

Saturday, February 7, 2026, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano*
Time for Three, *string trio*

Emily – No Prisoner Be

A Cal Performances Co-commission

Kevin Puts, *composer*

Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano*

Time for Three

Ranaan Meyer, *double bass and vocals*

Nicolas Kendall, *violin/viola and vocals*

Charles Yang, *violin and vocals*

Andrew Staples, *director, lighting, and sound designer*

Lars Braun, *stage manager*

William Reynolds, *lighting designer*

Colin Egan, *sound engineer*

Askonas Holt, *tour management and producer*

Park Avenue Artists, *Time for Three general management*

David Ross, *Time for Three tour management*

Metamorphoza, *dress designer*

Producers

Joyce DiDonato, Ranaan Meyer, Nicolas Kendall, Charles Yang

*The creation of Emily – No Prisoner Be was made possible
by the lead commissioner, Bregenzer Festspiele,
and co-commissioners Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley
and University of California, Santa Barbara Arts & Lectures.*

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Helen Berggruen for Five Arts Foundation, and Gordon P. Getty.*

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PROGRAM

They shut me up

I was the slightest in the House

The Soul selects her own Society

Again—his voice is at the door

Interlude No. 1

I dwell in Possibility

Because I could not stop for Death

A Bee I personally knew (Bee Scherzo No. 1)

I felt a Funeral

I reason, Earth is short

A little Snow

I tie my Hat—I crease my Shawl

“Hope” is the thing

Interlude No. 2

The Props assist the House

There is a solitude of space

Could I but ride indefinite (Bee Scherzo No. 2)

So set its Sun in Thee

Her face

Tell Her

His Feet are shod with Gauze (Bee Scherzo No. 3)

Wild Nights!

There is another sky

‘Tis true—They shut me in the Cold

If I can stop one heart from breaking
(On Praetorius’ “Lo, how a Rose e’er blooming”)

No Prisoner be

*This evening’s performance will last approximately 75 minutes
and be performed without intermission.*

Emily *No Prisoner Be* emerged through my collaboration with great performers from two different realms. *The Hours*—an opera based on the novel by Michael Cunningham with a libretto by Greg Pierce—was commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and featured a trio of stars including Joyce DiDonato, who created the role of Virginia Woolf to rapturous acclaim. My creative work during the Covid-19 pandemic toggled between this mammoth project and another: a triple concerto called *Contact* for the dynamic string trio Time for Three. At some point during our work on *Contact*, the members of Time for Three (Nicolas Kendall, violin and vocals; Charles Yang, violin and vocals; Ranaan Meyer, bass and vocals) and I realized we were having too much fun and needed to look ahead to another project in the near future. When the idea of an album of songs arose, I had just the singer in mind! I had a strong feeling the deep musical intuition, larger-than-life personalities and fiercely creative minds of all four of these powerhouse artists might gel in a very special way. I wasn't wrong.

But an album of songs based on what text? I stumbled upon this poem of Emily Dickinson and had the answer:

They shut me up in Prose—
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet—
Because they liked me "still"—

Still! Could themselves have peeped—
And seen my Brain—go round—
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason—in the Pound—

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity—
And laugh—No more have I—

Though Juilliard- and Curtis Institute-trained musicians of the highest caliber,

Time for Three exudes the energy of a rock/pop concert at its most exhilarating. I could imagine this energy right from the start, with "shredding" violin virtuosity ushering in Joyce's first lines. The trio could even sing back her lines in counterpoint and provide harmonic support in the manner of Aretha Franklin's backup singers. In short, I could see from the start this wasn't going to be your grandmother's Emily Dickinson song cycle.

The breadth of the entire work became vaguely apparent in my mind, a rather massive journey through Dickinson's poetry framed by her refusal to be contained in "prose", or—put less poetically—within the confines of conventional religious ideology, societal norms of the era, traditional social conventions, or even sexual identity. Though she famously cloistered herself in a room in her father's house for much of her life, she would be a prisoner of nothing and no one.

