

EMILY GROSHOLZ SONGS

**Poems by
EMILY GROSHOLZ**

**Music by
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Six Songs for Voice and Piano

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Emily Grosholz grew up in Philadelphia. She received her B.A. at the University of Chicago and her Ph. D in philosophy at Yale University. Since 1978, she has taught at Penn State where she is now professor of philosophy and a Fellow of the Institute for the Arts and Humanistic Studies. Her poetry collections include *The River Painter* (1984), *Shores and Headlands* (1988), *Eden* (1992), and *The Abacus of Years* (2001).

Emily Grosholz Songs was composed during residencies at The Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences in Rabun Gap, Georgia; Ucross Foundation in Wyoming; and Dorland Mountain Arts Colony in Temecula, California.

1. Dinner in the Courtyard

When summer tears the maple leaves to lace,
and blue shows through the green
like those imagined distances,
weaving through all things close at hand,
then sunset looms for hours upon the scarlet
tenements of day, unraveling curtains, windowpanes ablaze.
The house is close, I say,
and move the table underneath
the arches of the maple tree.
Not even the curious neighbors know
if I am host or stranger here,
nor if this roof of leaf and air,
the little courtyard of the world, is home.

2. In the Garden

Where are the children? – Sido

Up in the hazelbush that stood for a tree
at the southmost wall of the garden
the children lived like swallows
while their father and I cut grass
underneath, and weeded and watered the yellow roses.

They climbed by swinging up on pliant limbs
and imagined a different home,
disposing all they owned by pieces of string
on the branches around them:
dolls, bells, bags of raisins, water bottles.

Parts of the house became a constellation.
The children quarreled, sang and fell
on the hill of half-moon grass
we gathered underneath them, plash, unbroken
as falling stars against the roof at midnight.

They rose and fell, delighted,
walked up the stairs of grass into their tower.
Although they never learned to fly,
they overarched the swallows easily
with their continuous invented music.

But where, where are the children?
I've been to the house and garden
lately, alone; the bush has tassels,
the garden is overgrown, the swallows
repeat their single note among the branches.

Perhaps the gypsies stole them.
Perhaps they've found another home.
Perhaps they'll come to light again next spring
when swallows travel back from Egypt,
nesting in the ships which still have sails.

3. Elm Trees in the Early Close of Winter

Elm trees in the early close
of winter take me by surprise
as dusk descends,
take on, without my leave
or wish, the color mauve.

A trick of atmosphere,
earth breathing an upward cloud,
or my imposed desire,
or rising sap that swells
to leaf in winter buds?

Elm tree, shape of my desire,
what is color's origin?
Perhaps the sun's
light reflex as it moves
under the world again.

Midweek I live along,
Desires rise and face
with nowhere else to go.
Lengthening day, the empty vases
fill and overflow.

4. The Last of the Courtyard

Who will believe me later, when I say
we lived in a state of music? Passing birds
and mice met on the roof, and danced away.

Francis played his silver flute, and Guy
his violin; the children sang in words.
Who will believe me later, when I say

we lived on little else from day to day?
Life in the courtyard was its own reward.
Mice danced across the roof, and ran away.

Carpenter, painter, potter: poverty
is the sole good a singing man affords,
though not at last sufficient. As they say

we lose the things for which we cannot pay;
our houses were sold out, over our heads.
Even the dancing mice must go away,

nothing remains of us but memory,
a fleeting minor air, absently heard.
Who will believe me later, when I say
the mice danced on the roof, and ran away?

5. Eden

In lurid cartoon colors, the big baby
dinosaur steps backwards under the shadow

of an approaching tyrannosaurus rex.
“His mommy going to fix it,” you remark,
serenely anxious, hoping for the best.

After the big explosion, after the lights
go down inside the house and up the street,
we rush outdoors to find a squirrel stopped
in straws of half-gnawed cable. I explain,
trying to fit the facts, “The squirrel is dead.”

No, you explain it otherwise to me.
“He’s sleeping. And his mommy going to come.”
Later, when the squirrel has been removed,
“His mommy fix him,” you assert, insisting
on the right to know what you believe.

The world is truly full of fabulous
great and curious small inhabitants,
and you’re the freshly minted, unashamed
Adam in this garden. You preside,
appreciate, and judge our proper names.

