

# Confluence Concerts

## THE JOHN BECKWITH SONGBOOK TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS **Concert 1**

### Young Man from Canada (1998)

#### Tighinn Do America (Coming to America)

Mi an toiseach na luinge,  
'S neo-schocrach mo shuidhe,  
'S mi coimhead an t-sruith tha tighinn oirnn.  
Chi mi thall ud fo m'shùilean,  
A'mhuc mhara 's I brùchdail,  
Sruithean geala 'gan sputadh bho sròin.

Anns na doireachan dubha  
Far nach goireadh a' chuthag  
Ach coille gun uibhean gun eoin.  
Dh'fhagh mi deidh Mhac a 'Phearsoin,  
Leam bu mhiann bhig'gad fhaicinn;  
'S gu'm bu bhinn leam fhein facial do bheoil.

Tha thusa dìreach mar b' àbhaist,  
Air do sgrìob ris an Laraig,  
'S mise dìreach ri barr an tuinn mhòir.  
Ach Aonghuis a charaid,  
'S mi nach di-chuimhnich t'fharraid,  
'S nach iarradh an dealachdainn bèo.

At the bow of the vessel  
In a seat that's unsteady  
I am watching the surge coming on us.  
And out yonder under my gaze  
A big whale in a hurry  
Who is spouting white streams from his nose.

In the dark forests  
There'll be no cuckoo calling,  
Only woods with no eggs and no birds.  
Leaving behind MacPherson,  
I'd like to be seeing you,  
And it would be sweet for me to hear a word  
from your mouth.

You are going as usual  
On the trip to the Laraig  
While I'm climbing on top of huge waves.  
But Angus, my friend,  
I won't forget your talking  
And wouldn't want such parting while I'm alive.

#### **Peter Emberley**

My name is Peter Emberley, as you may understand.  
I was born on Prince Edward Island, near to the ocean strand.  
In eighteen hundred and eighty-four, when the flowers were a brilliant hue  
I left my native country, my fortune to pursue.

I landed in New Brunswick, that lumbering country.  
I hired to work in the lumber woods on the Sou'-West Miramichi.  
I hired to work in the lumber woods where they cut the tall spruce down.  
While loading teams with yarded logs, I received a deadly wound.

Here's adieu unto my father, 'twas him who drove me here.  
I thought he used me cruelly, his treatments were severe.  
For 'tis not right to oppress a boy, or try to keep him down:  
For 'twill oft repulse him from his home when he is far too young.

Here's adieu unto my greatest friend, I mean my mother dear.  
She raised a son who fell as soon as he left her tender care.  
'Twas little did my mother know, when she sang lullaby,  
What country I might travel in, or what death I might die.

Here's adieu unto my youngest friends, those Island girls so true.  
Long may they bloom to grace that isle where first my breath I drew.  
For the world will roll on just the same when I have passed away:  
What signifies a mortal man whose origin is clay?

### Young Man from Canada

I'm a young man from Canada,  
Some six feet in my shoes.  
I left my home for Cariboo  
On the first exciting news.  
In New York City I met a gent,  
Introduced himself to me;  
Says I, "I come from Canada,  
So you can't come over me."

With seventy-five upon my back  
I came the Douglas way.  
And at an easy-going pace  
Made thirty mile a day.  
I landed here without a dime  
In eighteen-sixty-three,  
But I'd been raised in Canada -  
'Twas nothin' new t'me.

In best of homespun I was clad  
So I was warmly dressed;  
The wool it grew near Montreal  
At a place in Canada West.  
On Williams Creek they called me green  
And "Johnny-come-late-lee" -  
Says I, "I come from Canada;  
I ain't from the Old Countree!"

In just two weeks I got a "div,"  
Which drove away all care -  
I went over to the "Wake Up"  
And had a bully square.  
Oh I danced all night till broad daylight  
And a gal smiled sweet on me.  
Says I, "I come from Canada  
and I'm on the marry-ee."

Now all young men who are in love,  
And sure I am there's some:  
Don't count your chicks before they're hatched,  
For they may never come.  
O when I asked that gal to wed,  
She only laughed at me:  
She said, "You may come from Canada,  
But you can't come over me!"

### De szeretnék hajnal csillag lenni (How I wish I were a morning star)

De szeretnék hajnal csillag lenni  
Rózsám ablakába beragyogni,  
Beragyognék hozzája hajnalban,  
Csókot adnék néki utóljára.

Szánom bánom amit cselekedtem,  
Egy legénnyel szerelembe estem,  
Szerlembe nem estem, csak szóba,  
Sajnálom, de nem tehetek róla.

How I wish I were a morning star  
Shining on my true love's window,  
I would shine on her at dawn  
So I could kiss her for the last time.

I deeply regret what I have done:  
I have fallen in love with a young girl.  
It was not really love, only idle talk,  
I regret it, but it was not my fault.

### Le Roulier (The Wagoner)

Je venons de tirer au sort  
Pour n'point d'être militaire.  
Mais l'coquin d'sort m'a donné tort:  
Je somm's pris pour la guerre.  
Moi, qui n'battions qu'du blé jadis,  
Maint'nant j'allons battr' des enn'mis.