To be sure, there is nothing groundbreaking in the choice to set Emily Dickinson's poetry to music, and admittedly my mention of it caused a few eyes to roll in the early stages. In fact, according to David Nirenberg, Director of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies, who graciously hosted the five of us for two immensely productive workshops, there have been more than 3,000 musical settings of Emily Dickinson's poetry. It positively cries out to be sung. There is music in every line, every word, and in the spaces between the words. It inspires rhythm, harmony, melody, musical atmosphere; it leaps off the page in a way composers have been unable to resist.

So I simply began to set poems—some well-known, some more obscure—as I discovered them, writing quickly and with little sense of where each song might eventually appear sequentially in the cycle. This approach to form represented a departure from the way I normally work, and frankly it made me nervous. Not until I began

workshopping the various songs with Joyce and Time for Three did I discover we could allow the music to dictate the course of things. Historians have relied on Dickinson's handwriting to make rough guesses as to when in her life a poem was written, but we do not know the precise order. It seems she wrote them as the spirit moved her. So once I released myself any obligation to preserve chronology or give the work a sequential thematic structure, isolated songs began to coalesce into small groups of songs.

Dickinson enjoyed a particular fascination with bees, judging from the number of poems written about them, so I found myself composing "bee scherzos" that serve the dual function of showcasing Time for Three's virtuosity and giving Joyce's voice a much-needed rest during this rather colossal cycle. In fact, I was delighted to find that, in her indispensable book *Dickinson*, Helen Vendler fittingly describes the following as a "winsomely playful scherzo":

Bee! I'm expecting you!
Was saying Yesterday
To Somebody you know
That you were due—

The Frogs got Home last Week—
Are settled, and at work—
Birds, mostly back—
The Clover warm and thick—

You'll get my Letter by
The seventeenth; Reply
Or better, be with me—Yours, Fly.

These scherzos also serve as connective material between clusters of songs. Sometimes I even found myself flipping through Dickinson's 1,800 poems to find one whose musical setting might close a "gap" in a similar way within the arc of the whole piece.

Though the intention of a poem like the wonderful "I Dwell in Possibility" is clear enough, others are more resistant to inter-

pretation, at least for this composer. Again to quote Vendler, "like all capacious writers, she baffles complete understanding," yet these more enigmatic offerings often create the most alluring space for musical setting. For example, the following:

So set its Sun in Thee
What Day be dark to me—
What distance—far—
So I the Ships may see
That touch—how seldomly—
Thy Shore?

There is the sense of longing for something just out of reach, and there is the setting sun and the gentle rhythm of the tide. And for me, that is enough.

In my program note for *The Hours*, I described a rather metaphysical experience after spending so much time considering the predicaments and motivations of Virginia Woolf, albeit through a second-hand incarnation of the great writer formed in the mind of Michael Cunningham. It truly began to feel as if she was in the room with me as I grafted melodies and harmonies onto her story. I experienced something similar with the ghost of Georgia O'Keeffe as I mined hundreds of her letters to create *The Brightness of Light* for Renée Fleming. Emily Dickinson also stopped by my little third-floor office in Yonkers, New York (it's getting crowded up here!). And when I visited Dickinson's house in Amherst, Massachusetts during the summer of 2024, I felt an odd familiarity and sense of recognition, though undoubtedly one formed by my own projecting and romanticizing. But this is, after all, what we do with our heroes.

—Kevin Puts

Multi-Grammy Award winner and 2018 Olivier Award winner for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, Kansas-born Joyce DiDonato entrances audiences across the globe, and has been proclaimed “perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation” by the *New Yorker*. With a voice “nothing less than 24-carat gold” according to the *Times*, DiDonato has risen to the top of the industry as a performer, a producer, and a fierce advocate for the arts. With a repertoire spanning over four centuries and a varied and highly acclaimed discography, as well as her many industry-leading projects, DiDonato’s artistry has defined what it is to be a singer in the 21st century.

