

John Oliver

Unseen Rain

for mezzo-soprano and orchestra

co-commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Music in the Morning

First performed by Judith Forst and the
CBC Vancouver Orchestra under the direction of Mario Bernardi,
March 14, 1995 at the Orpheum Theatre, Vancouver, Canada

johnolivermusic.com

PROGRAM NOTE

I composed these eight miniatures expressly for Judith Forst and the CBC Radio Orchestra in 1995. June Goldsmith, Artistic director of Music in the Morning, co-commissioned *Unseen Rain* with the CBC Radio Orchestra. In the early stages, as we discussed ideas, June suggested I read any writings by the Sufi poet Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. Rumi was a prolific writer, whose meeting, at age 37, with a great mystic, Shams, elicited a pouring forth of improvised quatrains about love and true friendship. The quatrains come off the page in English translation as imagist poems, like little diary entries. This was a great discovery for me and timely, too. My new interest in concise forms found its match in the quatrains. Over the years I have been interested in exploring the art song form in a context that includes the music of the World. So whereas one might hear a spiritual debt owed to Schubert, the musical language takes in Bartok, Berg and Persian folk song as well. John Moyne and Coleman Barks, the translators of the Rumi quatrains I used, remarked that in the original Sufi, they are "sonically very dense, with clusters of similar or identical sounds piled quickly one upon the other." The translators were not able to retain this characteristic, partly because of their intention "to connect these poems with a strong American line of freeverse spiritual poetry." In this spirit, I have created an accompaniment that sees a piling-up of sounds, but one that also creates a sense of sudden mystery and clarity.

NOTE TO THE PRESENTER

Please ensure that the printed concert program reads as follows:

UNSEEN RAIN by John Oliver

1. Tuning
2. The Altar
3. Friends
4. The Mirror
5. Fire
6. Candle
7. The Door
8. Stories

The poetry that appears in this composition was extracted from a collection of quatrains by the Sufi poet Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, (known in English as Rumi). These translations by John Moyne and Coleman Barks appear in the publication "Unseen Rain," published by

Threshold Books
RD 4 Box 600
Putney, VT 03346 USA

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1.

Tonight with wine being poured
and instruments singing among themselves,
one thing is forbidden,
one thing: Sleep.

2.

I came and sat in front of you
as I would at an altar.
Every promise I made before
I broke when I saw you.

3.

Tonight, a singing competition:
Jupiter, the moon, and myself,
the friends I've been looking for!

4.

I want to hold you close like a lute
so we can cry out with loving.

You would rather throw stones at a mirror?
I am your mirror, and here are the stones.

5.

The prophets all were commanded
to stay in the company of lovers.

We take warmth from fire, but fire
goes out in the presence of ashes.

6.

Since I've been away from you,
I only know how to weep.

Like a candle, melting is who I am.
Like a harp, any sound I make is music.

7.

I have lived on the lip
of insanity, wanting to know reasons,
knocking on a door. It opens.
I've been knocking from the inside!

8.

You were alone, I got you to sing.
You were quiet, I made you tell long stories.
No one knew who you were,
but they do now.

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The composer gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Music in the Morning.

John Oliver holds a Doctorate degree in composition from McGill University. He writes music for electronic media as well as traditional musical ensembles. As Composer-in-Residence at Music in the Morning from 1993-1995 he created new works for the St. Lawrence String Quartet, baritone Russell Braun, and percussionists Beverley Johnston and Salvador Ferreras. "Unseen Rain" marks the last commission of his residency and was co-commissioned by Music in the Morning and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

I wish to thank Director June Goldsmith for a wonderful opportunity to create new works that are performed three days in succession on her concert series. Her Composer-in-Residence program is unique in Canada.

John Oliver is an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre. His music has been performed and broadcast internationally and he is the winner of numerous prizes.

INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B-flat (doubling Clarinet in A)
2 Bassoons
1 Trumpet in B-flat
2 Horns in F

Timpani Percussion (one player): Vibraphone, Glockenspiel, Concert Cymbals, Medium Temple Bowl, Suspended Cymbal, Triangle, Bell Tree, Wood Block, Tambourine, Bass Drum.

