MIRIAM GIDEON

New World Records 80393

There is in American painting a dynamic movement known as abstract expressionism, led by such well-known artists as Jackson Pollack, Franz Kline, and Willem de Kooning.

In Music there is an equivalent--and equally important--development, which we call atonal expressionism. Its lineage stretches from Carl Ruggles and Roger Sessions to Stefan Wolpe and Elliott Carter. The work of Miriam Gideon stands out as a major and individualistic realization of this style.

One of the characteristics of abstract expressionism is that it is highly intense and personal; nonrepresentational art, free of references to the outside world, must of necessity build from its own premises and reflect an interior emotional world. This experience is exactly what we find in Miriam Gideon's music. There is a drama and lyricism here, highly controlled yet nevertheless personal, economical yet full of fantasy.

Although she is well known as an instrumental composer (until recently, instrumental music has dominated new-musical life), Gideon's fondness for the voice and her use of lyric and dramatic poetry play a major role in her output, which includes an opera, several choral works, and many songs and song cycles with piano and various instrumental ensembles. Through the choice of texts and their settings, a dialogue is established between the poet's images of love, nature, or death and the composer's lyric fantasy--highly vocal, freely intense, and atonal. The music on this recording well represents this evocative side of her work.

Miriam Gideon was born on October 23, 1906, in Greeley, Colorado, where her father was a professor at Colorado State Teachers College. Although her parents were not musical, when the family moved to Chicago in 1915 and she began piano lessons, she showed unusual talent right away. The next year the family moved to New York City, and she studied at nearby Yonkers Musical Conservatory with the pianists Hans Barth. Then her uncle, Henry Gideon, a choral conductor, organist, and music director at Temple Israel in Boston, arranged for her to come to that city in 1921, where she attended Boston University, and studied with pianist Felix Fox, a pupil of Isidor Philipp. In 1926, after graduating from Boston University, she returned to New York City (which is still her home). There she attended courses in music at New York University and studied composition with two private teachers who had a great influence on her, Lazar Saminsky (from 1931 to 1934) and Roger Sessions (from 1935 to 1943), with an intervening sojourn in France and Switzerland.

Sessions, who had been living in Europe, had recently returned to New York. At a time when American music had turned quite traditional and American teaching institutions were extremely conservative, he was examining and working with advanced techniques, and encouraging exploration and a more personal style among his pupils. The works of those who gathered around Sessions in New York, Princeton, and Berkeley form a major and multifaceted chapter in the history of American music, one that ranges from expressionism to serialism. Certainly Sessions exerted a major influence on Gideon as well.

The earliest music on this recording, a group of songs with piano (Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt, Lockung, Vergiftet sind meine Lieder, She Weeps over Rahoon, and The Too-Late Born), belong to this period. While this is apprentice work, still traditional and tonal, it is already highly accomplished.

From 1942 to 1946 Gideon studied at Columbia University, from which she received an MA degree in musicology. Subsequently she taught at both Brooklyn College and the City University of New York. On December 16, 1949, she married Frederic Ewen, a writer and professor of English literature at Brooklyn College.

The years just after World War II were an extremely creative period for Gideon, and are represented here by another series of songs based on poetry: Four Epitaphs by Robert Burns, Mixxo, on a poem by Miguel Angel Asturias, and To Music by Robert Herrick. These works are representative of the composer's growing creative maturity. Of particular interest is Mixxo, which is set both in the original Spanish and in English translation, a format which Gideon used here for the first time and repeated on a number of occasions.

The Suite for Clarinet and Piano, written for her colleague, the clarinetist and composer Meyer Kupferman, dates from 1972 and represents Gideon's mature instrumental style--at once intense and playful, tightly organized yet freely inventive.