Adieu père et mère que j'aimons,  
Adieu, sèche vos larmes.  
Puisque la loi veut que je servions  
Dans le métier des armes,  
Je deviendrons p'tit maréchal,  
Ou general, ou caporal.

Laisse là tes afflictions,  
Rose, ma bonne ammie;  
J't'aim'rons toujours, et quand je s'rons  
Dans l'corps d'la cavalerie,  
À ma jument j'donn'rons, ma foi,  
Ton nom pour m'souvenir de toi.

N'importe où j's'rons, si j'somm's vivant,  
J't'enverrais d'mes écritures.  
Si je m'taisons, c'est différent:  
Ce s'ra d'mauvais augure:  
C'est que je s'rons mort, et, dans c'cas,  
V'là pourquoi c'que j't'écrivons pas.

Just now I drew my lot,  
Figuring to avoid army service.  
But luck, that rogue, has betrayed me;  
I must go to war.  
I, who never struck anything but the grain in the field,  
Must now strike at the enemy.

Farewell, father and mother, whom I love,  
Farewell, dry your tears.  
Since the law says I must serve  
In the professions of arms,  
I may turn out to be a wee field marshall,  
Or a general – or a corporal.

Put aside your worries,  
Rose, my good little sweetheart;  
I will always love you, and when I get to join  
The cavalry troop,  
By heaven, I'll call my mare  
By your name, as a reminder of you.

No matter where I am, if I'm still alive,  
I'll send you my letters.  
If I'm silent, that's different;  
That will be a bad sign:  
It will mean I'm dead, and in that case  
You'll see why I don't write.

## Six songs to poems of e e cummings (1982)

1.

buy me an ounce and I'll sell you a pound.  
Turn  
gert  
    (spin!  
helen)the  
slimmer the finger the thicker the thumb(it's  
whirl,  
girls)  
round and round

early to better is wiser for worse  
Give  
liz  
    (take!  
tommy)we  
order a steak and they send us a pie(it's  
try,  
boys)  
mine is yours

ask me the name of the moon in the man.  
Up  
sam  
    (down!  
alice)a  
hole in the ocean will never be missed(it's  
in,  
girls)  
yours is mine

either was deafer than neither was dumb.  
Skip  
fred  
    (jump!  
neddy)but  
under the wonder is over the why(it's  
now,  
boys)  
here we come

2.

this man is so  
Waiter  
this;woman is

please shut that  
the pout And affectionate leer  
interminable pyramidal,napkins  
(this man is oh so tired of this  
a door opens by itself  
woman.) they so to speak were in

Love once?  
now

her mouth opens too far  
and:she attacks her Lobster without  
feet mingle under the  
mercy.

(exit the hors d'œuvres)

3.

"o purple finch  
please tell me why  
this summer world(and you and i  
who love so much to live)  
must die"

"if i  
should tell you anything"  
(that eagerly sweet carolling  
self answers me)  
"i could not sing"

4.

Jimmie's got a goil

goil

goil,

Jimmie

's got a goil and  
she coitnly can shimie

when you see her shake a  
shimmie how you wish that you was Jimme.

Oh for such a gurl

gurl

gurl,

oh

for such a gurl to  
be a fellow's twistandtwirl

talk about your Sal-

Sal-

Sal-,

talk

about your Salo  
-mes but gimie Jimmie's gal.

5.

that melancholy

fellow'll play  
his handorgan  
until you say

"i want a fortune"

At which(smiling)he stops:  
& pick  
ing up a magical stick  
t.a.p.s  
this dingy cage:then with a ghost

'S rainfaint windthin  
voice-which-is  
no-voice sobcries

"paw?lee"  
-whereupon out(Slo  
wl.y)steps(to  
mount the wand)a by no  
means almost

white morethanPerson;who

(riding through space  
to diminutive this  
opened drawer)tweak

S with his brutebeak

one fatal faded(pinkish or  
yellowish maybe)piece  
of pitiful paper -  
but now,as Mr bowing Cockatoo

proffers the meaning of the stars

14<sup>th</sup> st dis(because my tears  
are full of eyes)appears. Because  
only the truest things always  
are true because they can't be true

6.

let it go-the  
smashed word broken  
open vow or  
the oath cracked length  
wise-let it go it  
was sworn to  
                  go

let them go-the  
truthful liars and  
the false fair friends  
and the boths and  
neithers-you must let them go they  
were born  
                  to go

let all go-the  
big small middling  
tall bigger really  
the biggest and all  
things-let all go  
dear  
          so comes love



## Four Short Songs (2014)

### Song

A man sits in  
A narrow ring  
A narrow ring  
Of thinness.  
He is content.  
He has no ear.  
And doesn't have his eyeballs.  
He cannot find  
What's left behind  
Of red sounds of the sun ball.  
Whatever falls  
Stands up again.  
And what is dumb,  
It sings a song.  
Until the man,  
Who has no ear,  
And doesn't have his eyeballs,  
Will start to find  
Signs left behind  
Of red sounds of the sub ball.

### Table

Once there was a long table. Oh, a long, long  
table. Right  
And left at this table sat many, many people,  
people, people,  
people.  
Oh, a long, long time at this long, long table  
sat people.