Recent highlights include Handel’s *Theodora* for the Teatro Real in Madrid and a highly acclaimed European recital tour with performances at Teatro alla Scala, Staatsoper Berlin, Athens Megaron, and Palau de la Musica de Valencia. DiDonato has continued her celebrated musical partnership with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and made debut appearances with the Norwegian National Opera Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. In December 2024, DiDonato toured the United States with Dallas-based a *cappella* group Kings Return with a festive program entitled *Kings Re-Joyce*. An intensive spring residency at the Konzerthaus Dortmund

featured the world premiere of *Another Eve*, a song cycle by Rachel Portman, as well as her concert debut in Handel’s *Jephtha* alongside Il Pomo d’Oro.

DiDonato’s distinctively varied 2025–26 season commenced with season-opening concerts for both the Minnesota Orchestra and Montreal’s Orchestre Métropolitain, as well as re-opening Powell Hall with the St.

Louis Symphony Orchestra in a Kevin Puts’ world premiere, *House of Tomorrow*. Also this season, she returned to Musikkollegium Winterthur for a performance of Rachel Portman’s *Another Eve*, and collaborated with Radio France for Mahler’s *Ruckert-Lieder* in Paris and Dijon. DiDonato reunites with pianist Craig Terry for recitals at the Grand Théâtre de Genève and Suntory Hall Tokyo. She embarked on her first major tour of Australasia with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Tasmania Symphony Orchestra, and the New Zealand Sym-

phony Orchestra. In the United States, she made her Lincoln Center Theater stage debut as The Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and makes her much-anticipated role debut at the Metropolitan Opera in Kaija Saariaho’s *Innocence*. Concert appearances include Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Mahler’s Symphony No. 3 with Nézet-Séguin and the Berlin Philharmoniker. DiDonato maintains her

*“The staggering, joyful artistry
of Joyce DiDonato reminds us that in any
generation there are a few giants.
Joyce is not only a great,
brave and inspiring artist—
one of the finest singers of our time—
but she is also a transformative
presence in the arts. Those who
know her repertoire are in awe
of her gifts, and those who know
nothing of it are instantly engaged.
Joyce sings and the world
is suddenly brighter. She compels us
to listen actively, to hear things anew.”*

—Jake Heggie, *Gramophone*

annual in-demand master class series at Carnegie Hall and tours her album *SongPlay* throughout Asia. She also joins the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra for her second European tour with Nézet-Séguin and this orchestra following a performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 4 at Carnegie Hall.

As DiDonato's latest global touring project, *EDEN*, completed a ground-breaking three years with tours in Asia, South America, the United States, and Europe, reaching more than 15 million people with performances in 50 cities, the anticipation is only building for her next album release and touring project. This evening's newly commissioned song cycle by Kevin Puts for DiDonato and Time for Three, featuring the poetry of Emily Dickinson, had its world premiere at Bregenzer Festspiele in August 2025; subsequent performances across the US including Kansas City and Chicago, as well as at New York's Carnegie Hall.

On the operatic stage, DiDonato's recent roles include Virginia Woolf (*The Hours*), Sister Helen Prejean (*Dead Man Walking*), Agrippina, Cendrillon, Sesto (*La Clemenza di Tito*), Adalgisa (*Norma*) all for the Metropolitan Opera. Other milestones include Didon (*Les Troyens*) at the Wiener Staatsoper; *Agrippina* for the Royal Opera House and in concert with Il Pomo d'Oro under Maxim Emelyanhev; *Semiramide* at the Bavarian State Opera and Royal Opera House, and Charlotte in *Werther* at the Royal Opera House.

Much in demand on the concert and recital circuit, DiDonato has held residencies at Carnegie Hall and London's Barbican Centre; toured extensively in the United States, South America, Europe, and Asia; and appeared as guest soloist at the BBC's Last Night of the Proms. Other concert highlights include the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, the Philadelphia Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and the Ac-

cademia Santa Cecilia Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra USA under Sir Antonio Pappano.

