time: 14:13

KING MIDAS

A Cantata for Voices and Piano

on Ten Poems of Howard Moss

John Stewart, tenor Sandra Walker, mezzo-soprano Anne Schein, piano
Total Time: 25:32



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ARIEL

FOR TWO VOICES
AND PIANO

GLORIA

A CANTATA FOR
VOICES AND PIANO
ON TEN POEMS
OF HOWARD MOSS

KING MIDAS

FIVE POEMS
OF SYLVIA PLATH
FOR SOPRANO,
CLARINET AND
PIANO

ARIEL (1971)

Five Poems of Sylvia Plath For Soprano, Clarinet and Piano

Ariel was a gift to my friend Phyllis Curtin. The cycle was composed in New York during May 1971, and first performed by Phyllis Curtin, with clarinetist David Glazer and pianist Ryan Edwards, at the Library of Congress in Washington on November 26. Ariel is a setting of five poems by Sylvia Plath.

1. WORDS

Axes
After whose stroke the wood rings,
And the echoes!
Echoes travelling
Off from the centre like horses.
The sap
Wells like tears, like the
Water striving
To re-establish its mirror
Over the rock
That drops and turns,
A white skull,
Eaten by weedy green.
Years later I
Encounter them on the road—
Words dry and riderless,
The indefatigable hoof-taps.
While
From the bottom of the pool, fixed stars
Govern a life.

3. THE HANGING MAN

By the roots of my hair some god got hold of me.
I sizzled in the blue volts like a desert prophet.
The nights snapped out of sight like a lizard's eyelid:
A word of bald white days in a shadeless socket.
A vulturous boredom pinned me in this tree.
If he were I, he would do what I did.

4. POPPIES IN OCTOBER

Even the sun-clouds this morning cannot manage such skirts.
Nor the woman in the ambulance
Whose red heart blooms through her coat so astoundingly—
A gift, a love gift
Utterly unasked for
By a sky
Palely and flamily
Igniting its carbon monoxides, by eyes
Dulled to a halt under bowlers.
O my God, what am I
That these late mouths should cry open
In a forest of frost, in a dawn of cornflowers.

5. LADY LAZARUS

I have done it again.
One year in ever ten
I manage it—
A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot
A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.
Peel off the napkin
O my enemy,
Do I terrify?—
The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.
Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.
 I am only thirty.
 And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
 What a trash
 To annihilate each decade.
 What a million filaments.
 The peanut-crunching crowd
 Shoves in to see
 Them unwrap me hand and foot—
 The big strip tease.
 Gentlemen, Ladies,
 These are my hands,
 My knees.
 I may be skin and bone,
 Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
 The first time it happened I was ten.
 It was an accident.

The second time I meant
 To last it out and not come back at all.
 I rocked shut

As a seashell.
 They had to call and call
 And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying
 Is an art, like everything else.
 I do it exceptionally well.
 I do it so it feels like hell.
 I do it so it feels real.
 I guess you could say I've a call.
 It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
 It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
 It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
 To the same place, the same face, the same brute
 Amused shout:
 "A miracle!"
 That knocks me out.
 There is a charge
 For the eying of my scars, there is a charge
 For the hearing of my heart—
 It really goes.
 And there is a charge, a very large charge,
 For a word or a touch
 Or a bit of blood
 Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
 So, so, Herr Doktor.
 So, Herr Enemy.
 I am your opus,
 I am your valuable,
 The pure gold baby
 That melts to a shriek.
 I turn and burn.
 Do not think I understand your great concern.

Ash, ash—
 You poke and stir.
 Flesh, bone, there is nothing there—
 A cake of soap,
 A wedding ring,
 A gold filling.
 Herr God, Herr Lucifer,
 Beware
 Beware.

Out of the ash
 I rise with my red hair
 And I eat men like air.

GLORIA (1970)

For Two Voices and Piano

Gloria was composed during May and June of 1970, in New York and at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire. It is a gift to all the singers who bemoan the lack of duets. These nine Latin songs are only part of an unending series I am projecting, for various pairings and combinations, of varying difficulty, trios and quartets and — why not? — vocal octets, mostly in England, and mostly for the fun of it.

The first performance took place on James Holmes' *Chapel Concerts Series*, on November 26, 1972, when Phyllis Curtin was joined by mezzo Helen Vanni, and by the composer at the piano, at the Chapel of the Intercession in New York City.

The basic text of the Gloria as found in the Ordinary of the Latin Mass is given below in the divisions of Ned Rorem's setting.

1. Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.
2. Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.
3. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite, Jesu Christe, Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, filius Patris,
4. ("Miserere nobis") Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.
5. ("Qui tollis") (Qui tollis peccata mundi) suscipe deprecationem nostram.
6. Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis.
7. ("Interlude") (Gloria in excelsis Deo.)
8. ("Cadenza") (Gloria.)
9. Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe, cum sancto spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

KING MIDAS (1961 and 1956)

A Cantata for Voices and Piano on Ten Poems of Howard Moss

King Midas, a cycle of ten songs for two voices alternating, was composed in Paris during the late spring of 1961 (except for *The Princess' Song* which was written in 1956 and published as *See How They Love Me*).

The first complete performance was given on March 11, 1962 at the fourth and final Rorem-Flanagan recital in Carnegie Recital Hall, by tenor David Lloyd, soprano Veronica Tyler, with the composer at the piano.

HOWARD MOSS has written the following:

“KING MIDAS went through many transformations. It began as a single poem, a poem about its obvious subject, and it was centered, originally, on the King, himself, mourning the horrors of transforming the world into gold. Behind that, I saw, of course, another subject: the wish fulfilled becoming a scourge. A saying goes: ‘Be careful what you ask for; you may get it.’

The concept began to expand. The notion of a place, and a Queen, and a child took shape. And I wrote a series of seven poems that appeared in the May 1957 issue of *Poetry*, under the title KING MIDAS. As soon as I saw it in print, I realized I hadn’t done what I wanted to, or hadn’t known exactly what I wanted. And the idea of giving each character a speech to deliver and a song to sing took hold. But even while adding poems to the group, I revised poems already in it. The King’s speech was different, in the original version, and so was the Queen’s speech. The Gardener’s and Huntsman’s song was completely revised, as was the Address by Dionysus. I had trouble finding a speech for the Princess and finally used an old poem, “See How They Love Me,” which seemed to fit perfectly.

I wanted an overall Byzantine flavor — a tone that would not be incongruous in this day and age and which would give a King and a royal house a credible reality. At the same time, I wanted words as contemporary as “millionaire” to be used, too, without straining the tone. Power, loss, gold, money, vanity — I worked with those in mind. If you can imagine a King walking down Fifth Avenue, about to deposit an accumulation of goldleaf at the Chase Manhattan Bank, you’d have a notion of what I was after.”

I • The King’s Speech

My food was pallid till I heard it ring
Against fine china. Every blessed thing
I touch becomes a work of art that baits
Its goldsmith’s appetite: My bread’s too rich,
My butter much too golden, and my meat
A nugget on my plate, as cold as ice;
Fresh water in my throat turns precious there,
Where every drop becomes a millionaire.

My hands leak gold into the flower’s mouth,
Whose lips in tiers of rigid foliage
Make false what flowers are supposed to be.
I did not know I loved their warring thorns
Until they flowered into spikes so hard
My blood made obdurate the rose’s stem.
My God was generous. But when I bleed,
It clogs the rosebed and cements the seed.

My dog was truly witty while he breathed.
I saw the tiny hairs upon his skin
Grow like a lion’s into golden down.
I plucked them by the handfuls off of him,
And, now he is pure profit, my sculpturing
Might make a King go mad, for it was I
Who made those lively muscles stiffly pose—
This jaundice is relentless and it grows.

I hate the glint of stars the shine of wheat,
And when I walk, the tracings of my feet
Are affluent and litter where I go
With money that I sweat. I bank the slow
Gold-leaf of everything and, in my park,
A darkness shimmers that is not the dark,
A daylight glitters that is not the day—
All things are much less darling gilt this way.

Princess, come no closer; my tempered kiss,
Though it is royal still, will make you this
Or that kind of a statue. And my Queen,
Be armed against this gold paralysis,
Or you will starve and thinly bed alone,
And when you dream, a gold mine in your brain
Will have both eyes release their golden ore
And cry for tears they could not cry before.

I would be nothing but dirt made loud,
A clay that ripples with the worm, decay
In ripeness of the weeds, a timid sun,
Or oppositely be entirely cloud.
Absolved of matter, dissolving in the rain.
Before gold kills me as it kills all men,
Dear Dionysus, give me back again
Ten fingertips that leave the world alone.

II • The Queen’s Song

The palace clocks are stiff as coats of mail.
Time stopped; he flicked it with his fingernail.
O he was mine before he was a mine
Of Gold.

Time’s twelve cold sentinels so grimly still
no longer chime their golden interval.
O he was love before he was the love
Of Gold.

What treasurer is this, come to my bed,
Whose suppleness is now a golden rod?
O he was King before he was the King
Of Gold.

