

SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO

At time of writing I am not particularly wise or old, but as my life continues I find that both sorrows and joys of life multiply in ways that I never could have imagined even a few short years ago. Loved ones go through misfortunes, stress mounts in careers, and what's more life never seems to let one catch up. At the same time, one can find solace and love in partners and in the wisdom of friends.

There can be so much love and so much bitterness, all flowing in an endless stream that might quicken or slow, but never, ever stops for even a breath. In some small way, this music is meant to be a reflection of this.

*Eric Malmquist*

CHICAGO POETS SING! (SELECTIONS)

*Modigliani's Thought*

People are like pottery  
after baking without glazing  
warm  
earthy  
and humble  
my eyes can go around them like arms  
I can hold them with my eyes  
and feel their strength

*Van Gogh Speaks To A Child*

Look up  
the moon is on a trapeze tonight  
swinging back and forth  
swinging in the sky.  
  
swinging back and forth  
stars tremble in fear that the trapeze will break  
causing the moon to fall  
then the stars would have no one to sing for  
  
trees and fields tremble too  
tremble in fear  
of a night with silent stars

*Kathleen Lombardo*

MY DEAREST RUTH

The letter on which *My Dearest Ruth* is based was my father's last written statement. My parents celebrated their 56<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in my father's room at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore on Wednesday, June 23, 2010. The following day, my mother called to say Dad had taken a turn for the worse. I flew to Baltimore the next morning (Friday) and met Mom at Dad's room. The doctors came in and told us there was nothing more they could do—the cancer had progressed too far. All this time, Dad kept repeating one word: "Home." So we made arrangements to bring him back to our apartment in Washington, D.C. While collecting his belongings from the hospital room, Mom pulled open the drawer next to Dad's bed and discovered a yellow legal pad on which Dad had written this a week earlier:

6/17/10

My Dearest Ruth -

You are the only person I have loved in my life, setting aside, a bit, parents and kids and their kids, and I have admired and loved you almost since the day we first met at Cornell some 56 years ago.

What a treat it has been to watch you progress to the very top of the legal world!!

I will be in JH Medical Center until Friday, June 25, I believe, and between then and now I shall think hard on my remaining health and life, and whether on balance the time has come for me to tough it out or to take leave of life because the loss of quality now simply overwhelms. I hope you will support where I come out, but I understand you may not. I will not love you a jot less.

Marty

I should note one factual error: my parents met 59 years before the date of this letter, not 56. Obviously, Dad had their 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary in mind. We chose to keep the number 56 in the song.

My sister, Jane, and I commissioned Stacy Garrop to adapt the letter and set it to music as one of three songs by different women composers to be presented in 2013 as an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday tribute to our mother, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Soprano Patrice Michaels sang the premiere at the Supreme Court with pianist Dana Brown on Saturday, April 6, 2013.

*James Ginsburg*

#### *BIRKAT HADEREKH: BLESSING FOR THE ROAD*

*Birkat Haderekh*—Hebrew for “Blessing for the Road”—begins its journey as a spacious, gently inflected solo clarinet melody, slowly unfolding as it gathers the other members of this clarinet quartet around itself, carving out a distinctive musical “space.” Looking at this piece in its totality, the opening phrase is, at some level, emblematic of the entire piece, as this single-movement composition of approximately 8 minutes can be heard as one extended, gradually evolving melody. At around mid-point of the piece, though, where the clarinet assumes the solo line again, this melody takes something of a turn. With just a small melodic twist, the music takes on an imploring quality, almost in the spirit of an invocation, gradually increasing in urgency, thus becoming a form of prayer—its potential perhaps hinted at, but not necessarily self-evident in the opening statement.

In my own mind while composing this piece, and no longer just thinking in the strictly musical terms of the formation and development of sound shaped in time, the piece became, for all of its modest proportions, a parable of one of life’s journeys. I found myself thinking of the array of conflicting emotions associated with preparing for a voyage, destination uncertain, of someone precious. Anticipation, anxiousness, longing, hope—all mingled together. Perhaps it is a mother praying for her child’s well being; a small, private ritual that cuts across time and place, speaking to our common humanity.

*Shulamit Ran*