

Gavin Bryars

First Book of Madrigals

for unaccompanied male voices [ATTTBar]
[1998-2000]

Preview File Only



Mainz • London • Madrid • New York • Paris • Tokyo • Toronto

Written for the Hilliard Ensemble and first performed by them
Duration: 35 minutes

Preview File Only

1. Web [ATTBar] - page 2

The spider's lurking-parlour
its vestibule of thread
the spin of its walls
closing in and round us
until the hall we entered
hoping to visit life
becomes the manor of our death.
No skylight over the door
no flue of air
only the trap of shadows
and darkness ripening
in the heart of the sun.

2. Stormy [ATBar] - page 4

I should have seen from your eyes
and the lightning which broke in them
the storms that lay ahead.

The white ecstasy of bedsheets,
smashed pots and broken furniture,
the forked static of your touch.

But storms pass like headaches do.
Today the rain, in carpet-tacks.
Alone together, we watch the rain.

3. Almond Tree [ATBar] - page 6

We met under the fork of an almond tree
as March came slowly into leaf.
Our love blossomed like a snow-storm.
White confetti paved the street.

What are we to do now autumn's here?
Your eyes are cold, my arms have shrunk.
The years seem a tangle of dry twigs.
Can we get through them without love?

4. Just as the ash-glow [ATTBar] - page 8

Just as the ash-glow
and cinder-light of the skies
lose all their lustre
once you've seen the moon rise,

and the volted daisies
and bruised delphiniums
pale into nothing
when the sunflower blooms,

and the swallows
plinking on their long string
sound merely garrulous

if you've heard the lapwing,

so the women I'd been eyeing
were a dimmed light
when you walked into vision
that first night.

5. Within minutes [ATTBar] - page 10

Within minutes, our first conversation,
I knew.
Out of nowhere, from the rim of a wine-glass,
the flash
of knowledge, as if there were no choice.
Sewn up.
Like the moment the plane drops through
the clouds
and the land spreads out its patchwork,
and you see,
in crushing detail, the future race to meet you.
Just like that.

6. Our bodies in the shower [ATTBar] - page 14

Our bodies in the shower.
The hiss and plather
of skins under the water.
The smoke coming off us.
The stream within the stream.
We were rinsed clean
of everything but desire.

7. She'd buy things [TTBar] - page 16

She'd buy things, expecting our lives to flourish
because the objects surrounding them had changed.
My line was different: no matter how and where
we lived, we were what we were, unalterably.

8. All the homely arts and crafts [TTTBar] - page 18

All the homely arts and crafts -
the soft plinth of a tongue,
the Guggenheim of an ear,
the weave of hands and hair -
are nothing next to the science
of these eyes unseen until tonight,
this lip lightly charred from
the soft combustion of a kiss.

9. In April [ATTTBar] - page 20

In April we'll fly to the Lebanon and live among the vines
and the vines will be young and tender
and our bed will smell of cinnamon
and I'll order them not to wake us till we please.

I'll keep you safe
If ever you're lost
I'll go about the streets and broadways
and find you and bring you to my bed.

10. Who's the more to blame? [TTTBar] - page 22

Who's the more to blame?
You for having eyes
a soul could drown in?
Or me for falling in?
Let's not argue who's to blame.
The only points at issue
are the ones that shrink
and widen in your eyes.

My eyes have grown dim
from patrolling the days
like a camera lens,
trawling for your eyes.

Here's you in New York.
Here's you in London.
Your eyes are everywhere.
Where are your eyes?

11. The print of soles [ATTTBar] - page 24

The print of soles across the bathroom floor,
finding them, I felt like Crusoe, and stooped
to test their warmth and wetness, then rose
to follow where they led, not caring that
I knew the end already, as if she were
a stranger, this woman meeting my eyes
in the dressing-table mirror,
one towel tucked just above her bosom,
another knotted round her head,
and waterbeads still fresh on her nape
and shoulders, which I bent to kiss -
meeting your eyes again as I did -
for the first time ever in the world.