In 1955 she became an associate professor of music at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which awarded her a Doctor of Sacred Music degree in 1970. In 1967 she joined the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music. During later years she received many commissions, honors, and awards, and in 1975 became the second woman composer to be elected to the National Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Gideon's continuing creative development is well represented here by a series of works from the past decade, including *Ecloque* for flute and piano; *Poet to Poet*, a song cycle for voice and piano of poems written by famous poets to other poets; and a series of settings for voice and instruments: *Creature to Creature*, a setting of Nancy Cardozo's "An Animalculary" (voice, flute, and harp); *The Shooting Starres Attend Thee*, a cycle for voice, flute, violin, and cello on poems by Herrick, Thomas Carew, and Samuel Menashe; and *Böhmischer Krystall*, a setting of a poem from that classic inspiration of early expressionism, Albert Giraud's "Pierrot Lunaire," that uses the same instruments (voice, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano) used by Schoenberg in his "Pierrot" setting (although he did not set this particular poem). *Steeds of Darkness*, for voice, flute, oboe, cello, percussion, and piano, is a setting of an Italian poem by Felix Pick, followed by a poetic re-creation in English by Eugene Mahon. In this twofold dramatic meditation on death, many of the best elements of the composer's personal vision come together in a particularly intense and mature form.

—Eric Salzman

Eric Salzman is a composer, writer and artistic director of the American Music Theatre Festival.

Steeds of Darkness

1- Sovra un destrier dalle fumanti frogie sei, sola, Tu la temeraria guida, ma or vedo che il puledro, spaventato, accelera la corsa sua mortale e ora intendo del tuo terror le grida mentre dura il galoppo a perdifiato.

Su un cavallo mi butto, gia sellato, e affondo i miei speroni nel suo ventre in disperata scalpitante gara: potro affiancarmi a Tu, mentre ognora la distanza aumenta, oh dara terribil sorte?

Lottiamo, oh lottiam contro la morte; troppo or mi sopravanzi e non ti vedo piu, fuggiasca sposa, mentr' io, tenace, corro e mai non cedo incitando il destrier con voce irosa.

Gia s'e levata la novella aurora e disperatamente io corro ancora!

Dove ci condurra la folle corsa?

verso un abisso spaventoso e oscuro,
o del tempo l'irresistibil morsa
ci stringera, si perfida e tenace?
mai troveremo l'invocata pace?
--Felix Pick
(from "Sogni e Visioni")

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On a horse with fuming nostsrils You are alone, You, the fearless guide, But now I see that the horse, frightened, Is accelerating its mortal run and now I hear the terror of your screams While the galloping continues to a breathless end.

On a horse already harnessed I leap, And dig my spurs into its belly In a desperate contest: Will I be able to get close to you, while The distance deeps growing, O, terrible fate?

Let us fight, oh let us fight against death; Too far ahead, I no longer see you, My spouse in flight, While I, unswerving, run and never yield Urging the horse on, with angry voice.

Already the new dawn is rising! And in desperation I am still running! Where will this made race lead to? Toward an abyss fearful and obscure, Where the irresistible grip of time Will suffocate us, so perfidious and tenacious? Shall we ever find the peace we pray for? (trans. M.G.)

2- I hear the last shudder of your flesh As the horses of death Make off with you, Galloping reinless Into the night.

I follow, Stirrups of grief Girding my belly Like dawn shaking The limbs of darkness...

My horse is old,
Yet strong
And younger than the night,
But is there any hope
Of keeping pace with you?
Never say

My racing breath
Will never reach you.
Never

Though you be spent and breathless As the breathless dawn.

--Eugene Mahon

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The Shooting Starres Attend Thee

6- The Shooting Starres Attend Thee
Her Eyes the Glow-worme lend thee,
The Shooting Starres attend thee;
And the Elves also,
Whose little eyes glow,
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No Will-o'-th'-Wispe mis-light thee; Nor Snake nor Slow-worme bite thee: But on thy way Not making a stay, Since Ghost there's none to affright thee.

Let not the darke thee cumber;
What though the Moon do's slumber?
The Starres of the night
Will lend thee their light,
Like Tapers cleare without number.

Then Julia let me wooe thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me
And when I shall meet
Thy sil'vry feet,
My soule I'le pour into thee.
--Robert Herrick

7- Give Me More Love, or More Disdaine Give me more love, or more disdaine; The Torrid, or the frozen zone, Bring equall ease unto my paine; The temperate affords me none: Eigher extreme, of love, or hate, Is sweeter than a calm estate.