DiDonato's expansive discography includes the highly celebrated *Les Troyens* (winning *Gramophone's* coveted Recording of the Year award) and Handel's *Agrippina* (*Gramophone's* Opera Recording of the Year). Her other albums include her singu-



Zurich F. Kalotay

Joyce DiDonato

lar *EDEN* spanning four centuries of music, the acclaimed *Winterreise* with Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Grammy Award-winning *Songplay*, *In War & Peace*, the 2017 Best Recital *Gramophone* Award, *Stella di Napoli*, Grammy Award-winning *Diva Diva*, and *Drama Queens*. Other honors include the *Gramophone* Artist and Recital of the Year awards, as well as being selected an inaugural inductee into the *Gramophone* Hall of Fame. In September 2024, DiDonato was honored to receive the 14th Concertgebouw Prize for her exceptional contribution to the artistic profile of the Concertgebouw in

Amsterdam. She recently received one of France's highest honors, becoming an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters.

Grammy and Emmy-winning ensemble **Time for Three** (TF3) defies convention and boundaries, merging classical, Americana, and singer-songwriter traditions into a singular, remarkable sound. Consisting of

has previously appeared with the San Francisco Symphony, Boston Pops, Colorado Symphony, and Seattle Symphony, and was Artist in Residence with the Indianapolis Symphony for more than a decade. TF3 has additionally been championed by conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Keith Lockhart, Krzysztof Urbanski, James Gaffigan, and Lio Kuokman.

The trio's history of groundbreaking commissions has entered a new chapter with *Silicon Hymnal*, a genre-blending concerto by the highly sought after composer Mason Bates that integrates electronica into the orchestral fabric. The concerto received its premiere at Arizona Musicfest, with subsequent performances with San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra at SPAC, Louisville Orchestra, and Nashville Symphony, as well as with orchestras in Brevard, Sun Valley, Visalia, and Sioux City. This evening's newly commissioned song cycle by Kevin Puts for Joyce DiDonato and Time For Three, featuring the poetry of Emily Dickinson, had its world premiere at Brengener Festspiele in August 2025; subsequent performances across the US include Kansas City and Chicago, as well as at New York's Carnegie Hall.

TF3's previous collaboration with composer Kevin Puts helped earn the trio its first Grammy Award, winning in the category of Best Classical Instrumental Solo. That commissioned work, titled *Contact*, was recorded with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Xian Zhang and released on the Deutsche Grammophon label under the album title *Letters for the Future*. The album also included Jennifer Higdon's *Concerto 4-3*, written specifically for the trio. Time for Three has enjoyed additional collaborations with composers Chris Brubeck and William Bolcom, as well as a wide range of artists including Ben Folds, Branford Marsalis, Joshua Bell, Aoife O'Donovan, Natasha Bedingfield, and Arlo Guthrie.



Sherin Lainez

Time for Three

Ranaan Meyer (double bass, vocals), Nicolas "Nick" Kendall (violin, vocals), and Charles Yang (violin, vocals), TF3 captivates audiences worldwide with virtuosic playing and an insatiable appetite for creativity that expands typical perceptions of a string trio.

TF3's collaborations with major orchestras and conductors continue to flourish, including appearances this season with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Marin Alsop, Louisville Orchestra and Teddy Abrams, St. Louis Symphony and Stéphane Denève, New Jersey Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, and Nashville Symphony. The trio

Time for Three's solo shows have been praised for their "joy, mastery, creativity and supreme artistry" (*The Strad*), featuring original songs with imaginative arrangements of beloved classical and mainstream works. As described by National Public Radio, "In person, the members of Time for Three come off as just three dudes in a band. But with their staggering technique and freewheeling genre-crossing, it's hard not to be swept up in the force of their contagious energy." Their concert special, *Time for Three In Concert*, was produced by PBS and earned the trio an Emmy Award.

Time for Three's affinity for new experiences has led the trio to collaborate with cellist and composer Ben Sollee on the soundtrack for Focus Features' film *Land*, which was directed by Robin Wright and premiered at the 2021 Sundance Film Festival. For the past two seasons, TF3 has worked with choreographer Lauren Lovette for special performances with the Paul Taylor Dance Company at Lincoln Center. On the recording side, the trio teamed up with Grammy-winning songwriter Liz Rose and Grammy-winning producer Femke Weidema for new recordings released through Warner Music, and contributed to Summer Walker's R&B hit, "Constant Bullsxxt."