## Poems by Wassily Kandinsky translated by Elizabeth Napier

### Why

"No one came out of there."  
"No one?"  
"No one."  
"One?"  
"No."  
"Yes! But when I came by, there was one  
standing there."  
"At the door?"  
"At the door. He stretched out his arms."  
"Yes! Because he doesn't want to let anyone  
in."  
"No one came in there?"  
"No one."  
"The one who stretched out his arms, was he  
there?"  
"Inside?"  
"Yes. Inside."  
"I don't know. He just stretches out his arms  
so no one can get in."  
"Was he sent there so No One can get in?  
The one who stretches out his arms?"  
"No. He came and stood there himself and  
stretched out his arms."  
"And No One, No One, No One came out?"  
"No one. No One."

### Earth

The heavy earth was laid on carts with heavy  
spades. The carts were loaded and were  
heavy. The men shouted at the horses. The  
men cracked their whips. Heavily the horses  
pulled the heavy carts with the heavy earth.

## from Four Love Songs for Baritone and Piano (1969)

### **Drimindown**

There was an old man and he had but one cow,  
And how that he lost her he couldn't tell how,  
For white was her forehead and slick was her tail  
And I thought my poor Drimindown never would fail

E-go so ro Drimindown ho ro ha.  
So ro Drimindown nealy you gra,  
So ro Drimindown or ha ma dow  
Me poor Drimindown nea le sko che a go slanigash  
So ro Drimindown horo ha.

As I went to mass one fine morning in May  
I saw my poor Drimindown sunk by the way,  
I rolled and I bawled and my neighbours I called  
To see my poor Drimindown, she bein' my all.  
E-go so ro.....

My poor Drimon's sunk and I saw her no more,  
She sunk on an island close down by the shore,  
And after she sunk down she rose up again  
Like a bunch of black wild berries grown in the glen.  
E-go so ro.....

Oh Drimindown liv'd before she was dead,  
She gave me fresh butter to spread on my bread<  
Likewise good milk for to stiffen my crown,  
But now it's black water since Drimindown's gone.  
E-go so ro....

### **St. John's Girl**

A few days ago I went on a spree,  
In St. John's town I like for to be.  
I heard people talking and just for a lark,  
I got down the town; 'twas just before dark,  
Few coins in my pocket; likewise a few dubs,  
Says I to myself, "I'm right on the job,"  
When someone called, "Charles," and turning around,  
The prettiest girl in town there I found.

She said, "Good evening, sir;" and I said, "Good  
evening, miss." I asked her did she drink. She said  
yes, she drank champagne.

She was a clergyman's daughter, sure that was no doubt,  
The name of this fair one I could not find out;  
She told me she loved me; It seemed rather strange;  
I called for champagne; she wiped up the change.  
We huddled and cuddled like two turtle doves.

She asked me to buy her a pair of kid gloves:  
I bought her the gloves; quite smoochy I got<  
Says I to myself, "I'm right on the spot,"  
Says I to myself, "My gold watch I'll pawn."  
To my surprise I found it was gone.

My gold watch and scarf pin, which ner knocked me down,  
She's been on to me, that fair one from town.

I went down the street, and I met my friend Ben. He  
said, "Hello, Charles, you look bad." "Why hadn't I<  
when I was nearly had?" "Were you?" --

That St. John's girl, that St. John's girl,  
I thought she was sweeter than honey;  
She had jewels and pearls,  
Her hair all in curls,

'Twas on her I spent all my money.  
That dear little miss, she gave me a kiss,  
Which set my poor heart in a whirl.  
I'll never forget the first time I met,  
That little St. John's girl.

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## Concert 2

### Three songs to poems by Miriam Waddington (2003)

#### **A Man and his Flute**

A man in a black coat  
plays a song  
on a black flute  
in a concert hall.  
He plays with his whole  
body with his hands  
with his trunk until  
he becomes a tree and  
his arm a branch;  
his fingers are urgent  
extensions that startle  
the air in the leaves.

His song is obscurely  
about a lemon  
picked from an old tree  
in another country then  
brought home and cut  
against the blue  
of a winter sky.

The lemon and the  
black flute and the man  
in the black coat who  
sways with the music  
in the concert hall  
takes the blue sky the  
yellow lemon and the  
cold sunlight of March  
and turns it into an April  
filled with the blueness  
of hyacinth; winter turns  
its back and melts away  
in the runnelled snow piled  
against frozen houses.

The man and his flute  
play their song,  
the audience is pierced  
by the blueness of sky,  
the audience hears  
the snow melting,

the audience sees spring  
approaching the audience  
stands up the audience claps,  
the audience dances.

The man and his flute  
end their song,  
a smell of cut lemon  
fills the air.

#### **Old Chair Song**

Knots and crosses,  
thread and leather,  
cut your losses  
stitch a feather.

Knots and crosses  
dot your i's  
baste your losses  
with your sighs.

Mend what's broken  
make old new,  
forms are false  
but shapes are true.

So flash your thimble  
push your luck,  
if you win a chicken  
lose a duck;

If you find a chair  
that's old yet new,  
it might teach you  
how chairs grew

From knots and crosses  
silk and tweed,  
so close your eyes  
and twist a bead;

Ask a riddle,  
turn your head,  
and you might learn  
to raise the dead.