Like God, I brought you here.
Like God, I seem to be omnipotent,
mostly helpful, sometimes angry as hell.
I fix whatever minor faults arise
with band-aids, batteries, masking tape, and pills.

But I am powerless, as you must know,
to chase the serpent sliding in the grass,
or the tall angel with the flaming sword
who scares you when he rises suddenly
behind the gates of sunset.

6. Spring Fever

At the wood's edge trillium shows
mauve petals in three,
bloodroot fragile white
planets down the ecliptic of the road.
I can do nothing better with my eyes
than seek the early risers out;
my self rides up and down,
teased from sterner purposes
by love and evolving spring.

Too restless to stay fixed
at my desk, which faces city streets
through windows darkening
with dust and spiderwork,
I ride my bicycle by morning
out to country at the city's edge.

I never touch the violets,
Quaker ladies massing in their dress
of blue and white, the common pinks
ignorant of their family's Latin title.
Empty-handed, given to pastoral,
by night I ride back to my lover's bed,
trailing names of flowers from the woods.

1. Dinner in the Courtyard

Emily Grosholz

from *The River Painter* (1984)

Tempo di tango ♩ = 112

Piano

poco stringendo

mp

mf

con pedale

poco rit. e dim.

mp sempre legato

When sum - mer tears the

a tempo

sempre legato mp

ma - ple leaves to lace, and blue shows through the green like those i - mag - ined

pp

dis - tanc-es, weav - ing through all things close at hand, then

13

p poco cresc.

mf

sun - set looms for hours up - on the scar - let ten - e - ments of day, un -

17

passionately

rav - el - ing cur - tains, win - dow - panes a - blaze.

21

cresc.

cresc.

f rapturously

The house is close, I say,

24

f rhapsodically

pp

and move the ta - ble un - der - neath the arch - es of the ma - ple tree. —

28

molto dim.

pp luminous

mp

Not e - ven the cur - ious neigh - bors know if I am host or

poco cresc.

33

poco cresc.

mp

allargando

stran - ger here, nor if this roof of leaf and air, the lit - tle court - yard of the

37

allargando

a tempo

world, is home. _____

41

a tempo

cantando

mp

45

p

calando

rit.

2. In the Garden

Con moto ♩ = 116

Voice

mp Up in the ha-zel-bush that

Piano

mp *mf* *p*

con pedale

stood for a tree at the south-most wall of the gar-den, the

4

chil-dren lived like swal-lows while their fa-ther and I cut grass un-der-neath, and

7

weed - ed and wa - tered the yel - low ros - es. They climbed by

10

cresc. swing-ing up on pli - ant limbs _____ and i - mag - ined a dif - f'rent home,

13

mp cresc. *mf*

mp dis - pos - ing all they owned by piec - es of string on the branch - es a -

16

sonore mp

p round them: dolls, bells, bags of rai - sins, wa - ter bot - tles.

19

poco marc. sub. p *mp* *mf*

mp *cresc. poco a poco*

23 Parts of the house be-came a con-stel-la-tion. The chil-dren quar-reled, sang and

sub.p *cresc. poco a poco*

27 fell on the hill of half-moon grass we gath-ered un-der-neath them,

mf *mp*

30 plash, un-brok-en as fall-ing stars a-gainst the roof at mid-night.

allarg. dim. *p*

allarg. dim. *p*

Poco meno mosso ♩ = 104

espressivo

34 They rose and fell, de-light-ed, _____ walked up the stairs of

espressivo *simile*

poco cresc. e string.

grass in - to their tow - er. Al - though they nev - er learned to fly, they

40

poco cresc. e string.

dim. e rall. *a tempo* *moving ahead*

o-ver-arched the swal-lows eas - i - ly with their con-tin-u-ous in-vent-ed mu-sic.

45

dim. e rall. *moving ahead*

holding back p **Andante espressivo** ♩ = 88 *mp moving ahead*

But where, where are the chil-dren? I've been to the house and gar - den

51

holding back *moving ahead* *pp* *mp non arpeg.*

holding back *moving ahead* *cresc.*

late - ly, a-lone; the bush has tass-els, the gar - den is o - ver -

56

holding back *moving ahead* *cresc.*

mf *p* *poco rit.*

grown, the swal-lows re-peat their sin-gle note a-mong the branch-es. Per -

60 *mf* *p* *poco rit.*

Adagio $\text{♩} = 72$ *sempre molto espressivo* *mp*

65 haps the gyp-sies stole them. Per - haps they've found a-noth-er home. Per - haps they'll come to

sempre molto espressivo *mp*

70 light a - gain next spring when swal - lows trav-el back from E - gypt,

dim. *p*

calando

nest - ing in the ships which still have sails.