Then crowne my joyes, or cure my paine; Give me more love, or more disdaine. --Thomas Carew

8- Interlude

9- Know, Celia, Since Thou Art So Proud
Know, Celia (since thou art so proud),
'Twas I that gave thee thy renowne:
Thou had'st, in the forgotten crowd
Of common beauties, liv'd unknowne,
Had not my verse exhal's thy name,
And with it, ympt* the wings of fame.

That killing power is none of thine,
I gave it to thy voyce, and eyes:
Thy sweets, thy graces, all are mine;
Thou art my starre, shin'st in my skies;
Then dart not from thy borrowed sphere
Lightning on him, that fixt thee there.

Tempt me with such affrights no more, Lest what I made, I uncreate; Let fooles thy mystique formes adore, I'le know thee in thy mortall state: Wise Poets that wrap't Thruth in tales, Knew her themselves, through all her vailes.

--Thomas Carew

*attached

10- Around My Neck an Amulet

А-

round

my neck

an amul-

let

Be-

tween

my eyes

а

star

Α

ring

in my

nose

and a

gold

chain

to

keep me

where

You

are

--Samuel Menashe

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Böhmischer Krystall

13- Ein Strahl des Mondes, whohl verschlossen

Im Glas von bohmischem Krystall,

Ein Kleinod, wundersam und selten,

1st dieses versetolle Buch.

Ich hab mich als Pierrot verkleidet-

Ihr, die ich liebe, bring ich dar

Den Strahl des Mondes, wohl verschlossen

Im Glas von bohmischem Krystall.

In diesem schimmernden Symbole

Liegt Alles, was ich hab und bin.

Gleichwie Pierrot im bleichen Schadel, Trag ich in Herz und Sinnen nur Den Strahl des Mondes-wohl verschlossen. --Hans Heilmann

A moon's ray, securely enclosed In a glass of Bohemian crystal A jewel, strange and rare, Is this verse-intoxicated book.

I have dressed like Pierrot-For her, whom I love, I bring A moon's ray, securely enclosed In a glass of Bohemian crystal.

In this shimmering symbol Is contained all that I have and am. Like Pierrot in his pale skull, I carry in my heart and thoughts Nothing but the moon's ray-well hidden. (*trans. M.G.*)

Creature to Creature

14- *The Fly* Compose, you said, a poem for this fly Who simply will not die.

A Love poem, said I,
And wrote it with a sigh
And hung it up to dry.
So when the fly flew by,
(I cannot tell you why)
He read it with his metaphysical eye.

15- *Spider*Spider, the cloth you spin,
Spreading your substance thin,
Can hold no heat within,
Nor keep out the cold wind.

Your geometric net Is jewelled with corpses, set With friends that you collect And victims you forget.

Spider-how skild you are--

Ambitious metaphor-Stretching from star to star Ladders of gossamer.

What green revolutionary
Thought sent your incendiary
Spirit wandering through a summer's night?

16- Snake
Who let you in
After I barred the gate?
It's much too late
To talk of sin.
The orchard bare
And flowers gone to seedThere is no need
To tempt or dare.

Beware, my fleet
Monosyllabic foe,
This rusty hoe-Yet, it was sweet,
Our ancient crime;
So while I turn my head,
Swift through this garden thread
A stitch in time.

17- Firefly
(after Hadrian)
Minuscule voluptuary
Guest in the imaginary
Gardens wher the would-be poets write
Verses quasi visionary,
Aviary, bestiary-Tell me, animula of delight-What green revolutionary
Thought sent your incendiary
Spirit wandering through a summer's night?

18- Hoot-Owl
Be still, I pray, desist,
Hooter, hilarious.
Old dusty feathers,
Perched in the high
Crotch of darkness-Don't you know what time it is?

What scatologic jest

Calls forth such laughter
That I cannot rest?
What huge obscenity
Drops through the leaves
Of midnight? Stop. Or tell it me.