#### **The Snow Tramp**

When it snowed  
in Winnipeg  
my mother would look  
out the kitchen window  
and say  
I wish I was a gypsy.

She would put on her moccasins  
and  
sweaters, wrap a scarf  
around her neck, shoulder  
her snowshoes and go  
tramping  
in Kildonan park.

That evening when  
my father came home  
he found us all supperless,  
he was angry and worried  
but he opened a can of soup  
and fed us.

When my mother  
came home it was late  
and dark; she shook  
the snow from her hair  
and wondered how it happened  
we didn't know she had gone  
tramping  
in Kildonan park.

My father scolded,  
but my mother's soul  
was far away  
wrapped like a gift  
in stars and snow,  
and all night long  
her gypsy tunes sang  
and danced in the wind  
around our house.

## Ten English Rhymes (1963)

### Gregory Griggs

Gregory Griggs, Gregory Griggs,  
Had twenty-seven different wigs.  
He wore them up  
He wore them down  
to please the people of the town.  
He wore them East,  
he wore them West,  
But he never could tell which he liked best.

### The man of Thessaly

There was a man of Thessaly  
And he was wondrous wise,  
He jump'd into a quickset hedge  
And scratch'd out both his eyes.  
And when he saw his eyes were out,  
With all his might and main  
He jump'd into another hedge  
And scratch'd them in again.

### The north wind doth blow

The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will poor robin do then,  
Poor thing?

He'll sit in a barn,  
And keep himself warm,  
And hide his head under his wing,  
Poor thing.

### How many miles to Babylon?

How many miles to Babylon?  
Three score miles and ten.  
Can I get there by candle-light?  
Yes, and back again.  
If your heels are nimble and light,  
You may get there by candle-light.

### Robinson Crusoe

Poor old Robinson Crusoe  
Poor old Robinson Crusoe,  
He made him a coat  
of an old nanny goat,  
I wonder how he could do so?  
With a ring-a-ting tang,  
And a ring-a-ting tang,  
Poor old Robinson Crusoe,  
Poor old Robinson Crusoe.

### There once was a fish

There once was a fish,  
What more could you wish?  
He liv'd in the sea,  
Where else should he be?  
He was caught on a line.  
Whose line if not mine?  
So I brought him to you.  
What else should I do?

### Old chairs to mend

If I'd as much money as I could spend,  
I wouldn't be crying old chairs to mend,  
Old chairs to mend, old chairs to mend.  
I wouldn't be crying old chairs to mend.

If I'd as much money as I could tell,  
I wouldn't be crying old clothes to sell,  
Old clothes to sell, old clothes to sell.  
I wouldn't be crying old clothes to sell.

### The blue fly and the bee

zz, quoth the blue fly,  
mm, quoth the bee,  
zz and mm they cry,  
and so do we:

### Splash!

If all the seas were one sea,  
What a great sea that would be,  
And if all the trees were one tree,  
What a great tree that would be!  
And if all the axes were one axe,  
What a great axe that would be,  
And if all the men were one man,  
What a great man he would be!  
And if the great man took the great axe,  
and cut down the great tree,  
and let it fall into the great sea,  
What a splish splash that would be!

### Doctor Foster

Doctor Foster went to Gloster  
In a shower of rain,  
He stepp'd in a Puddle,  
Right up to his middle,  
And never went there again.

## Two songs to poems of Colleen Thibaudeau (1950)

### Serenade

Lady, in the country of my coming  
there will be lush peaches  
ripe on ev'ry tree.  
Ev'ry little cloud will glide  
clear as a magic lantern slide.  
The golden serpent sun will throw  
his body like a light lasso  
about the heart of each dark centre,  
to fashion flowers of strange splendour.

You will fill your panier, lass,  
with blooms like ornamental glass  
You will hear their Christmas chime  
all the glorious summertime.

### The formal garden of the heart

The formal garden of the heart  
has pathways that the jungle touches,  
thus dreams of doves  
will sudden start a maiden's blushes.  
Or virgin hid behind the trellis see  
by some parfait fountain in the dark  
a sudden tiger tense  
or else a lion lurk.

## Stacey (1997)

1.

At the Day of Judgement, God will say  
*Stacey MacAindra, what have you done with your life?*  
And I'll say  
*Well, let's see, Sir, I think I loved my kids>*  
And He'll say  
*Are you certain about that?*  
And I'll say,  
*God, I'm not certain about anything any more.*  
So He'll say,  
*To Hell with you, then. We're all positive thinkers up here.*  
Then again, maybe He wouldn't. Maybe He'd say,  
*Don't worry, Stacey, I'm not all that certain, either. Sometimes I wonder if I even exist.*  
And I'd say,  
*I know what you mean, Lord. I have the same trouble with myself.*

2.

Okay, God, say what you like, but I damn well wish I could get away just sometimes by myself. But no. It's a criminal offense, nearly. What makes any of them think they've got the right to tell me own me have me always there not that they notice when I am only when I'm not.

3.