12. My pomegranate [ATTTBar] - page 28

My pomegranate in the wilderness
my sunlit fishpool
my August torrent
and winter coal.

No one can quench the flame
of this ecstasy
our love is strong as death
and rich as fire.

13. Against Dieting [ATTTBar] - page 30

Please, darling, no more diets.
I've heard the talk on why it's
good for one's esteem. I've watched you
jogging lanes and pounding treadmills.
I've even shed two kilos of my own.
But enough. What are love-handles
between friends? For half a stone
it isn't worth the sweat.
I've had it up to here with crispbread.
I doubt the premise, too.
Try to see it from my point of view.
I want not less but more of you.

© Copyright 1999 Blake Morrison

Note: The texts of these madrigals were commissioned from Blake Morrison to be set to music. Subsequently Blake published 11 of these poems, along with others, under the title "Madrigalia" in his volume of Selected Poems (1999). The first ("Web") and last ("Against Dieting") set in my collection do not appear in that edition. The third ("Almond Tree") and fifth ("Within minutes") set the original typescript versions of his poems, which differ slightly from those in the poetry collection.

Preview File Only

for Martin and Rita Cadman

First Book of Madrigals

for unaccompanied male voices

Text: Blake Morrison

Gavin Bryars

1. Web Slowly

Alto *pp*
The spi - der's lurk - ing - par - lour its ves - ti - bule of thread the

Tenor 1 *pp*
The spi - der's lurk - ing - par - lour its ves - ti - bule of thread the

Tenor 2 *pp*
The spi - der's lurk - ing - par - lour its ves - ti - bule of thread the

Baritone *pp*
The spi - der's lurk - ing - par - lour its ves - ti - bule of thread the

5
A. *(>)*
spin of its walls clos - ing in round us un - til the

T.1 *(>)*
spin of its walls clos - ing in and round us un - til the

T.2 *(>)*
spin of its walls clos - ing in round us un - til the

Bar. *(>)*
spin of its walls and round un - til the

10
A.
hall we en - tered hop - ing to vi - sit life be - comes the

T.1
hall we en - tered hop - ing to vi - sit life

T.2
hall we en - tered hop - ing, hop - ing to vi - sit life be - comes the

Bar.
hall we en - tered hop - ing to vi - sit life be - -

15

A. *ppp* ma - nor of our death. No sky-light o - ver the door no flue of

T.1 *ppp* No sky-light o - ver the door no flue of

T.2 *ppp* ma - nor of our death. No sky-light o - ver the door no flue of

Bar. *ppp* - comes No sky-light o - ver the door no flue of

21

A. *mp* air in the heart of the

T.1 *poco cresc.* air on - ly the trap of sha-dows and dark-ness ri - pen-ing in the heart of the *mp*

T.2 *poco cresc.* air on - ly the trap of sha-dows and dark-ness ri - pen-ing in the heart of the *mp*

Bar. *poco cresc.* air on - ly the trap of sha-dows and dark-ness ri - pen-ing heart of the *mp*

26

A. *pp* sun. No sky-light o - ver the door (=) no flue of air on - ly the

T.1 *pp* sun. No sky-light o - ver the door no flue of air on - ly the

T.2 sun.

Bar. sun.

31

A. *p poco cresc.* trap of sha-dows and dark-ness ri - pen-ing in the heart of the sun. *mp*

T.1 *p poco cresc.* trap of sha-dows and dark-ness ri - pen-ing in the heart of the sun. *mp*

T.2 *p poco cresc.* and dark-ness ri - pen-ing in the heart of the sun. *mp*

Bar. *p poco cresc.* and dark-ness ri - pen-ing in the heart of the sun. *mp*

2. Stormy
Flowing, moderate tempo (conversational)

mp

Alto
I should have seen from your eyes and the light-ning

mp

Tenor
I should have seen from your eyes and the light - ning

mp

Baritone
I should have seen from your eyes, from your eyes and the light - ning, the