Both on and off stage, TF3 is committed to encouraging the next generation of musicians. In conjunction with their performances, the members of TF3 host master classes, workshops, and musical conversations. They have also been invited for multi-day residencies by universities and youth orchestras. As part of its performances, Time for Three regularly welcomes local student musicians to share the stage, creating collaborative moments that are both empowering and inspiring.

Ranaan Meyer and Nick Kendall are graduates of the Curtis Institute of Music. Charles Yang is a graduate of the Juilliard School.

Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award-winning composer **Kevin Puts** has established himself as one of America's leading composers, gaining international acclaim for his "plush, propulsive" music (*The New York Times*), and described by *Opera News* as "a master polystylist." His work has been commissioned and performed by leading organizations around the world including



Kevin Puts

the Metropolitan Opera, Philadelphia Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Opera Philadelphia, Minnesota Opera, and many others, and he has collaborated with leading artists including Renée Fleming, Joshua Bell, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Marin Alsop, and Stéphane Denève.

In March 2022, Puts' fourth opera, *The Hours*, received its world premiere on the concert stage by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and was hailed as a "historic event... with a lush orchestration that hits you in the solar plexus" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*). *The*

Hours premiered to sold-out houses as a fully staged production at the Metropolitan Opera in November 2022 starring mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato and sopranos Renée Fleming and Kelli O'Hara, performances that were hailed as "a stunning triumph" by *Variety Magazine*. The opera's revival in May 2024 marked the first instance in the Metropolitan Opera's history of a work returning the season after its premiere. Puts was also invited to perform the final trio from the opera at the 2024 Grammy Awards, accompanying its three leading ladies from the piano.

Puts' breakthrough opera *Silent Night*—for which he was awarded the 2012 Pulitzer Prize following its 2011 premiere by the Minnesota Opera—was heralded as "remarkable" (*The New York Times*) and "stunning" (*Twin Cities Examiner*) and has become one of today's most-performed contemporary operas. Other major works include *The Brightness of Light*, a multimedia orchestral song cycle based on the letters of Georgia O'Keeffe and featuring Renée Fleming and Rod Gilfry, which premiered at Tanglewood in 2017 and received performances across the United States by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Opera, and

many others. Written for Time for Three, his triple concerto *Contact* had its world premiere in March 2022 with the Florida Orchestra and subsequently received performances around the world. A recording of the piece by the Philadelphia Orchestra and conductor Xian Zhang was released on the Deutsche Grammophon album *Letters for the Future* and was named Best Contemporary Classical Composition at the 2023 Grammy Awards. Based on *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, Puts' *House of Tomorrow* for mezzo-soprano soloist, chorus, and orchestra was commissioned by the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra to commemorate the reopening of its renowned Powell Hall and was premiered in September 2025, led by Music Director Stéphane Denève and with Joyce DiDonato as soloist.

Kevin Puts was named *Musical America's* Composer of the Year in 2024. Since 2006, he has been a member of the Composition Faculty at the Peabody Institute. He also serves as Distinguished Visiting Composer at the Juilliard School as well as Director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer's Institute. All works by Kevin Puts are published worldwide by G. Ricordi & Co., New York, a global leader in classical music publishing.



Daguerreotype of Emily Dickinson, c. early 1847,
presently located in Amherst College Archives & Special Collections

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Emily – No Prisoner Be

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TEXTS

They shut me up

They shut me up in Prose –
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet –
Because they liked me “still” –

Still! Could themselves have peeped –
And seen my Brain – go round –
They might as well have lodged a Bird
For Treason – in the Pound –

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Look down upon Captivity –
And laugh – No more have I –

I was the slightest in the House

I was the slightest in the House –
I took the smallest Room –
At night, my little Lamp, and Book –
And one Geranium –

So stationed I could catch the Mint
That never ceased to fall –
And just my Basket –
Let me think – I’m sure –
That this was all –

I never spoke – unless addressed –
And then, ‘twas brief and low –
I could not bear to live – aloud –
The Racket shamed me so –

