

THE SYLVAN CYCLE

Five Songs for Voice and Piano

Poetry by

JOSEPH GRUCCI

EMILY GROSHOLZ

JASON CHARNESKY

Music by

BRUCE TRINKLEY

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Five Songs for Voice and Piano

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Duration: Approximately 15 minutes

Joseph L. Grucci (1909-1982) was the founder and editor of the poetry magazine, *Pivot*, until his death in 1982. Born in Pittsburgh, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. He taught at the American University in Shrivenham, England, and at the University of Pittsburgh before becoming director of the poetry workshop at Penn State in 1950. He taught poetry workshops for twenty-five years. He was author of four volumes of poetry and was co-author of a volume of translations, *Three Spanish American Poets*.

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).

Jason Charnesky was born in Pittsburgh and received his undergraduate and graduate degrees at Penn State. He teaches in the English department at Penn State. "The elms that line the Mall dwindle each year and the view from Mount Nittany declines as our county 'develops'. But it is in our power to care fro that which we have received and preserve that which we love the most for those who follow us."

1. I Know a Road

by Joseph Grucci from *This Autumn Surely* (1935)

I know a road, and I can find it still,
Though the bright asters and the hollyhocks
Invade the unfenced pathway from the hill,
To hush one's foot against the eye-blue phlox.

And yet I wonder if the sullen hill
That threatened it has made his menace good.
I know a road, and I can find it still –
Or something happened where a hill once stood.

Whether in moonlight or when night is black,
With red-gold autumn burning in my brain,
Let them say what they will behind my back,
I know a road that I must find again.

2. Before You Inhabit Another Star

by Joseph Grucci from *The Invented Will* (1962)

Man, if you should inhabit another star,
Fell not a single tree
That you cannot replace,
Cultivate no acre for the ravens to destroy,
House no one where he cannot see
A sun-held hill beyond the greenest street.
 (But above all else
 Take nothing from a native of that star
 To make his world the less.)

Build landing strips
For visitors from outer space;
Make laws, if indeed you must,
That even the wildest cannot twist,
But shape them to the human need.
Against inquisitors keep inviolable
The privacy of mind.

O man, before you inhabit another star,
Let fall the rain
Here, let it fall to stir
The sleeping sand.

3. Lovely October

by Joseph Grucci from *This Autumn Surely* (1935)

Lovely October, red-gold and immortal,
Like a spread wing at sunset in my brain!
I have been waiting your outrageous coming,
Leaf-footed, treading down the wind-slain!

I have been such a lover of autumn;
Listened to bronze leaves make a fabulous sound
As they sucked their last breath from nervous boughs,
Then made a secret noise upon the ground.

I have watched boys plunge knee-deep into heaps
Of leaves and fill their shoes with copper-gold,
And heard their laughter mixed with joyous rage
At having so much beauty here to hold.

Lovely October, red-gold and immortal,
Like a spread wing at sunset in my brain!
I have been waiting your outrageous coming,
Leaf-footed, treading down the wind-slain!

4. Elm Trees in the Early Close of Winter

by Emily Grosholz from *Eden* (1992)

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.

5. The Fire Elms

by Jason Charnesky

From the start of the stars
when that first garbled night
blazed out in cosmic light
all was fire, all was fire,
and the flame passed along
to the fire blossomed birth
of our fair risen earth
all afire.

Now the light lay well hid
within flower and beast,
the most vast and the least
each a fire, each a fire.
Every ordinary tree
bears a mark from the realm
of the star. And our elms
are on fire.

And the elm gabled mall
where we walked in our youth
echoed passion and truth,
all on fire, all on fire.
Though we thought those dark trees
wooden-hearted and cold.
We were brave, clever, bold,
and on fire.

Half our life now well spent,
those grand trees span the mall,
we are stooped, they are tall,
and the fire, and the fire
has passed on to the eyes
of the youth-blooming crowd
walking careless and proud
and on fire.

For the sons of the daughters
of the daughters of our sons
will discover in their turns
some pure fire,
and will strike out as if
all the world waited through
all of time for their new
urgent fire.

What if tree turn to dust,
or the sea overwhelm
dusty plain, and each elm
once a fire, once a fire,
should sink back to the earth?
Every birth is as swift.
Let us merit the gift –
Life, Love, Fire.