19- Interlude

20- L'Envoi
Welcome, cricket,
Faithful friend,
Once more to mourn
The summer's end.
From secret corners
Of my walls
Your wistful phrase
One voice recalls.

Although the rose
Is black with frost,
Tell me, my cricket,
All's not lost.
Still in our fires
The apple glows
While the winds gather
And the snows...

When into winter
I must climb
Up the dark passagewayThis time,
Come with me,
Cricket, come to bed,
Sweet voice that lives
Within my head.
--Nancy Cardozo

From Creature to Creature: An Animalculary.

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21- Leise Zieht Durch Mein Gemut

Leise zieht durch mein Gemut, Liebliches Gelaute, Klinge, kleines Fruhlingslied, Kling hinaus ins Weite. Kling hinaus bis an das Haus, Wo die Blumen spriessen. Wenn you eine Rose schausst, Sag' ich lass sie grussen. --Heinrich Heine

Lightly drift through my thoughts Ringing sounds. Ring out, little songs of Spring, Ring out into the distance.

Ring out to that house Where the flowers are sprouting. If you should see a rose, Tell it I send my greeting. (*trans. M.G.*)

22- Lockung

Horst du nicht die Baume rauschen Draussen durch die stille Rund? Lockt's dich nicht, hinabzulauschen Von dem Soller in den Grund,

Wo die vielen Bache gehen Wunderbar in Mondenschein, Und die stillen Schlosser sehen In den Fluss vom hohen Stein?

Kennst du noch die irren Lieder, Aus der alten, schonen Zeit? Sie erwachen alle wieder, Nachts in Waldeseinsamkeit,

Wen die Baume Traumend lauschen, Und der Flieder duftet schwul, Und im Fluss die Nixen rauschen; Komm herab, hier ist's so kuhl. Komm herab, hier ist's so kuhl. --Joseph Eichendorff

Don't you hear the rustling of the trees Outside in the quiet? Are you not tempted to listen From the balcony to below,

Where the many brooks flow, Wonderful in the moonlight, And the silent castles gaze
Into the river from the high promontory.

Do you still recognize the wild songs From the beautiful times of yore? They all awaken At night in the solitude of the woods,

When the trees listen, dreaming, And the scent of the lilac lies heavy, And in the rive the water-nymphs are playing; Come down here, it is so cool. Come down here, it is so cool. (*trans. M.G.*)

23- Vergiftet Sind Meine Lieder

Vergiftet sind meine Lieder; Wie konnt es anders sein? Du hast mir ja Gift gegossen, Ins bluhende Leben hinein.

Vergiftet sind meine Lieder; Wie konnt es anders sein? Ich trage im Herzen viel Schlangen, Und dich, Gelibte mein! --Heinrich Heine

Poisoned are my songs; How could it be otherwise? Since you have poured poison Into my blossoming life.

Poisoned are my songs; How could it be otherwise? I carry in my heart many serpents, And you, my beloved! (*trans. M.G.*)

24- She Weeps Over Rahoon

Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling, Where my dark lover lies. Sad in his voice that calls me, sadly calling, At grey moon-rise.

Love, hear thou how desolate the heart is, Ever calling, ever unanswered, An the dark rain falling, then, as now.

Dark, too, our hearts, O love, shall lie, And cold as his sad heart has lain, Under the moon-grey nettles, the black mould, And mutt'ring rain. -- *James Joyce*

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25- The Too-Late Born

We too, we too, descending once again
The hills of our own land,
We too have heard-far off(Ah!--que ce cor a longue haleine)
The horn of Roland in the passages of Spain.

The first, the second blast,--the failing third.
And with the third turned back,
And climbed once more the steep road southward,
And heard faint the sound of swords, of horses,
Of the disastrous war!

And crossed the dark defile at last,
And found at Roncevaux, upon the dark'ning plain,
The dead against the dead,-And on the silent ground-The silent slain...
--Archibald MacLeish

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Four Epitahs

26- Epitaph for a Wag in Mauchline Lament him, Mauchline husbands a', He often did asist ye. For had ye stayed hale weeks awa', Your wives they ne'er had missed ye.

