James Joyce

Chamber Music

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James Joyce (1882-1941), photo c.1915, Paul Ghirardelli, vert. sqrd.

CHAMBER MUSIC

I

Strings in the earth and air
Make music sweet;
Birds on the branch where
Day slumps round.

Thieves remain along the river
Not Lean wanderers there;
Pace Romans on his sandals,
Pook frowns on his face.

All softly playing,
Dreaming of old times here,
And lapsed enraging
Upon an instrument.

II

The twilight turns from amethyst
To deep and deeper blue
The lamp flame turns from green glow
The voice of the cantor

The old priest plays on an
Indian and clear and grey
He bends upon the yellow keys,
Bent head motionless the sun.

Thy thoughts and grave wide eyes and hands
Are upon the keys
The twilight turns to darker blue
With lights of amethyst

III

At that hour when all things have repose,
O lonely watcher of the skies
I see the young moon through and the night
Of happy glittering eyes is witches
Yet pale green of sunrise?

When all things repose, do you alone
Awake to have the sweet hope plain
Of the young moon that is to be
And the night wind coming in at sunphase
Till night is stronger?

Pip, on, invisible moon, I am
Where wait, to hearten a sight
Of your pale green and your young and gay,
Soft smart music in the air above
And in the earth below.

IV

When the day are gone birds in heaven
All numbers, discursive,
Hear you sound the dreamy cross
Of your music, O lonely watcher
Hey sings a little dance for thee
And lo, come to visit you.

O hold me secure in mystery
When he at remainder is calling,
Sun moon. Who is my lover
Who is my lover? Who is my darling?
Know not by this, the lovers, I ever,
"Do I hear you sun remain.

V

Lean out of the windows,
Goldenhair,
I heard you singing
A merry air.

My book was closed,
I read no more,
Watching the shadows
On the floor.

I have left my book,
I have left my room,
For I heard you singing
Through the gloom.

Singing and singing
A merry air,
Lean out of the windows,
Goldenhair.

VI

I would in that sweet bosom be
O I would I would I would
Be a little wee, wee, warm heart
Sometimes over all the coverlid

Sometimes over all the coverlid
Sometimes over all the coverlid
Sometimes over all the coverlid
Sometimes over all the coverlid

And where the sky is pale blue cap
Of the wee, wee, warm
Big little eyes, twinkling to
The dress with dainty hand

VII

Who goes amid the green wood
With sprightly delicate laughing lo?
Who goes amid the merry green wood
To make it merrier?

Who passes in the twilight
Be voice that is low but light-footed?
Who passes in the twilight
Be voice that is light?

The voices of O the woodland
Gleam with a soft and golden fire
For whom does all the merry woodland
Carry so loose attire?

O, is it for my love
The woods their rich apparel wear —
O, is it for my love
That is a young and fair.

VIII

Winds of May, that dance on the sea,
Dancing a measure, chanting a lay:
From heaven to heaven softly sounding
The hours that go to perfection,
Dancing, dancing, the winds of May
Your step my love has stolen?
Strikkalo! Strikkalo!
Your step my love has stolen.
Love is a refrain when love is sung.

IX

Bright cap and streamers,
He sings in the hollow:
Come follow, come follow,
Follow the fair.
Leave dreams in the shoonee
That will not after
Follow the footsteps
Its nothing more.

With ribbons streaming
He sings the holiday
In troop at his shoulder
Follow follow
And the tune of dancing
Dances is now —
Follow follow
Sweetheart, I come.

X

Red rubies, zircs, zircs,
Red zircs in gilded dun,
Happy I am; scarce to stare
Of happiness I dare not share,
For love of you and you is fair
The wood opens thy yellow hair.

When then here heard his voice upon
The bugles of the elucidation
Of the wood opens thy yellow
The gilded tresses are fair
And soft to touch the wood
That is the vapor of wonderment

XI

What counsel has the hunted moon
Put in the heart, my lady wood,
O lovely wood and wondrous wise,
Of course a moon hunted by day
A sage that is held cold lest
With the wonderful Capricho?

Believe me rather that are wise
In disregard of the divine,
A gaiety troubles those moon
Hunted by day, O lady wood,
Its mere be known to reason or wind
Lest, O lady wood, I be blind.

XII

Go seek her out all courteously,
And say I come,
Wind of spices whose song is ever
Of her delicacy.
O, bayou sweet, bayou sweet,
Sweet, sweet, sweet.
Go where she walks
Bright-robed, and where
She sits
Her silver wheels are weaving
Her web of dreams.
Arise, arise,
My dove, my beautiful one!

I send by the cuckoo two,
My sister, my love,
Who is my spouse and my bride.
My dove, my beautiful one!

Arise, arise!
Now the rain is over and gone,
The winter is passed,
The flowers appear on the earth
Of grace and gladness.

White sweetly, gently, sweetly
The flowers bells of a dove are stirred
And the voice charm of Mary
Begins (remember!) to be heard.

XIII

O mark it, the valley cries
And then, lovely wood
Let every thing be ready
For soon a story is sung to you
When Love did entreate go
Through the woods and fields calling
Cuckoo, cuckoo!
O wood and pleasant is the valley
And then, love, will we sing

XIV

Because your voice was at my side
I gave him peace.
Because your voice was kind I held
Your hand upon.

There is no word nor any sign
Can wonder over
Or is a stranger to me now
Who was my friend.

XVII

O sweetheart, hear you
Across the water
A voice shall have sorrow
When friends him fall.