Once it seemed almost violent, this music. Now it seems incredibly gentle. Sentimental, self-indulgent? Yeh, probably. But I love it. It's *my* beat. I can still do it. I can still move without knowing where, beforehand. Yes. Yes. Yes. Like this, like this...My hips may not be so hot but my ankles are pretty good, and my legs. Damn good in fact. My feet still know what to do without being told. I love to dance. I love it. I love it. It can't be over.

The hell with what the kids say. In fifteen years their music will be just as corny. But naturally they don't know that. I love this music. It's mine. Buzz off, you little buggers. You don't understand. No – I didn't mean that. I meant it. I was myself before any of you were born.

I can still do it. I don't do it badly. See? Like this, like this...(Don't listen in, God, this is none of your business.)

4.

I don't want anyone else bringing up my kids.

*Yeh, you're such a marvelous mother. Great example to the young, you. A veritable pillar of strength, I don't think.*

Listen here, God, don't talk to me like that. You have no right. *You* try bringing up four kids. Don't tell me you've brought up countless millions. I don't buy that. We've brought our own selves up with precious little help from you, if you're there. Which probably you aren't, although I'm never convinced totally, one way or another...Next time you send somebody down here, get it born as a her with seven young. Then we'll see how the inspirational bit goes.

God, pay no attention. I'm not myself. I'm nuts.

5.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways, as some goon once said. Reclothe us in our rightful mind. And so on. But what if this *is* our rightful mind, or at least the only one we're likely to have?...

*Okay, Stacey, simmer down. The fun is over. It's been over for some time, only you didn't see it before. Or, no – you saw it all right but you couldn't take it. You're nearly forty. You got four kids and a mortgage....*

I guess the fun's been over for Mac for quite a while. It would be nice if we were different people but we're not different people. We are ourselves and we're sure as hell not going to undergo some total transformation at this point.

*That's right, doll. Mrs. C. MacAindra, by an overwhelming majority voted The Most Sensible Woman of the Year.*

We can save our money. When we've got all four kids through university....and Mac retires and is so thin you have to look twice to see him and I'm so huge I can hardly waddle, then we can go to Acapulco and do the Mexican hat dance. I can't stand it. I cannot. I can't take it. But I can; yeh, I can. By God, I can, if I set my mind to it.

6.

I used to think there would be a blinding flash of light someday, and then I would be wise and calm and would know how to cope with everything and my kids would rise up and call me blessed. Now I see that whatever I'm like, I'm pretty well stuck with it for life. Hell of a revelation that turned out to be.

## Singing Synge (2011)

1

Dan Burke

Sit down now and take a little taste of the stuff, Michael Dara, there's a great drouth on me, and the night is young. I was thinking to strike you, Michael Dara, but you're a quiet man, God help you, and I don't mind you at all. Your good health, Michael Dara.

– *The Shadow of the Glen*, final scene

2

The Priest

Is it marry you for nothing at all?

Let you hold your tongue; let you be quiet, Sarah Casey. ... [I]f you want to be married, let you pay your pound. I'd do it for a pound only, and that's making it a sight cheaper than I'd make it for one of my own pairs ...

If it's ten shillings you have, let you get ten more ... and I'll marry you then. ...

Let you get a crown along with the ten shillings and the gallon can, Sarah Casey, and I will wed you so. ...

Well, I'll be coming down early to the chapel, and let you come to me a while after you see me passing, and bring the bit of gold along with you, and the tin can. I'll marry you for them two, though it's a pitiful small sum; for I wouldn't be easy in my soul if I left you growing into an old, wicked heathen ...

– *The Tinker's Wedding*, Act 1

3

Martin Doul

The devil mend Mary Doul for putting lies on me, and letting on she was grand. The devil mend the old saint for letting me see it was lies. The devil mend Timmy the smith for killing me with hard work, and keeping me with an empty windy stomach in me, in the day and in the night. Ten thousand devils mend the soul of Molly Byrne and the bad wicked souls is hidden in all the women of the world. It's lonesome I'll be from this day, and if living people is a bad lot, yet Mary Doul herself, and she a dirty, wrinkled-looking hag, was better maybe to be sitting along with than no one at all. I'll be getting my death now, I'm thinking, sitting alone in the cold air, hearing the night coming, and the blackbirds flying round in the briars crying to themselves, the time you'll hear one cart getting off a long way in the east, and another cart getting off a long way in the west, and a dog barking maybe, and a little wind turning the sticks. I'll be destroyed sitting alone and losing my senses this time the way I'm after losing my sight, for it'd make any person afeard to be sitting up hearing the sound of his breath, and the noise of his feet, when it's a power of queer things do be stirring, little sticks breaking, and the grass moving till you'd take your dying oath on sun and moon a thing was breathing on the stones. I'll be going now, I'm thinking, but I'm not sure what place my stick's in, and I'm destroyed with terror and dread. There's a thing with a cold living hand on it sitting up at my side. My road is lost on me now! Oh, merciful God, set my foot on the path this day, and I'll be saying prayers morning and night, and not straining my ear after young girls, or doing any bad thing till I die – ... Mary Doul is it? Is it Mary Doul, I'm saying?