And if it had not been so far –
And any one I knew
Were going – I had often thought
How noteless – I could die –

The Soul selects her own Society

The Soul selects her own Society –
Then – shuts the Door –
To her divine Majority –
Present no more –
Unmoved – she notes the Chariots – pausing –
At her low Gate –
Unmoved – an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat –
I’ve known her – from an ample nation –
Choose One –
Then – close the Valves of her attention –
Like Stone –

Again – his voice is at the door

Again – his voice is at the door –
I feel the old Degree –
I hear him ask the servant
For such an one – as me –

I take a flower – as I go –
My face to justify –
He never saw me – in this life –
I might surprise his eye!

I cross the Hall with mingled steps –
I – silent – pass the door –
I look on all this world contains –
Just his face – nothing more!

We talk in careless – and it toss –
A kind of plummet strain –
Each – sounding – shyly –
Just – how – deep –
The other’s one – had been –

We walk – I leave my Dog – at home –
A tender – thoughtful Moon –
Goes with us – just a little way –
And – then – we are alone –

Alone – if Angels are “alone” –
First time they try the sky!
Alone – if those “veiled faces” – be –
We cannot count – on High!

I’d give – to live that hour – again –
The purple – in my Vein –
But He must count the drops – himself –
My price for every stain!

I dwell in Possibility

I dwell in Possibility –
A fairer House than Prose –
More numerous of Windows –
Superior – for Doors –

Of Chambers as the Cedars –
Impregnable of eye –
And for an everlasting Roof
The Gambrels of the Sky –

Of Visitors – the fairest –
For Occupation – This –
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise –

Because I could not stop for Death

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

A Bee I personally knew

(Instrumental: Bee Scherzo No. 1)

A single Clover Plank
Was all that saved a Bee
A Bee I personally knew
From sinking in the sky –
'Twixt Firmament above
And Firmament below
The Billows of Circumference
Were sweeping him away –
The idly swaying Plank
Responsible to nought
A sudden Freight of Wind assumed
And Bumble Bee was not –
This harrowing event
Transpiring in the Grass
Did not so much as wring from him
A wandering "Alas" –

I felt a Funeral

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum –
Kept beating – beating – till I thought
My mind was going numb –

And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space – began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race,
Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down –
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing – then –

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

I reason, Earth is short
I reason, Earth is short –
And Anguish – absolute –
And many hurt,
But, what of that?

I reason, we could die –
The best Vitality
Cannot excel Decay,
But, what of that?

I reason, that in Heaven –
Somehow, it will be even –
Some new Equation, given –
But, what of that?

A little Snow

A little Snow was here and there
Disseminated in her Hair –
Since she and I had met and played
Decade had gathered to Decade –

But Time had added not obtained
Impregnable the Rose
For summer too indelible
Too obdurate for Snows –

I tie my Hat—I crease my Shawl
I tie my Hat – I crease my Shawl –
Life's little duties do – precisely –
As the very least
Were infinite – to me –

I put new Blossoms in the Glass –
And throw the old – away –
I push a petal from my gown
That anchored there – I weigh
The time 'twill be till six o'clock
I have so much to do –
And yet – Existence – some way back
Stopped – struck – my ticking – through –
We cannot put Ourselves away
As a completed Man
Or Woman – When the Errand's done
We came to Flesh – upon –
There may be – Miles on Miles of Nought –
Of Action – sicker far –
To simulate – is stinging work –
To cover what we are
From Science – and from Surgery –
Too Telescopic Eyes
To bear on us unshaded –
For their – sake – not for Ours –
Twould start them –
We – could tremble—
But since we got a Bomb –
And held it in our Bosom –
Nay – Hold it – it is calm –

Therefore – we do life's labor –
Though life's Reward – be done –
With scrupulous exactness –
To hold our Senses – on –

“Hope” is the thing

“Hope” is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops at – all –

And sweetest – in the Gale is heard –
And sore must be the storm –
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm –

I’ve heard it in the chilliest land –
And on the strangest Sea –
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb – of Me.