III • The Princess' Speech

I praise the bird, the river, and the tree.
One flies, one flows, and one has made me see
That, standing still, the world is turning me
I cannot fly. Birds carry in the morn.
I cannot flow. A river bed is born.
I grow. My leaves are green, and gold, and torn.
Divided into two, I am a tree.
The branches are too high for me to see,
The roots too hidden from reality.
They say that veins of gold lie underground.
Beware, explorers, of the spoil you find:
Though you sail back and forth, you sail around.
The laurel grows upon the laurel tree.
Apollo plucked the string of mystery
And made a golden echo in the sea.

IV • The Queens Speech

May every child of mine be barren, golden!
May every beast become a golden swine!
Here is a list, O gardeners and huntsmen,
Of what to kill and what to leave alone:
All nature things must go excepting those
That are by nature golden. Whatever grows
The King's touchy color let live, but close
Your nets upon the pink and crimson rose.
But I will save one rose tree in this pot
That I may gaze at it, and when he's not
About, I'll look and look till light is gone
At flower, petal, stem, and leaf. And then,
I'll ponder how a King became a fool!
Long live King Midas! And the Golden Rule!

V • The Huntsman's Song, The Gardener's Refrain

Is it the hawk or hare,
Blindly alive to feed,
The daylight rises for?
I have seen both bleed,
Yellow and dead.
Is it the clang of war
I waken to instead
Of the hunt as hereofore?
That shot was in my head,
Yellow and dead.
The quarry goes before.
The hunter must be fed.
I know the huntsman's lore.
I know the blood is red,
Yellow and dead.
Nature cannot bear
To gild its marriage bed
With gold that is not there.
The golden goose is dead,
Yellow and dead.

VI • Address By Dionysus

There is no meekness in my sun.
It is more dazzling than the one
You cannot look at, Midas. Run
This way or that, it follows you,
And is indifferent to the view.
A king especially must live
Without a God's prerogative.
We take, for every gift we give,
Two back. Your gold made you a fool.
Now you grow wise, but in my school.
There is a lesson children learn:
You reach your hand out, and you burn.
It is no lesson kings can spurn.
Mine is a cruel curriculum
Not fit for the powerless or dumb.
Go to the river. Dip your hand
Into its silver rumblings. Stand
Still while the precious contraband
You glitter with flows from your skin
Till water sucks away your sin.
It is through will, and only will,
Pleasure unearths the sensual.
The Gods grind error in a mill
Whose gold wheels turn all coastly wit
Into its dreaded opposite.

VII • The Princess' Song

See how they love me,
Green leaf, gold grass,
Swearing 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 you rebuke me,
O love, love I
Only pursue. See
How they love me!

VIII • The King's Song

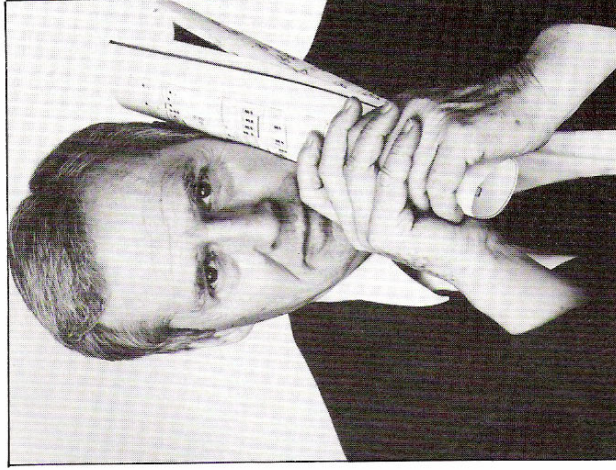
What I loved most moved me.
Tell me, soul, where now your motion is.
Looking back, I look on Orpheus,
Who, looking back, looked on Eurydice.
His voice is distant as the shelled sea.
She, underground, is where no music is.
They moved me most who loved me.
Tell me, flesh, where now your motion is.
I, an ancient King, walk blindly.
I break on pleasure where no pleasure is.
Looking back, I look on Orpheus,
Who, looking back, looked on Eurydice.

IX • Dionysus's Song

Midas in the street
Makes statues out of men.
When man and money meet,
Beware! The worst is then.
Beware! The worst is then.
When animal and angel
Meet on a common ground,
And elegance is natural,
Nothing is so profound.
Nothing is so profound.

**X • The King to the Princess,
at the River Bank**

My daughter, the river flows down to the sea.
All things begin in its rich nursery.
If you should shed a tear, shed it for me.
Remember me for this: If you should gain
What men most wish for, give it back again,
Before the Gods transform it into pain.
Stay here beside me while I dip my hand
Into the cold river. Until water end,
Pactolus, from this day, runs golden sand.



NED ROREM

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

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