Ye Mauchline bairns, as on ye press To school in bands togither--O tread ye lightly on his grass.-- Perhaps he was your father.

27- Epitaph on Wee Johnie
Whoe'er thou art, O reader, know
That Death has murdered Johnie.
And here his body lies full low,
For soul he ne'er had any.

28- Epitaph on the Author
He who of Rankine sang lies stiff and dead,
And a green, grassy hillock hides his head.
Alas, alas, a devilish change indeed!

29- Monody on a Lady Famed for Her Caprice
How cold is that bosom which folly once fired,
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately glistened.
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
How dull is that ear which to flattr'y so listened.

Here lies now a prey to insulting neglect, What once was a butterfly gay in life's beam. Want only of wisdom denied her respect, Want only of goodness denied her esteem. Robert Burns

30- Mixco

The Indians descend from Mixco with their burdens of deep blue and the city receives them in its trembling streets with a scattering of lights like stars, that vanish with the dawn.

Los indios bajan de Mixco cargados de azul oscuro y la ciudad les recibe con las calles asustadas por un manojo de luces que, como estrellas, se apagan al venir la madrugada.

A whisper of heartbeats comes from their hands that stroke the wind like two oars; and their feet leave footprints like little soles

in the dust of the road

Un ruido de corazones dejan sus manos que reman como dos remos al viento; y de sus pies van quedando como plantillas las huellas en el polvo del camino.

The stars that appear in Mixco, remain in Mixco, for the Indians catch them for baskets that they fill with chickens and the big white flowers of the golden izote.

Las estrellas que se asoman a Mixco, en Mixco se quedan, porque los indios las cogen para canastos que llenan con gallinas y floronas blancas de izote dorado.

Serenely, serenely live the Indians, more serenely than we do, and when they descend from Mixco all that you hear is the panting that hisses on their lips like a silken serpent.

Es mas callada la vida
de los indios que la nuestsra,
y cuando bajan de Mixco
solo se escucha el jadeo
que a veces silba en sus labios
como serpiente de seda.
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(trans. M.G.)

31- To Music

Charm me asleep and melt me so With thy delicious numbers, That, being ravished, hence I go Away in easy slumbers. Ease my sick head And make my bed,

Thou power that canst sever From me this ill; And quickly still, Though thou not kill, My fever.

Thou sweetly canst convert the same From a consuming fire Into a gentle-licking flame, And make it thus expire.
Then make me weep My pains asleep;
And give me such reposes
That I, poor I,
May think thereby
I live and die
'Mongst roses.

Fall on me like a silent dew,
Or like those maiden showers
Which, by the peep of day, do strew
A baptism o'er the flowers.
Melt, melt my pains
With thy soft strains;
That, having ease me given,
With full delight
I leave this light,
And take my flight
To heaven.
--Robert Herrick

Poet To Poet

32- An Ode for Ben Jonson
Ah, Ben! Say how, or when
Shall we, thy guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun?
Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad;
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

My Ben! Or come again, Or send to us Thy wit's great overplus; But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it,
Lest we that talent spend;
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock, the store
Of such a wit the world should have no more.
--Robert Herrick

33- To Thomas Moore

What are you doing now, Oh Thomas Moore? What are you doing now, Oh Thomas Moore? Sighing or suing now, Rhyming or wooing now, Billing or cooing now, Which, Thomas Moore?

But the Carnival's coming, Oh Thomas Moore! The Carnival's coming, Oh Thomas Moore! Masking and humming, Fifing and drumming, Guitarring and strumming, Oh Thomas Moore! --George Gordon, Lord Byron

34- Ave atque vale (In Memory of Charles Baudelaire)

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over, Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet, Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover, Such as thy vision here solicited, Under the shadow of her fair vast head, The deep division of prodigious breasts, The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep, The weight of awful tresses that still keep The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests Where the wet hill-winds weep?