– *The Well of the Saints*, Act 3

## Five Songs from Canadian Traditional Collections (1971)

### **J'ai perdu mon amant**

J'ai perdu mon amant  
Et je m'en souci' guère;  
Le regret que j'en ai  
Sera bientôt passé.  
Je porterai le deuille  
D'un habit de satin;  
Je verserai des larmes  
De vin.

Amant, que j't'ai donc fait  
Qui puiss' tant te déplaire?  
Est-c' que j't'ai pas aimé  
Comm' tu l'as mérité?  
Je t'ai aimé, je t'aime,  
Je t'aimerai toujours.  
Pour toi mon coeur soupier  
Toujours.

La maison de chez nous  
C'est un lieu solitaire;  
On n'y voit pas souvent  
Divertir ses amants.  
Pour des amants qu'on aime,  
Qu'on aim' si tendrement,  
On aimerait les voire  
Souvent.

### **There was a woman in our town**

There was a woman in our town,  
in our town she did dwell;  
She lov-ed her husband dearly  
but another man twice as well.

Marsh'n tie, hiddledy high,  
hurray me boys for me.

She went to the doctor  
to see if she could find  
To see if she could find something  
for to make her old man blind

"Just feed him on cheese and marrowbone  
and feed it to him all,  
And he will get so gosh-darned blind  
he'll not see you at all."

I have lost my love,  
but I am harly concerned about it;  
sorrow  
will soon pass.  
I will wear mourning clothes -  
of fine satin;  
I will let flow great tears -  
of wine.

Love, what have I done to you,  
that could upset you so much?  
Did I not love you  
as you deserved?  
I did love you; I do love you;  
I will always love you.  
My heart pines for you  
always.

Our house  
is a lonely place;  
there is seldom much there  
by which one could amuse a lover.  
Lovers that one loves  
so tenderly -  
one would like to see them  
often.



She fed him on cheese and marrowbone  
and fed it to him all,  
And he did get so gosh-darned blind  
he couldn't see her at all.

One day the old man said to her,  
"I'm tired of this life:  
I think I'll go and drown myself  
and that will end my strife."

They walked along and they talked along  
'til they came to the river's brim;  
The old man said to her, "My dear,  
I wish you'd push me in."

She ran back some paces  
and ran to shush him in;  
The old man stepp-ed to one side  
and she went tumbling in.

She scream-ed and she hollered,  
she cri-ed and she bawled;  
The old man said, "I'd help you, dear,  
but I can't see you at all."

She swam around, she swam around,  
'til she came to the river's brim;  
The old man grabbed a cedar pole  
and shoved her father in.

So now my song is ended  
and I can sing no more,  
But wasn't she a gosh-darned fool  
she didn't swim ashore?

### **Hanusja**

There on a hillock were two cuckoos cutting barley;  
A third cuckoo, Hanusja, was gathering flax.

"O God, level the mountains even with the valleys  
So that I can see my father from afar.  
I care not whether they are levelled or not,  
For I can recognize my father by his voice."

"O God, level the mountains even with the valleys  
So that I can see my mother from afar.  
I care not whether they are levelled or not,  
For I can recognize my mother by her voice."

"O God, level the mountains even with the valleys  
So that I can see my beloved from afar.  
I care not whether they are levelled or not,  
For I can recognize my beloved by his voice."

**Susvarcyk, Antela**

Rock lightly, little duck,  
floating silently;  
Think it over, dear girl,  
before you marry me.

Do you know, dear girl,  
how to mow the rye on the hill?  
Will you know how to hold me  
close to your heart?

Oh, don't ask, dear lad,  
if I know the work;  
Ask at first  
if I'll marry you.

Neither am I a drunkard  
nor a loose-living man;

I am father's son,  
a tiller of the soil.

You boasted, young lad,  
how good your home was.  
You boasted, young one,  
how magnificent your fields were.

The home of the young lad  
has a leaky roof;  
The fields of the young one  
are sandy hills.

Rock lightly, little duck,  
floating silently;  
Think it over, dear girl,  
giving such an answer.

**L'habitant de Saint-Roch**

...L'extrémité d'extrémité du bout  
du loil du bout d;la queue du chien  
du cavalier d'la fill' d;la femm' d'l'habitant  
de Saint-Roch s'en va-t-au marché

...The very end of the end of the tip  
of the hair on the top of the tail of the  
dog of the sweetheart of the daughter  
of the wife of the settler from Saint-Roch goes  
off to market.

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## Concert 3

### Five Lyrics of the T'ang Dynasty (1947)

#### **The Staircase of Jade**

Her jade-white staircase is cold with dew;  
Her silk soles are wet, she lingered there so long....  
Behind her closed casement, why is she still waiting,  
Watching through its crystal pane the glow of the autumn moon?

#### **The Limpid River**

The limpid river, past its bushes  
Running slowly as my chariot,  
Becomes a fellow voyager  
Returning home with the evening birds.  
A ruined city-wall overtops an old ferry,  
Autumn sunset floods the peaks.  
Far away, beside Mount Song,  
I shall close my door and be at peace.

