

# ***Songs of Longing and Solitude***

*based on the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*

*for tenor (opt. soprano)  
with chamber winds & percussion*

## **Book 1**

- I. We Set the Pace
- II. Evening
- III. To Say Before Going to Sleep
- IV. You, Who Never Arrived

## **Book 2**

- V. Premonition
- VI. The Solitary
- VII. The Hour Strikes
- VII. Quiet Friend

## ***Performance Notes***

Both books should be performed by a single tenor, if possible, or else each book by a different tenor. If this is not possible, a soprano may sing Book 1, provided that a tenor sings Book 2.

It is preferable to perform only Book 1 or only Book 2, rather than to excerpt and combine movements from both books.

The voice should not be amplified. Winds and percussion should be one on a part.

## ***Instrumentation***

Flutes 1 & 2	Timpani
Oboes 1 & 2	Mallets 1 (1 player: bells, chimes)
Bassoons 1 & 2	Mallets 2 (1 player: vibes, xylo)
Clarinets 1 & 2	Mallets 3 (1 player: marimba, chimes)
Horns 1 & 2	Percussion (2 players
Trumpets 1 & 2	tam-tam, cr cym, wdbl, BD, sus cym, triangle)
Trombones 1 & 2	
Euphonium	
Tuba	

# Book 1

## I. We Set the Pace (*Sonnets to Orpheus, Book 1*)

We set the pace.  
But this march of time – take it as a trifle compared to what endures.

All this hurrying soon will be over.  
Only by lingering do we touch the holy.

Young ones, don't waste your courage racing so fast, flying so high!

See how all things are at rest –  
darkness and dawn, blossom and book.

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## II. Evening

Slowly now, the sky slips on its darkening blue coat held by a rim of ancient trees.  
You watch: the lands separate and abandon you,  
one part rising toward heaven, one part falling to earth,

leaving you, not at home in either one,  
not so calm and dark as the silent houses,  
not so sure of eternity as the fervent points of light above;

leaving you your own life, boundless and anxious, evolving,  
so that sometimes blocked in, sometimes reaching out,  
one moment a stone inside you, the next, a star.

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## III. To Say Before Going to Sleep

I would like to sing someone to sleep, have someone to comfort and be near.  
I would like to cradle you and softly sing, protect you while you sleep or wake.

I would like to be the only person in the house who knew: the night outside was cold.  
And I would like to listen into you.

The clocks chime, calling to each other.  
Beyond that is silence.

My eyes rest upon your face, and they hold you gently, but let you go.

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#### **IV. You Who Never Arrived**

You, who never arrived,  
Beloved, lost from the start,  
I don't even know what songs would please you.

All the vast, deep images in me –  
the distant landscapes, the surprise turns in the path,  
the mighty kingdoms that once surged with the life of the gods  
all rise within me to mean you, who forever elude me.

You are all the gardens I've gazed at, longing,  
and you almost stepped out, pensive, to meet me.

You, Beloved – I have given up trying to find you.  
But who knows?  
Perhaps the same bird echoed through both of us  
yesterday, separately, in the evening...

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## **Book 2**

#### **V. Premonition**

I am like a flag surrounded by distances.  
I sense the winds that are coming, and must live them  
while the things down below don't yet stir.

The doors still close softly,  
and in the chimneys there's silence;  
the windows don't tremble yet,  
and the dust is still calm.

Then I know the storm already  
and grow embroiled like the sea,  
and spread myself out and plunge deep inside myself,  
and cast myself off,  
and am entirely alone in the great storm.

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## **VI. The Solitary**

I, who have sailed across an unknown sea, am alone among those eternally at home.  
Their long days are sated by routine, while mine yearn for distant dreams.

A new world calls to me, perhaps as uninhabited as the moon.  
But here, they probe and analyze, and all their words are old and spent.

The creatures I brought back from far away, compared with theirs, barely make a sound.  
In their native land they were wild,  
but here they hold their breath, as if for shame.

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## **VII. The Hour Strikes (*The Book of Hours*)**

The hour strikes so close above me, so metallic and so clear,  
that all my senses thrum with it.  
I feel it now: there's such power in me  
to grasp and sculpt my world.

I know now that nothing has ever been real without my beholding it.  
All becoming has needed me.  
My gaze ripens things,  
and they come toward me, to meet and to be met.

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## **VIII. Quiet Friend (*Sonnets to Orpheus, Book 2*)**

Quiet friend who has come so far,  
feel how your breathing opens space around you.

In this darkened bell tower let yourself ring.  
As you sound, what batters you becomes your strength.

If your life has been painful and drinking it is bitter, turn yourself to wine.

In this boundless night, be the mystery at the crossroads of your senses.  
Become the meaning there.

Embrace your transformation.  
And if the world forgets you,  
say to the silent earth: I flow.  
To the rushing waters, speak: I am.