

THE YEATS SONGS- PROGRAM NOTES.

The Yeats Songs were written in honor of my colleague, Virginia Hunter on the occasion of her retirement from the vocal faculty at Western Washington University. Aaron Nicholson and Roger Briggs gave the first performance in 2007.

A PRAYER FOR OLD AGE

GOD guard me from those thoughts men think
In the mind alone;
He that sings a lasting song
Thinks in a marrow-bone

From all that makes a wise old man
That can be praised of all;
O what am I that I should not seem
For the song's sake a fool?

I pray -for word is out
And prayer comes round again -
That I may seem, though I die old,
A foolish, passionate man.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

THE FOLLY OF BEING COMFORTED

One that is ever kind said yesterday:
Your well-belovéd's hair has threads of grey,
And little shadows come about her eyes;

Time can but make it easier to be wise
Though now it seems impossible, and so
All that you need is patience.'

Heart cries, 'No,
I have not a crumb of comfort, not a grain.

Time can but make her beauty over again:
Because of that great nobleness of hers
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs,
Burns but more clearly. O she had not these ways
When all the wild summer was in her gaze.

O heart! O heart! If she'd but turn her head,
You'd know the folly of being comforted.