#### **The Inlaid Harp**

I wonder why my inlaid harp has fifty strings,  
Each with its flower-like fret an interval of youth.  
The sage Chuatzui is day-dreaming, bewitched by butterflies,  
The spring-heart of Emperor Wang is crying in a cuckoo,  
Mermen weep their pearly tears down a moon-green sea,  
Blue fields are breathing their jade to the sun....  
And a moment that ought to have lasted for ever  
Has come and gone before I knew.

#### **On a Rainy Night**

You ask me when I am coming,  
I do not know.  
I dream of your mountains and autumn pools  
brimming all night with the rain.  
Oh, when shall we be trimming wicks again,  
together in your western window?  
When shall I be hearing your voice again,  
all night in the rain?

#### **Parting at a Wine-Shop**

A wind, bringing willow-cotton, sweetens the shop,  
And a girl from Wu, pouring wine, urges me to share it  
with my comrades of the city who are here to see me off,  
And as each of them drains his cup, I say to him in parting:  
O, go and ask this river running to the east,  
if it can travel farther than a friend's love.

## Beckett Songs for baritone and guitar (2008)

### Roundelay

on all that strand  
at end of day  
steps sole sound  
long sole sound  
until unbidden stay  
then no sound  
on all that strand  
long no sound  
until unbidden go  
steps sole sound  
long sole sound  
on all that strand  
at end of day

### Thither

thither  
a far cry  
for one  
so little  
fair daffodils  
march then  
  
then there  
then there  
  
then thence  
daffodils  
again  
march then  
again  
a far cry  
again  
for one  
so little

### Something there

something there  
where  
out there  
out where  
outside  
what  
the head what else  
something there somewhere  
outside  
the head  
  
at the faint sound so brief  
it is gone and the whole globe  
not yet bare  
the eye  
opens wide  
wide  
till in the end  
nothing more  
shutters it again  
  
so the odd time  
out there  
somewhere out there  
like as if  
as if  
something  
not life  
necessarily

## Play and Sing (2008)

3.

How to sing a song without words? Well, now, let's find some words to sing along with this tune. But this tune has no need for words, Pooh! So just sing. It's a song without words. Boo, la, la. Slowly: that's all.

5.

Yes, I can play a pizzicato cello, and I can imitate the pizzicato; hear the cello imitate what I first sang. This is double counterpoint, in case you didn't know.

7.

The voice now sings alone. This is me singing all alone. The intervals zig and zag, up and then down, and enharmonics thicken the plot. Now a louder tone, as the melody climbs and then springs to jump up, up, to match a higher note. You think that's all now? Well, just think again. Whoo! Climax! and here's how it ends.

## Avowals (1985)

*The stage has two spot-lit areas, one very bright (the "performance area," PA) and the other a yellowish dim light (the "backstage" area," BA), Blackness; a sudden burst of light; the singer is standing in PA, smiling and singing the end of a song.*

[Singer:] ...YOU!

*Steps in BA,; smile disappears.*

i was meant to

i was meant to

i was meant to meant to

i was meant to

i was meant to

i was meant to meant to

i was meant to

i was meant to

i was meant to meant to

sing-guh

sing-guh

sing-guh

sing-guh

i was me- (h)e- (he)eant to

sing-guh

sing-guh

sing-guh

sing-guh

guh guh guh guh gah guh...goo?

goo?

goo

goo

goo? (*Hand in front of mouth, as if sucking thumb.*)

[Pianist:] (*Loud, breathy explosion of air*) HOO!

[Singer:] (*slaps cheeks*) i was

i was i was

i was

i meant

i meant -t -t -t -t (*steps back into PA.*)

-t -t -to tell you

you were loved

all the while

tho the years stretch on between us

please remember the love we once knew...o...

o... oooooo...  
(steps back into BA, doubles over  
as if in intense pain.)

i was  
i mean i  
was i  
mean i was

i mean  
i was i  
mean i  
was i mean

i mean....

[Pianist:] *(sarcastic)* YES?

[Singer:] i mean...

[Pianist:] *(louder)* YES?

[Singer:] i me an'...(steps back into PA)  
you  
do this to  
everyone you meet  
greet them in  
the same sweet way  
treat them like  
they're lovers, they  
don't know what to do

you  
do this too  
every time we part  
casually  
you break my heart  
start and stop  
i'm torn apart  
don't know what to say

[Pianist:] Hey!

[Singer:] Exactly! *(moving back into BA)*

Exactly! *(pause)* Ex – actly.

*Sits, looking at audience, gestures with thumb to PA.*

my ex – act  
my ex -  
actual -  
act  
a  
my exact

you

actual  
all my

*you (stands and picks up chair)*

act  
*(carries chair to area between PA and BA, then holds chair up in the air)*  
you – you

maybe me or  
us  
we?  
them  
or it or

*they (puts chair down in front of him and stares at it; picks up chair, carries it to PA; placing chair on stage, puts one foot on it.)*

i...  
i, i, i,  
you say  
beauty's in the eye of  
the beholder and  
when I behold her  
I know what beauty means

you say  
the future's in the hands of  
the dreamers and  
when i dream her  
she hands my future to me

you say  
all things come to him who waits  
so i'm waiting yes i'm waiting  
but better too soon than far too late

oh  
won't you please come over to me?