75 *calando*

This is a blank page.

3. Elm Trees in the Early Close of Winter

Andante mesto $\text{♩} = 92$

p

Elm trees _____ in the ear-ly close of

Piano

pp

simile

con pedale

win - ter _____ take me by sur - prise _____ as dusk de - scends,

[7]

mp

p calmato

mf

take on, with - out my leave or wish, _____ the col - or mauve. _____

[12]

mp

calmato

mf

mp
A trick of

18

at - mos-phe-re, earth breath-ing an up - ward cloud, or my im - posed de-sire,

24

mf *p* *poco allarg.* *a tempo*

mp *mf* *p*

or ris-ing sap that swells to leaf in win - ter buds?

29

mp *pp* *p* *cantando*

mp

Elm tree, _____ shape of my de-sire, what is col - or's or - i-gin?

35

mp *sonore*

p

rit.

a tempo
pp *sotto voce*

Per-haps the sun's light re-flex as it moves un-der the world a -

40

a tempo
pp *una corda*

gain. Mid-week I live a-lone.

45 *mp* tre corde *poco rit.* *a tempo* *f*

p subito *mp* *p*

De - sires rise and fade with no-where else to go. Leng-then - ing

50

p subito *mp* *p*

pp

day, the emp - ty vas - es fill _____ and o - ver -

55

pp

flow. _____

59

p dolore *pp* *rit.*

4. The Last of the Courtyard

Andante grazioso ♩ = 63

Piano

mf *dim.*

mp *cresc.*

Who will be-lieve me lat - er, when I say _____ we lived in a state of

mp *cresc.*

f *mf* *p*

mu - sic? _____ Pass-ing birds _____ and mice met on the roof, and

f *mf* *p*

mp *p*

danced a - way. Fran - cis _____ played his sil - ver flute, and

mp

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It begins with a tempo marking of 'Andante grazioso' and a metronome setting of 63. The piano part starts with a melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The voice part enters with the lyrics 'Who will be-lieve me lat - er, when I say _____ we lived in a state of'. The piano accompaniment features a variety of dynamics, including *mf*, *dim.*, *mp*, *cresc.*, *f*, and *p*. The score includes measure numbers 4, 7, and 10. The key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to two flats (Bb and Eb). The time signature changes from 6/8 to 9/8 and then to 5/8.

Guy his vi - o - lin; the chil - dren sang in words.

14

p *mp*

Who will be-lieve me lat - er, when I say we lived on lit - tle else from day to

18

p *cresc.*

day? Life in the court - yard was its own re-ward. Mice danced a -

22

mf *sub. p*

cross the roof, and ran a-way. Car-pen-ter, paint - er,

26

mf

sub. p cresc.

pot - ter:____ pov - er - ty____ is the sole good____ a sing - ing man____ af -

30

sub. p cresc.

f *mf dim.* *poco a poco allarg.*

fords,____ though not at last suf - fi - cient.____ As they say,____

34

f *mf dim.* *poco a poco allarg.*

p **Quietly** $\text{♩} = 56$ *mp desperately*

we lose the things for which we can-not pay;____ our hous-es were sold out,____

39

p *mp*

Tempo primo

p

o - ver our heads.____ E - ven the danc - ing mice must

43

p

mp

go a - way, noth-ing re-mains of us but mem-o - ry, _____ a

46

non cresc. *p*

fleet-ing mi-nor air, ab-sent-ly heard. _____ Who will be-lieve me

49

8va -

lat - er, _____ when I say _____ the mice danced on the

52

molto ritard.

roof, and ran a - way? _____

55

molto ritard.

8vb -

5. Eden

Andante moderato **Allegro marcato** ♩ = 112

Voice

Piano

espressivo *poco rit.*

mp *ff* *f*

mf

mp

In lur - id car - toon col - ors, — the big ba - by di - no-saur steps

back - wards — un - der the shad - ow — of an ap - proach - ing — ty -

7 12

poco allarg.

ran - no - sau - rus rex.

