

*For D. Elliott Wilbur
Commissioned by Ariel Pisturino & Ginnie Wilbur Miller*

DEWDROPS:
Songs for D. Elliott Wilbur

mezzo soprano & electric guitar

Alexander Elliott Miller

Dewdrops: Songs for D. Elliott Wilbur (2017)

Alexander Elliott Miller

Duration: 15 minutes

PROGRAM NOTE

Dewdrops is a collection of songs composed in honor of my grandfather, D. Elliott Wilbur. Dually commissioned by mezzo soprano Ariel Pisturino, and by my mother, Ginnie Wilbur Miller, in honor of her father, the collection includes settings of three poems with some significance to my grandfather's life, for voice and electric guitar.

Each of the three settings includes musical motives and melodic shapes composed by my grandfather. He took a music theory class as an elective in college in the 1940's, loved jazz and Bach, and was a talented boogie-woogie pianist, drummer and member of the church choir. After my grandfather's passing in 2012, my grandmother found a number of his theory assignments and Baroque-style composition projects. She shared these old documents with me, and from them I then took melodic excerpts and bits to modify and re-harmonize in my own settings.

All three of the settings include these variations and adaptations of my grandfather's melodies, in fact, most of the soprano part can be related to his melodies in some way or another. It is from this compositional process, and from his initials, that the work gets its title "Dewdrops."

TEXTS

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Hope is the thing with feathers

- Emily Dickinson

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 chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

One bright day in the middle of the night

- unknown

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Beggars and Tramps,
Cross-eyed mosquitos and bow legged ants,
Pull up a chair and sit on the floor
And I'll tell you a story you've never heard before.

One bright day in the middle of the night
Two dead boys got up to fight
Back to back they faced each other
Drew their swords and shot each other

One was blind and the other couldn't see
So they chose a dummy for a referee.
A blind man went to see fair play
A dumb man went to shout "hooray!"

A stone-deaf sheriff heard the noise,
And came and save those two dead boys.
The mute psychotic shrieked in fright,
With words of joy at this ghastly sight.

Now if you doubt this lie is true?
Ask the blind man; he saw it, too."

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

- William Butler Yeats

I arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

For D. Elliott Wilbur,

Commissioned by Ariel Pisturino & Ginnie Miller

DEWDROPS: Songs for D. Elliott Wilbur

mezzo soprano & electric guitar

I. Hope is the thing with feathers... - Emily Dickinson

Alexander Elliott Miller

$\text{♩} = 56$

free improvisation of "bird-like" whistling

Voice

Electric Guitar
5 = G
6 = C

f *p*

4

poco rit. *a tempo*

mf

7

mf *mp*

Hope _____ is the

p *mf*

2
10

thing with fea thers

p

13

oo that per

p *f*

16

ches in the soul

rit. *a tempo* *p*

19

And sings the tune with

mf

22

out the words

f

25

And ne - ver stops at

f

28

bird whistle

all

f *p*

31

poco rit.

poco rit.

a tempo

34

mf *f*
And

37

swee - test in the gale is heard And sore must be

40

sore must be the sto - - -

ff

43

rm that could a - bash the

mf *p* *mf*
mp

46 *p* *pp*

li - ttle bird that kept so ma - ny warm

49 *p*

52 *ppp*

55 *p* *mf* *pp*

I've heard

6
58 *mf* > *mp* *p*

it in the chill - est land

62 *p*

And on the strang - est

65

sea yet ne ver in ex -

69 *p*

tre - - mi - ty it

73

asked a crumb of me.

mf

Detailed description: This system contains measures 73 through 76. The vocal line starts with the lyrics 'asked a crumb of me.' The melody is in a major key with a treble clef. The piano accompaniment is in a lower register. Dynamic markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano).

77

rit.

a tempo
bird whistle

p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 77 through 79. Measure 77 features a piano introduction with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measures 78 and 79 include a 'bird whistle' section, indicated by a double slash in the vocal line. The piano accompaniment continues with various textures. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano).

80

Detailed description: This system contains measures 80 through 82. The piano accompaniment features complex textures with many beamed notes and slurs. The vocal line has some rests and melodic fragments. The system concludes with a double bar line.

83

Detailed description: This system contains measures 83 through 85. The piano accompaniment has a more sparse texture with long slurs and some rests. The vocal line has a few notes and rests. The system concludes with a double bar line.

2. One Bright Day in the Middle of the Night - unknown ♩ = 112

Spoken freely & theatrically. No time signature.

Ladies and gentleman, beggars and tramps, cross eyed mosquitos and bow legged ants

continue ad lib., repeat as needed

f *p*

Detailed description: This system contains the first two measures of the piece. The music is written in 2/4 time. The first measure features a piano introduction with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a fermata. The second measure begins with the spoken lyrics and a piano accompaniment of chords marked with 'x' and a piano (*p*) dynamic. The system concludes with a repeat sign and the instruction 'continue ad lib., repeat as needed'.

