

Dal canzoniere di Umberto Saba
for baritone voice and piano

- I. Sonetto di Primavera
- II. Il garzone con la carriola
- III. Inverno

12 minutes

Brooke Joyce (2014)
Text by Umberto Saba

Commissioned by Andrew Whitfield
Premiered by Andrew Whitfield, March 2015

Program Note:

The Italian poet and novelist Umberto Saba (1883-1957) was born to a Jewish mother and an ex-Catholic father, raised by a Slovene wet-nurse, and spent most of his life in Trieste, a city that has been owned and disowned by the Austro-Hungarians, the Italians and the Slovenes (and is less than 10 miles from the Croatian border). His multivalent background, grounded in the unique cultural landscape of Trieste, produced a literary voice that is at once sentimentally romantic and starkly modern. His *Canzoniere* was published in multiple volumes and contains poems written throughout his life. The music for the first song was composed in Decorah; the second and third were composed in Duino, a village just west of Trieste on the Adriatic coast.

Sonetto di primavera

Città paesi e culmini lontani
sorridon lieti al sol di primavera.
Torna serena la natia riviera.
Sono pieni di canti il mare e i piani.

Io solo qui di desideri vani
t'esalto, mia inesperta anima altera;
poi stanco mi riduco in sulla sera
alla mia stanza, e incerto del domani.

Là seggo sovra il bianco letticcio,
e ripenso a un'età già tramontata,
a un amor che mi strugge, all'avvenire.

E se nell'ombra odo la voce amata
di mia madre appressarsi e poi morire,
spesso col pianto vo addolcendo il duolo.

Spring Sonnet

Cities, towns, and far-off summits
smile with pleasure at the springtime sun.
My native coast is calm again.
The sea and fields are full of songs.

Alone here, I exalt you with vain desires,
my spirit, proud and still untested;
then, weary and uncertain of tomorrow,
I return at evening to my room.

I sit there on the narrow white bed
and think about a time already past,
a love that consumes me, and of the future.

And if in darkness I hear the beloved voice
of my mother approach and then die away,
I often ease my grief with tears.

Il Garzone con la carriola

È bene ritrovare in noi gli amori
perduti, conciliare in noi l'offesa;
ma se la vita all'interno ti pesa
tu la porti al di fuori.

Spalanchi le finestre o scendi tu
tra la folla: vedrai che basta poco
a rallegrarti: un animale, un gioco,
o, vestito di blu,

un garzone con una carriola,
che a gran voce si tien la strada aperta,
e se appena in discesa trova un'erta
non corre più, ma vola.

La gente che per via a quell'ora è tanta
non tace, dopo che indietro si tira.
Egli più grande fa il fracasso e l'ira,
più si dimena e canta.

Inverno

È notte, inverno rovinoso. Un poco
sollevi le tendine, e guardi. Vibrano
i tuoi capelli selvaggi, la gioia
ti dilata improvvisa l'occhio nero;
che quello che hai veduto—era un'immagine
della fine del mondo—ti conforta
l'intimo cuore, lo fa caldo e pago.

Un uomo si avventura per un lago
di ghiaccio, sotto una lampada storta.

(Translations by George Hochfield and Leonard Nathan)

The shop-boy with the wheelbarrow

It's good to recover in ourselves
lost loves, or reconcile ourselves to an affront,
but if life pent up inside weighs you down,
take it out of doors.

Throw open the windows, or go down
into the crowd; you'll see how little it takes
to cheer you up: an animal, a game,
or, dressed in blue,

a shop-boy with a wheelbarrow
clearing the street with a loud voice,
who, if he finds the slightest downward slope,
runs no more, but flies.

The streets are full of people at that hour
who don't keep quiet after dodging him.
The noisier the uproar and the wrath,
the more he swings his hips and sings.

Winter

It's night, a bitter winter. You raise
the drapes a little and peer out. Your hair
blows wildly; joy suddenly
opens wide your black eyes,
and what you saw—it was an image
of the world's end—comforts
your inmost heart, warms and eases it.

A man ventures out on a lake
of ice, under a crooked streetlamp.