5

A.
which broke in them the storms that lay a - head. The

T.
which broke in them the storms a - head. The

Bar.
light-ning which broke in them the storms that lay a - - head. The

11

A.
white, the white ec - sta-sy of

T.
white, the white, the white ec - sta-sy of

Bar.
white, the white ec - sta-sy of

16

A. bed-sheets, smashed pots and bro-ken fur - ni- ture, the forked sta- tic of your

T. bed - - sheets, fur - ni- ture, the forked sta- tic of your

Bar. bed - sheets, bro - ken fur - ni- ture, the forked sta - tic

21

Slower (*mp*)

A. touch. But storms pass like head-aches do.

T. touch. But storms pass like head-aches do.

Bar. of your touch. But storms pass like head - aches do.

28

A. To-day the rain, in car-pet-tacks. A-lone to - ge-ther, we watch the rain.

T. To-day the rain, in car - pet - tacks. A - lone to - ge-ther, we watch the rain.

Bar. To-day the rain, in car - pet - tacks. A - lone to - ge-ther, we watch the rain.

35

pp *molto rit.*

A. A - - - lone, we watch the rain.

T. A - - - lone, we watch the rain.

Bar. (*mp*) *pp* A-lone to - ge-ther, we watch the rain, we watch the rain.

3. Almond Tree

Very slow

mp

Alto
We met un - der the fork of an al - mond tree as March came

Tenor
We met un - der the fork of an al - mond tree as March came

Baritone
We met un - der the fork of an al - mond tree as March came

7

A.
slow - ly in - to leaf. Our love blos - somed like a snow - storm.

T.
slow - ly in - to leaf. Our love blos - somed like a snow - storm.

Bar.
slow - ly in - to leaf. Our love blos - somed like a snow - storm.

13

A.
White con - fet - ti paved the street. What are we to do?

T.
White con - fet - ti paved the street. What are we to do?

Bar.
White con - fet - ti paved the street. now au - tumn's

20

A. *mf*
 Your eyes are cold, my arms have shrunk. The years seem a tan -

T.
 Your eyes are cold, my arms have shrunk. The years seem a

Bar.
 here? Your eyes are cold, my arms have shrunk. The years

27

A. *molto rall.*
 -gle of dry twigs. Can we get through them with - out love?

T.
 tan - gle of dry twigs. Can we get through them with - out love?

Bar.
 dry twigs. Can we get through them with - out love?

4. Just as the ash-glow

Fairly slowly ($\text{♩} = \text{c.70}$)

Alto *p*
Just as the ash-glow and cin - der-light of the skies

Tenor 1 *p*
Just as the ash-glow and cin - der-light lose all their

Tenor 2 *p*
Just as the ash - glow and cin - der-light of the skies

Baritone *p*
Just as the ash - glow and cin - der-light of the skies

6
A. *p*
once you've seen the moon rise,

T.1 *p*
lus-tre once you've seen the moon rise, and the vol - ted dai - sies

T.2 *p*
once you've seen the moon rise, and the dai - sies

Bar. *p*
once you've seen the moon rise, and the dai - sies

11
A. *p*
del - phi-ni-ums pale in - to no - thing when the sun - flower

T.1 *p*
and bruised del - phi-ni-ums pale in - to no - thing when the sun - flower

T.2 *p*
and bruised del - phi-ni-ums pale in - to no - thing, the sun - flower

Bar. *p*
and bruised del - phi-ni-ums in - to no - thing, the sun - flower

15 *mp*

A. blooms, and the swal-lows plink-ing on their long string sound mere-ly

T.1 blooms, the swal - - lows on their long string sound mere-ly

T.2 blooms, and the swal-lows plink-ing on their long string

Bar. blooms, and swal - - lows on string sound mere-ly

20 *f* *mp*

A. gar-ru-lous if you've heard the lap-wing, wo - - men were a

T.1 gar-ru-lous if you've heard the lap-wing, wo - - men were a

T.2 gar-ru-lous if you've heard the lap-wing, so the wo-men I'd been eye-ing were a