Pull up a chair and sit on the floor, I'll tell you a story you've never heard before

sim.

f *p* *sim.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 3 and 4. Measure 3 continues the piano accompaniment with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 4 begins with the spoken lyrics and a piano accompaniment marked *sim.* (simile) with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The system ends with a repeat sign and the instruction *sim.*

f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 5 and 6. Measure 5 continues the piano accompaniment with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 6 features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

funky

ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 7 and 8. Measure 7 features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measure 8 features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The system concludes with a repeat sign.

10

Musical score for measures 10-12. Measure 10 is a whole rest. Measure 11 is in 3/4 time with a piano accompaniment of eighth notes and a vocal line of quarter notes. Measure 12 is in 4/4 time with a piano accompaniment of chords and a vocal line of quarter notes. Dynamics include *fff* and *p*.

13

mf no vibrato, "pop-style" singing

Musical score for measures 13-14. Measure 13: "One bright day in the". Measure 14: "mi-ddle of the night in the". Includes piano accompaniment and dynamics.

15

Musical score for measures 15-16. Measure 15: "mi-ddle of the ni-ght of the". Measure 16: "night". Includes piano accompaniment and dynamics.

17

Musical score for measures 17-18. Measure 17: "Two dead boys got". Measure 18: "up to fight got". Includes piano accompaniment and dynamics.

19

up to fi - ght up to fight

ff

21

24

non-pitched voice, "Johnny Cash attitude"

Back to Back to Back to Back to Back they faced each oth-er

f

26

Faced each oth-er Back to Back to Back to Back to Back they faced each

28

oth - er Drew their swords and

30

ff (high shriek on "shot")

Shot each oth - er Shot each oth - er

ff *f*

32

repeat 5-10x

freely speak "Drew their swords and shot each other" one time in an improvised rhythm with the beat during these repeats.

dim. through repeats *p*

34

36

One was blind and the

38

oth - er could-n't see so they choose a blind man for a

40

ref - er - ee A blind man went to

42

see fair play A dumb man went to shout hur -

44

ray

f

47

A stone deaf sheriff heard the noise and

50

came to save those two dead boys

The mute psychotic

f

*non-pitched voice, free improvised rhythm,
spoken loudly and dramatically*

53

shrieked in fright, with words of joy at this ghastly sight

p

dim. through repeats

55

Musical score for measures 55-57. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The music features a melodic line in the bass staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the treble staff. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present at the end of the system.

58

Musical score for measures 58-60. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The music features a melodic line in the bass staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the treble staff.

61

Musical score for measures 61-62. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The music features a melodic line in the bass staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the treble staff. The lyrics "One bright day in the middle of the night two" are written below the bass staff. A dynamic marking of *f* is at the start, and *f > dim.* is at the bottom left.

63

Musical score for measures 63-65. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The music features a melodic line in the bass staff and a rhythmic accompaniment in the treble staff. The lyrics "dead boys got up to fight" are written below the bass staff. A dynamic marking of *mf > dim.* is at the bottom left.

66

Musical score for measures 66-67. The score is written for three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a whole rest. The middle staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of chords and eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The time signature changes to 3/4 for the second measure and back to 4/4 for the third measure.

68 *mf* Scat

Musical score for measures 68-69. The score is written for three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The middle staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of chords and eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The dynamic marking *mp* > *dim.* is present below the first measure.

70

Musical score for measures 70-72. The score is written for three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The middle staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of chords and eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The time signature changes to 2/4 for the second measure and back to 4/4 for the third measure. The dynamic marking *p* is present below the second measure.

73

Musical score for measures 73-75. The score is written for three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The middle staff is a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of chords and eighth notes. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature, containing a series of eighth notes. The time signature changes to 3/4 for the second measure and back to 4/4 for the third measure. The dynamic marking *p* is present below the third measure.

76

*Improvised scat/guitar solos
(mostly B dorian)*

p

Now if you don't be-lieve my

pp

79

sto - ries true just ask the__ blind man he saw it too.

f

3. The Lake Isle of Innisfree - William Butler Yeats ♩ = 60

p

4 *p* *mf*

I will arise

7 *f* *p* *mf* *p*

rise and go now

pp

9 *p*

And go to Innisfree And

12

a small ca - bin build there of clay and wa - tles

15

made Nine bean rows will I have there a

18

hive for the ho - ney bee And live a -

21

lo - ne in the bee loud glade

24

27

rit. *a tempo*

30

33

36 *slower, freely*

cri - cket sings

pp

39 *p*

There mid - night's all a gli - mmer and noon a pur - ple glow

42

and eve - ning's full of the li - nnet's wings

44 *pp*

pp

47 *rit.* *p* \curvearrowright *mf* *a tempo*

I will a - rise a - a -

50 *f* \curvearrowright *mf* \curvearrowright *p* *p*

rise and go now For al - ways

53

night and day I hear lake wa - ter

56

la - pping with low sounds by the shore

59 *mf*

While I stand ³ on the road - way or on pave - ments

62 *p*

grey I hear it in the

65 *pp*

deep heart's core oo

pp

68 *ppp* *pppp*

oo oo oo

ppp