you say  
that love is the wisdom  
of a fool and  
yes i'm fool enough  
to be in love with you  
to be in love with...*(shakes his head)*  
be in love...  
with...

no...no...*(shakes head again; flips chair  
upstage; steps into BA)*

no  
no more  
no  
no more no  
no more  
no  
no more  
more  
i meant  
no  
more

was  
i meant no  
was  
i was no  
i was i was

*Moves midway between BA and PA.*

no....  
i... i... you...  
i... you... you...  
i, i... you...  
i, i, i...you, you  
i, i... you, you, you  
a  
you, you  
e  
i



i, o, you  
u  
a, e, o  
you  
a, e, o  
ooo  
o, o, ooo  
a, e, a, i  
eee  
i, i i,  
o, u, ooo,  
ayy, ohh  
you, you  
i, you, i  
u  
a, e, o  
i...  
y...

*Lights slowly dim to blackness*

## I love to dance (1999)

### The Jolly Raftsman, O

I am sixteen, I do confess,  
I'm sure I am no older, O.  
I place my mind, it never shall move,  
It's on a jolly raftsman, O.  
    To hew and score it is his plan,  
    And handle the broad-axe neatly, O.  
    It's lay the line and mark the pine.  
    And do it most completely, O.

Oh, she is daily scolding me  
To marry some freeholder, O;  
But I place my mind, it never shall move,  
It's on a jolly raftsman, O.  
    To hew and score, etc.

My love is marching through the pine  
As brave as Alexander, O;  
And none can I find to please my mind  
As well as that jolly raftsman, O.  
    To hew and score, etc.

### So skuki I pechali

In boredom and grief one does not like to go out to the street,  
But I would fly our there to the one whom I love.

I loved him truly, and he loved me too,  
But our love was in vain; he left and forgot me.

I was waiting all day Sunday, waiting just for him,  
But I felt in my heart that I would not see him again.

It is already evening, and my loved one has not come,  
Well, [musicians,] play me a sad tube: he has found another.

Let him stay away; let him love other girls.  
Wherever I meet such men they will not be dear to me.

### Müde kehrt ein Wanderer zurück

Müde kehrt ein Wanderer zurück,  
Nach der Heimat, seiner Liebesglück.  
Einst trat er, trat er vor sein fein's Liebchens Haus,  
und bat von ihr den schönsten Blumenstrauß.

Die schöne Gärtnersfrau so zart und bleich,  
Sie ging mit ihm ins Blumenbeet sogleich;  
Und bei jeder Rose die ihr Finger bricht,  
Rollten Tränen ihr vom Angesicht.

Wearily a wanderer returns  
To the home of the one he loves.  
He came up to the house of his darling loved one  
And asked her for the finest wreath of flowers.

The pretty gardener's wife, so delicate and pale,  
Immediately went with him into the flower bed;  
And every time a rose pricked her finger  
The tears rolled down her face.

“Warum weinst du, du schöne Gärtnersfrau?  
Weinst du um der Veilchen Dunkelblau?  
Oder weinst du dass dein Finger Rosen bricht?”  
“Nein, um die Blümlein allein wein’ ich nicht.

Um den Liebsten wein’ ich nur allein,  
Der gegangen in die Welt hinein,  
Der sein’ m Liebchen, Liebchen Treu versprochen hat,  
Und die Treu hernach gebrochen hat.”

### **La Danse**

Moi, j’aime la danse,  
Le plaisir qui nous fuit sans retour  
Plait á l’enfance,  
Partout et toujours.  
Sous les lambris d’or et sous l’ombrage,  
Le héros et le sauvage,  
Dans les champs come á la Cour,  
Partout on danse.

Le papillon danse,  
Mollement sur le bord du ruisseau,  
Puis il se lance  
Et rit de son eau.  
Le poisson sur la rive fleurie,  
Le mouton sur la prairie,  
Le berger et le troupeau,  
Jusqu’au chien danse.

Dans le ciel on danse,  
Les nuages, la grêle et les vents  
Vont en cadence  
Au gré des antans.  
Et lorsque les éclats du tonnerre  
Ont fait prisonnier la terre  
C’est que les quatr’ éléments  
Étaient en danse.

“Why are you weeping, pretty gardener’s wife?  
Are you weeping for the dark blue violets?  
Or are you weeping for the roses which prick your finger?”  
“No, I am not weeping for the flowers alone.

I am weeping only for my loved one,  
He who has gone into the wide world,  
He who has promised to be true to his dear loved one,  
And has broken that promise.”

I love to dance.  
The enjoyment that’s so fleeting  
Entrances us in childhood,  
Everywhere and always.  
Within gilded salon walls or under shade-trees,  
Noble heroes and natives,  
In the fields just as in the castle hall,  
All around they’re dancing.

The butterfly dances  
Languidly beside the stream,  
Then darts forward  
And laughs from his perch on the water.  
The fish by the flowered shore,  
The sheep in the meadow,  
The shepherd and the whole flock,  
Even the dog, are dancing.

In the sky they’re dancing:  
The clouds, the hail and the breezes  
Do a turn  
In the style of olden days.  
And when bursts of thunder  
Have the earth in their power,  
It’s as if the four elements  
Were dancing.

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