Bar. gar-ru-lous if you've heard the lap-wing, were a

26 *poco rit. a tempo*

A. dimmed light when you walked in - to that first

T.1 dimmed light when you walked in - to that first

T.2 dimmed light when you walked in - to vi - sion that first

Bar. dimmed light when you

32 *mp*

A. night, you that night.

T.1 *mp sempre, non legato* night, you walked in - to vi - sion that first night.

T.2 *mp sempre, non legato* night, you walked in - to vi - sion that first night.

Bar. *mp sempre, non legato* you walked in - to vi - sion that first night.

5. Within minutes

mp $\text{♩} = 60$

Alto
With-in mi-nutes (=) our first con-ver - sa-tion, I knew.

Tenor 1
With-in mi - nutes, our first con-ver - sa-tion, I

Tenor 2
With - in mi - nutes, our first con - ver - sa - tion, I

Baritone
With - in mi - nutes, our first con - ver - sa - tion, I

6 *mf* *mp*

A.
Out of no-where, from the rim of a wine-glass,

T.1
knew, I knew. Out of no-where, from the rim of a wine-glass,

T.2
knew, I knew. Out of no-where, from the rim of a

Bar.
knew. Out of no-where, from the rim of a wine-glass,

12

A. *p* *mp*
the flash of know-ledge, as if there were no choice.

T.1 *p* *mp*
the flash of know-ledge, as if there were no choice.

T.2 *p* *mp*
wine-glass, the flash of know-ledge, as if there were no choice.

Bar. *p* *mp*
the flash of know-ledge, as if there were no choice.

19

A. *mp*
Sewn up. Like the mo-ment the plane drops.

T.1 *mp*
Sewn up. Like the mo-ment the plane drops.

T.2 *mp*
Sewn up. Like the mo - - ment drops.

Bar. *mp*
Sewn up. Like the mo - - ment drops.

25 *cresc. poco a poco*

A. and the land spreads

T.1 through the clouds and the land spreads

T.2 through the clouds land spreads

Bar. through the clouds and the land spreads

31 *(cresc.)* *mf* *mp*

A. out its patch - work, and you see, in crush - ing de - tail, the

T.1 *(cresc.)* *mf* *mp* out its patch - work, and you see, in crush - ing de - tail, the

T.2 *(cresc.)* *mf* *mp* out its patch - work, and you see, in crush - ing de - tail, the

Bar. *(cresc.)* *mf* *mp* out its patch - work, and you see in de - tail,

37

cresc. poco a poco *mf* *p*₂

A. fu - ture race to meet you. Just like that.

cresc. poco a poco *mf* *p*₂

T.1 fu - ture race to meet you. Just like that.

cresc. poco a poco *mf* *p*₂

T.2 fu - ture race to meet you. Just like that.

cresc. poco a poco *mf* *p*₂

Bar. fu - ture race to meet you. Just like that.

6. Our bodies in the shower

Slowly ($\text{♩} = c.62$)

mp

Alto
The hisp and pla-ther of skins un-der the

Tenor 1
mp
Our bo - dies in the shower. The hisp and pla - ther of skins

Tenor 2
mp
Our bo - dies in the shower. The hisp and pla-ther of skins.

Baritone
mp
Our bo - dies in the shower. The hisp and pla - ther of skins.

5

A.
wa-ter. The smoke com-ing off us. The stream

T.1
un-der the wa-ter. The smoke com-ing off us. The

T.2
un-der the wa-ter. The smoke com-ing off us. The

Bar.
un-der the wa-ter. com-ing off us.

10

A.
with - in the stream.

T.1
stream with - in the stream.

T.2
stream with - in the stream.

Bar.
The stream with - in the stream.