Harp

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

DURATION: 10'24" (#1: 1'05"; #2: 50"; #3: 56"; #4: 1'38"; #5: 1'42"; #6: 1'36"; #7: 1'16"; #8: 1'21")

Please note: the eight parts should be played continuously with only a brief pause between sections, (though not so brief that noise of page turns disturbs the performance).

dedicated to Gayle Kamachi

Unseen Rain

for mezzo-soprano and orchestra

poetry by Jalal al-Din al-Rumi

1. Tuning

John Oliver
(born 1959)

$\text{♩} = 82$

Fl. *solo*
f

Ob. *solo*
f

Cl. *solo*
f

C Tpt. *muted*
f

Harp *sf* *l.v. sempre* *f*

Vn. I *legatissimo*
con sordino
ppp *p* *con sordino legatissimo*
p *crescendo poco a poco*

Vn. II *legatissimo*
con sordino
ppp *p* *con sordino legatissimo*
p *crescendo poco a poco*

Vla. *ppp* *sin sordino sul tasto* *legatissimo*
p *crescendo poco a poco*

Vc. *ppp* *sin sordino sul tasto*
p *crescendo poco a poco*

Cb. *ppp* *p* *crescendo poco a poco*

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

C Tpt.

Harp

Vn. I *mp* *crescendo poco a poco*

Vn. II *mp* *crescendo poco a poco*

Vla. *mp* *crescendo poco a poco*

Vc. *mp* *crescendo poco a poco*

Cb. *mp* *crescendo poco a poco*

11

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

C Tpt.

Harp

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

ff

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

15

mp ————— mf

Voice: To - - night with wine_ be- ing poured.

Fl. *ff* *pp* *gliss.* *f*

Ob. *ff* *pp* *f*

Cl. *ff* *pp* *f*

Bsn. *mp* *f*

C Tpt. *ff*

Pc.

Glock.

Vibes.

Harp. *mf* *ff* *mf* *6* *6*

Vn. I *f* *ff* *via sordino* *pizz.* *mf*

Vn. II *f* *ff* *via sordino* *pizz.* *mf*

Vla. *f* *ff* *via sordino* *p* *mf*

Vc.

Cb. *f*

19 *mf* *f*

and in - stru - ments sing - ing a - mong them - selves. _____

gliss. *ff* *p* *f* *[3]*

p *mf* *mf* *f* *[3]*

p *f* *p* *[3]*

p *[3]*

p *[3]*

mf Tambourine *mp*

6 *6*

25 $\text{♩} = 60$ *mp* *rall.* *pp*

Voice: one thing is - for - bid - den, one thing: sleep.

Fl.

Ob. *ff* *fp* *pp*

Cl. *f* *ff* *fp* *pp*

Bsn.

Tamb. *f*

Glock.

Vibes.

Harp *ff* *6* *6* *lv.*

Unseen Rain

2. The Altar

$\text{♩} = 100$

Voice

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bsn.

C Tpt.

Cym.

Harp

Vn. I

Vn. II

Vla.

Vc.

Concert Cymbals

mf *ff* *fp* *f* *pp* *p*

arco *sul tasto*

3 *a 2*

36 *mp* *mf*

Voice: I came and sat in front of you as I

Fl. solo *fp* *ppp*

Ob. *fp* *ppp*

Cl. *fp* *ppp*

C Tpt. *f* *p*

Pc. Temple Bowl Hard rubber mallet *f* l.v.

Harp *f*

Vn. I Violin solo *f* *mf* *f* *p*

Vn. II sul tasto *p* pizz. arco *ppp* *mf* *ppp*

Vla. *p* *mf* *ppp* *mf* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *mf* *ppp*

Cb. *ppp* *mf* *ppp*

43

Voice: would at an al - ter. E - very_ pro - mise_ I made_ be - fore

Ob. *fp* *f* *p*

Cl. *fp* *f* *f*

Pc. Temple Bowl *f* l.v. To Cym. (sus) Cymbal (sus) *pp*

Vn. I *tutti* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *pp*

Vn. II *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *fp* *pp*

Vla. *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *fp* *pp*

Vc. *p* *fp* *pp*



Lento
♩ = 60

rall. ♩ = 50

50

Voice: I broke when I saw you.

Cym. (sus) *f*

Timp. *f*

Vn. I **Lento** *pizz.* *f* *arco* *ppp* *ppp*

Vn. II *f* *arco* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

Vla. *f* *arco* *pp* *ppp*

Vc. *f* *pizz.* *solo (espressivo)* *arco* *divisi* *mp* *the rest* *pp* *ppp*

Cb. *f* *pizz.*