17 *poco allarg.*

mf

recitative

mp

"His mom-my going to fix it," you re-mark, sere - ly an - xious, hop - ing for the

21 *mp*

rit.

a tempo

best. —

f

Af - ter the big ex - plo - sion, af - ter the lights go

22 *f*

mf

down in - side the house and up the street, we rush out - doors ——— to

27 *piu f*

find a squirrel ——— stopped in straws ——— of half - gnawed — ca - ble.

30 *poco rit.*

mp recitative simply, but intensely *p* **Poco a tempo**

I ex-plain, try - ing to fit the facts, "The squirrel is dead."

33 *p*

mp

No, you ex - plain it — oth - er - wise to

35

poco rit. *recitative* *p*

me. "He's sleep - ing. And his mom - my going to come."

poco rit.

39

mf *p*

Lat - er, when the squirrel has been re - moved, "His mom - my fix him,"

41

mf *p*

mp *poco stringendo* *poco rit.* *p* *mp*

you in - sist, in - sist - ing on the right to know what you be - lieve. The

43

mp *p*

Andante espressivo ♩ = 108

world is tru-ly full of fab - u - lous great and cu - ri - ous small_____

45

mp

simile

rit. *a tempo*

in - hab - i - tants, and you're the fresh - ly mint - ed,

49

rit. *a tempo*

poco rit. *a tempo dolce ed espansivo*

un - a-shamed Ad - am in this gar - den. You pre -

53 *poco rit.* *a tempo dolce ed espansivo*

mf

side, ap - pre - ci - ate, and judge our prop - er names.

58 *mf*

p

Like God, I brought you here. Like God, I

62 *p*

cresc.

seem to be om - nip - o - tent, most - ly help - ful,

67 *cresc.*

f some - times an - gry as hell. *mf* I fix what - ev - er

70

f *mp*

mp mi - nor faults a - rise with band - aids, — bat - ter - ies, —

73

p

Slow lullaby

poco rit. mask - ing tape, and pills. *p semplice* But I am pow - er - less, as

77

poco rit. *p*

you must know, to chase the ser - pent slid - ing in the grass, or the tall

cresc.

82 *simile*

an - gel ——— with the flam - ing sword who scares you ——— when he ris - es

mf *p espressivo* *cresc.*

88 *mf* *colla voce* *p* *non arpeg.*

sud - den - ly ——— - be - hind the gates of sun - set. ———

f *mp* *rit.* *poco a tempo*

93 *f* *mp non arpeg.* *poco a tempo* *p* *pp*

6. Spring Fever

Allegro energico $\text{♩} = 104$

Piano

mf

cresc.

f

ff dim.

mf

mp

At the wood's edge__ tril-li-um shows__ mauve pet-als in three,__ blood-root frag - ile white

mf simile

mp

cresc.

f

plan - ets down the e - clip-tic__ of the road,_____

cresc.

f

mf

18 I can do noth - ing bet - ter with my eyes than seek the ear - ly

mf

mp *cresc.*

23 ris - ers out; my self rides up and down, teased from stern - er pur - pos - es

mp *cresc.*

f

28 by love and e - volv - ing spring, by love

f

mf

32 — and e - volv - ing spring. Too

rest-less__ to stay fixed_____ at my desk, which fac - es cit - y streets through win-dows

37 *mp*

rit. e dim. dark-en-ing__ with dust__ and spi - der - work, *Poco meno mosso* *mp* I ride my bi-cy-cle__ by

41 *rit. e dim.* *mp*

morning__ out to country__ at the cit-y's edge. *p legato ed espressivo* I nev - er touch the vi - o -

47 *p legato ed espressivo*

Chorale ♩ = 92

mp dolce

lets, Quak-er la - dies mass - ing in their dress of blue and white, the

54 *mp sonore*

pp *rit.* *mp*

com-mon pinks ig-nor-ant of their fam-i-ly's Lat-in ti-tle. Emp-ty-hand-ed,

59

pp *mp*

molto accel. *mp*

giv'n to pas-tor-al, by

64

molto accel.

Tempo primo

cresc.

night I ride back to my lov-er's bed, trail-ing names of

68

mp cresc.

ff

flow-ers from the woods.

72

ff