--Algernon Charles Swinburne

The Artists

Steeds of Darkness

Constantine Cassolas, tenor

members of Speculum Musicae Susan Palma, flute Stephen Taylor, oboe Eric Bartlett, cello Daniel Druckman, percussion Aleck Karis, piano Robert Black, conductor

Suite for Clarinet and Piano

Sheldon Berkowitz, clarinet Elizabeth Rodgers, piano

The Shooting Starres Attend Thee

Eleanor Clark, soprano members of The New York Camerata Jayne Rosenfeld, flute Diane Bruce, violin Charles Fobes, cello

Eclogue

Patricia Spencer, flute David Oei, piano

Böhmischer Krystall

Christine Schadeberg, soprano members of Speculum Musicae Jean Kopperud, clarinet Linda Quan, violin Chris Finckel, cello Elizabeth DeFelice, piano

Creature to Creature

The Jubal Trio Constance Beavon, mezzo-soprano Sue Ann Kahn, flute Susan Jolles, harp

Leise Zieht Durch Mein Gemut, Lockung, Vergiftet Sind Meine Lieder, Mixco, To Music, Poet to Poet

Constantine Cassolas, tenor Walter Hilse, piano

She Weeps Over Rahoon, The Too-Late Born, Four Epitaphs

William Sharp, baritone Walter Hilse, piano

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SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

The Condemned Playground. Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano; Constantine Cassolas, tenor; chamber group, Fritz Jahoda conducting. *Questions on Nature*. Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano; Philip West, oboe; Samuel Lipman, piano; Barry Jekofsky, percussion. CRI SD 343.

Nocturnes. Judith Raskin, soprano; Da Capo Chamber Players, John DeMain conducting. Songs of Youth and Madness. Judith Raskin, soprano; American Composers Orchestra, James Dixon conducting. CRI SD 401.

The Resounding Liar. Constantine Cassolas; Speculum Musicae, Robert Black conducting. Spirit Above the Dust. Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano; Contemporary Chamber Music Ensemble, Arthur Weisberg conducting. CRI SD 493.

Voices from Elysium. Constantine Cassolas; Da Capo Chamber Players. New World 80317.

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Miriam Gideon Retrospective

Steeds of Darkness

- 1- Moderato (5:34)
- 2- Rather fast (3:21)

Suite for Clarinet and Piano

- 3- I. Allegro (1:58)
- 4- II. Moderato (2:36)
- 5- III. Allegreto (3:18)

The Shootings Starres Attend Thee

- 6- The Shooting Starres Attend Thee (2:16)
- 7- Give Me More Love, or More Disdaine (1:15)
- 8- Interlude 043
- 9- Know, Celia, Since Thou Art So Proud (2:47)
- 10- Around my Neck an Amulet (1:04)
- 11- I. Lively and singing (2:30)
- 12- II. Andantino (2:24)
- 13- Bohmischer Krystall (3:00)

Creature to Creature

- 14- I. The Fly (2:11)
- 15- II. Spider (1:41)
- 16- III. Snake (1:50)
- 17- IV. Firefly (0:42)
- 18- V. Hoot-Owl (1:14)
- 19- VI. Interlude (0:38)
- 20- VII. L'Envoi (2:34)
- 21- Leise Zieht Durch Mein Gemut (0:30)
- 22- Lockung (1:18)
- 23- Vergiftet Sind Meine Lieder (1:17)
- 24- She Weeps Over Rahoon (1:40)
- 25- The Too-Late Born (3:18)

Four Epitaphs

- 26-1. Epitaph for a Wag in Mauchline (0:51)
- 27- 2. Epitaph on Wee Johnie (0:55)
- 28- 3. Epitaph on the Author (0:58)
- 29- 4. Monody on a Lady Famed for Her Caprice (1:08)
- 30- Mixco (4:53)
- 31- To Music (4:08)

Poet to Poet

- 32- An Ode for Ben Jonson (2:05)
- 33- To Thomas Moore (1:19)
- 34- Ave atque vale (In Memory of Charles Baudelaire) (2:10)

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