For he shall have lost
Friends he serves
Who shall have
Their words come to

But one voice love
Will softly move
And softly woo him
In voice of love.

His hand is under
Your head (O sweet rose!)
So he who has secrets
Shall have rest.

XX

Be not sad because of stars
Prefer a lying clamour before you
Be not sad because of stars
Can thou dishonour you?

They are sudden fires of stars,
Their fires cursed as a continual sigh,
Proudly answer to their stars —
Are they deep, deep

James Joyce with Nora Barnacle (Mrs. J.), c.1904, Paul Ghirardelli, vert. sqrd. Pen Pictures Gallery, collection of Paul Gerard Hermann, Los Angeles, Pen Pictures.

XX

In the dark prize wood
I would set by,
In deep cool shadow
At noon of day.

Hear sweet to be there,
Hear sweet
When the great place friend
Unsettled is.

Thy kiss descending
Sweeter were
Than the sweet sound
Of the bee.

O, unto the pine wood
At noon of day
Come with me now
Sweet love, away.

XXI

The sea is in thy silver hours
Of dreaming and of dreams
And silver is everything but love
Before the looking glass.

I pray you, come to comfort me
Comfort me, come hither
Comfort me, I pray you
Under a green tree.

That makes as cool things in the lower
Burning and going hours
All fair, with sweet a pretty or
And sweet a neighbour.

XXV

Lightly come or lightly go
Another will pass the door soon,
Hours and years I wasted on,
Proud for thy heighter sun —
Lightly come or lightly go
Begin all thing low.

Lightly, lightly, — ever so
Chaste that wings' low darkness
In the bower of exotour
Lightly, lightly, — ever so
Lest sunlighter wing confound
When the heart is heartest.

XXVI

Thou hearest in the shelf of night,
Poor lady, a thriving sun —
Hearest thy lover, poor lady
What sound hath made his heart so beat?
Instead it is return coming forth
From the gates of the north?

That sound of thine, O Veronica,
Is the sound of my lady's
When a wind that blows from sea
At gleaming heart unsyndic —
Is the sound of my lady's heart
In Purchase or in Falmouth.

XXVII

Though I thy Mithridates were,
Framed to defy the poison-dart,
Yet must thou fold me unaware
To know the rapture of thy heart,
And I but render and confess
The malice of thy tenderness.

For elegant and antique phrase,
Dearest, my lips wax all too wise ;
Nor have I known a love whose praise
Our piping poets solemnize.
Neither a love where may not be
Ever so little falsity.

XXVIII

Gentle lady, do not sing
Sad songs about the end of love ;
Lay aside sadness and sing
How love that passes is enough.

Sing about the long deep sleep
Of lovers that are dead, and how
In the grave all love shall sleep :
Love is aweary now.

XXIX

Dear heart, why will you use me so ?
Dear eyes that gently me upbraid,
Still are you beautiful – but O,
How is your beauty raimented !

Through the clear mirror of your eyes,
Through the soft sigh of kiss to kiss.
Desolate winds assail with cries
The shadowy garden where love is.

And soon shall love dissolved be
When over us the wild winds blow –
But you, dear love, too dear to me,
Alas ! why will you use me so ?

XXX

Love came to us in time gone by
When one at twilight shyly played
And one in fear was standing nigh –
For Love at first is all afraid.

We were grave lovers. Love is past
That had his sweet hours many a one ;
Welcome to us now at the last
The ways that we shall go upon.

XXXI

O, it was out by Donnycarney
When the bat flew from tree to tree
My love and I did walk together ;
And sweet were the words she said to me.

Along with us the summer wind
Went murmuring – O, happily ! –
But softer than the breath of summer
Was the kiss she gave to me.

XXXII

Rain has fallen all the day.
O come among the laden trees :
The leaves lie thick upon the way
Of memories.

Staying a little by the way
Of memories shall we depart.
Come, my beloved, where I may
Speak to your heart.

XXXIII

Now, O now, in this brown land
Where Love did so sweet music make
We two shall wander, hand in hand.
Forbearing for old friendship› sake,
Nor grieve because our love was gay
Which now is ended in this way.

A rogue in red and yellow dress
Is knocking, knocking at the tree ;
And all around our loneliness
The wind is whistling merrily.
The leaves – they do not sigh at all
When the year takes them in the fall.

Now, O now, we hear no more
The vilanelle and roundelay !
Yet will we kiss, sweetheart, before
We take sad leave at close of day.
Grieve not, sweetheart, for anything –
The year, the year is gathering.

XXXIV

Sleep now, O sleep now,
O you unquiet heart !
A voice crying « Sleep now »
Is heard in my heart.

The voice of the winter
Is heard at the door.
O sleep, for the winter
Is crying « Sleep no more. »

My kiss will give peace now
And quiet to your heart –
Sleep on in peace now,
O you unquiet heart !

XXXV

All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan,
Sad as the sea-bird is, when going
Forth alone,
He hears the winds cry to the waters›
Monotone.

The grey winds, the cold winds are blowing
Where I go.
I hear the noise of many waters
Far below.
All day, all night, I hear them flowing
To and fro.

XXXVI

I hear an army charging upon the land,
And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their knees :
Arrogant, in black armour, behind them stand.
Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.

They cry unto the night their battle-name ;
I moan in sleep when I hear afar their whirling laughter.
They cleave the gloom of dreams, a blinding flame.
Clanging, clanging upon the heart as upon an anvil.

They come shaking in triumph their long, green hair ;
They come out of the sea and run shouting by the shore.
My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair ?
My love, my love, my love, why have you left me alone ?

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