The Props assist the House

The Props assist the House
Until the House is built
And then the Props withdraw
And adequate, erect,
The House support itself
And cease to recollect
The Augur and the Carpenter –
Just such a retrospect
Hath the perfected Life –
A Past of Plank and Nail
And slowness – then the scaffolds drop
Affirming it a Soul –

There is a solitude of space

There is a solitude of space
A solitude of sea
A solitude of death, but these
Society shall be
Compared with that profounder site
That polar privacy
A soul admitted to itself –
Finite infinity.

Could I but ride indefinite

(Instrumental; Bee Scherzo No. 2)

Could I but ride indefinite
As doth the Meadow Bee
And visit only where I liked
And No one visit me

And flirt all Day with Buttercups
And marry whom I may
And dwell a little everywhere
Or better, run away

With no Police to follow
Or chase Him if He do
Till He should jump Peninsulas
To get away from me

I said But just to be a Bee
Upon a Raft of Air
And row in Nowhere all Day long
And anchor off the Bar

What Liberty! So Captives deem
Who tight in Dungeons are.

So set its Sun in Thee

So set its Sun in Thee
What Day be dark to me –
What Distance – far –
So I the Ships may see
That touch – how seldomly –
Thy Shore?

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

Her face

Her face was in a bed of hair,
Like flowers in a plot –
Her hand was whiter than the sperm
That feeds the sacred light.
Her tongue more tender than the tune
That totters in the leaves –
Who hears may be incredulous,
Who witnesses, believes.

Tell Her

Going – to – Her!
Happy – Letter! Tell Her –
Tell Her – the page I never wrote!
Tell Her, I only said – the Syntax –
And left the Verb and the Pronoun – out!
Tell Her just how the fingers – hurried –
Then – how they – stammered – slow – slow –
And then – you wished you had eyes –
in your pages –
So you could see – what moved – them – so –

Tell Her – it wasn't a practised writer –
You guessed –
From the way the sentence – toiled –
You could hear the Bodice – tug – behind you –
As if it held but the might of a child!
You almost pitied - it – you – it worked so –
Tell Her – No – you may quibble – there –
For it would split Her Heart – to know it –
And then – you and I – were silenter!

Tell Her – Day – finished before we – finished –
And the old Clock kept neighing – “Day”!
And you – got sleepy – and begged to be ended –
What could – it hinder so – to say?
Tell Her – just how she sealed – you – Cautious!
But – if she ask “where you are hid” –
until the evening –
[Ah!] Be bashful!
Gesture Coquette –
And shake your Head!

His Feet are shod with Gauze **(Instrumental: Bee Scherzo No. 3)**

His Feet are shod with Gauze –
His Helmet, is of Gold,
His Breast, a Single Onyx
With Chrysophrase, inlaid.
His Labor is a Chant –
His Idleness – a Tune –
Oh, for a Bee's experience
Of Clovers, and of Noon!

Wild Nights!

Wild Nights – Wild Nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!
Futile – the winds –
To a heart in port –
Done with the compass –
Done with the chart!
Rowing in Eden –
Ah, the sea!
Might I moor – Tonight –
In thee!

There is another sky
There is another sky,
Ever serene and fair,
And there is another sunshine,
Though it be darkness there;
Never mind faded forests, [Austin,]
Never mind silent fields –
Here is a little forest,
Whose leaf is ever green;
Here is a brighter garden,
Where not a frost has been;
In its unfading flowers
I hear the bright bee hum:
Prithee, my brother,
Into my garden come!

‘Tis true—They shut me in the Cold
‘Tis true – They shut me in the Cold –
But then – Themselves were warm
And could not know the feeling ‘twas –
Forget it – Lord – of Them –

Let not my Witness hinder Them
In Heavenly esteem –
No Paradise could be – Conferred
Through Their beloved Blame –

The Harm They did – was short – And since
Myself – who bore it – do –
Forgive Them – Even as Myself –
Or else – forgive not me –

If I can stop one heart from breaking
If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

No Prisoner be
No Prisoner be –
Where Liberty –
[Her]self – abide with Thee –