

John Oliver

# Unseen Rain

for mezzo-soprano and guitar

(an arrangement of the original version for voice 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](http://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

IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII

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.

IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII

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.

Voice  
Guitar

for Gayle Kamachi

# Unseen Rain

for mezzo-soprano and orchestra

John Oliver  
(born 1959)

poetry by Jalal al-Din al-Rumi

classical guitar arrangement by the composer

$\text{♩} = 82$

## 1. Tuning

legatissimo

Capo on third fret to allow "open" C to sound on 5th string.  
Open 5th, 3rd, and 2nd string will be used for C, B $\flat$ , and D.

Guitar

0 2 0

*ppp*

*p*

5

*crescendo poco a poco*

8

*mp*

*crescendo poco a poco*

11

*mf*

14

*f*

16 *mp* *mf*

To - night with wine be- ing poured

*ff* *p i p m* Ob. Cl. *p* *f*

19 *mf* *f*

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

*mf* *f* *mf* *mf* *f*

23

*ff* *i i i i ...*

26  $\text{♩} = 60$  *mp* *rall.* *pp*

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

# Unseen Rain

## 2. The Altar

♩ = 100

*mf* *ff* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *fp*

34

*mp* *mf*

*fp* *fp* *fp* *fp* *pp* *fp* *fp*

38

*fp* *ppp* *f* *p* *f*

41

*pp* *mf* *p* *fp* *fp*

al - - - ter.

Ob.

*fp* *f*

E - - - very pro - mise I made

Cl.

Strings

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

be - fore I broke when I saw

**Lento**  $\text{♩} = 60$  *ff* **rall.** *mf*

*pp* *f* *mp* sul tasto

you.

*p* *p*

# Unseen Rain

## 3. Friends

$\text{♩} = 78$

*legatissimo*

*crescendo poco a poco*

Musical notation for measures 1-58. The piece is in 2/2 time. The first measure starts with a *ppp* dynamic. The notation includes various accidentals (flats and sharps) and slurs. A second *ppp* dynamic marking is present in measure 4. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together.

Musical notation for measures 58-62. Measure 58 begins with a *pp* dynamic. This section includes triplets and a fermata over a measure. The notation continues with various accidentals and slurs.

Musical notation for measures 62-66. Measure 62 starts with a *ff* dynamic. The notation includes a fermata and various accidentals. The music continues with slurs and accidentals.

Musical notation for measures 66-70. Measure 66 begins with a *ff* dynamic. The notation includes a circled '2' above a measure, indicating a second ending. The piece concludes with a final chord and a fermata.



69

*f*

To - night, a

XII

*f* *mp* *mf* Timp.

73

sing - ing com - pe - ti - tion: harp Ju - pi - ter, the moon,

oboe

*f* *mf* *f*

78

and my - self, the friends I've been

*ff*

83

look - ing for! Ju - pi - ter, the moon,

*mp* *rall.*

*p*

88

and my - self.

*p*

s.t.

*p*

# Unseen Rain

## 4. The Mirror

♩ = 72

mp

Winds I

Hp. 2 sul tasto

1 rasq.

3

f ff p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 94, 95, and 96. The top staff is a vocal line with a half rest in measure 94 and a quarter note in measure 95. The bottom staff features a piano accompaniment. In measure 94, the piano is marked *f* and includes the instruction "Hp. 2 sul tasto". In measure 95, the piano is marked *ff* and includes the instruction "Winds I 1 rasq.". In measure 96, the piano is marked *p* and includes the instruction "3".

97 : mf

want to hold you like a lute

Hp. sul tasto 2

Winds rasq.

Fl. 1 sul tasto

Hp.

f ff p f p f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 97, 98, and 99. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics "want to hold you like a lute". The bottom staff features a piano accompaniment. In measure 97, the piano is marked *f* and includes the instruction "Hp. sul tasto 2". In measure 98, the piano is marked *ff* and includes the instruction "Winds rasq.". In measure 99, the piano is marked *p* and includes the instruction "Fl. 1 sul tasto".

100

so we can cry out with lo - ving.

normal

Hn. sul tasto

1

3

Strings tasto

pp < f >

Detailed description: This system contains measures 100, 101, and 102. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics "so we can cry out with lo - ving.". The bottom staff features a piano accompaniment. In measure 100, the piano is marked *ff* and includes the instruction "normal". In measure 101, the piano is marked *mf* and includes the instruction "Hn. sul tasto". In measure 102, the piano is marked *f* and includes the instruction "1 3".

103

Winds pont.

pont.

3

2

2

tasto

4 pizz

1

2

pp < f > ff ppp

Detailed description: This system contains measures 103, 104, and 105. The top staff is a vocal line with a half rest in measure 103 and a quarter note in measure 104. The bottom staff features a piano accompaniment. In measure 103, the piano is marked *pp* and includes the instruction "Winds pont.". In measure 104, the piano is marked *ff* and includes the instruction "pont. 3". In measure 105, the piano is marked *ppp* and includes the instruction "4 pizz 1 2".

106

sul tasto

f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 106, 107, and 108. The top staff is a vocal line with a half rest in measure 106 and a quarter note in measure 107. The bottom staff features a piano accompaniment. In measure 106, the piano is marked *f* and includes the instruction "sul tasto".

109

*mf* *f*

You would ra-ther throw stones

113

at a mir - ror? \_\_\_\_\_

sul ponticello... al tasto  
Vibes.

sul tasto  
Hp.

*ff* *f* *mp* *mf* *f*

118

am your

Bn & Hn.  
Cl.

*sf* *f* *mp* *f* *p*

121

mir - ror, and here are the stones. \_\_\_\_\_

Ob. Fl. Winds rasq.

*f* *ff* *ff* *p*

124

Strings pizz.

*mp*

♩ = 112

# Unseen Rain

## 5. Fire

Capo I  
(Score remains at sounding pitch.)

*pp*

*mf* Timp.

*f* Str. pizz.

Strong accents! (See footnote.)

*f* Str. arco *pp* *mf* *mp*

The pro-phets all were com-mand - ed

Winds *mf*

to

*f* Winds

stay in the com - pa - ny of

Accented notes are all *ff* in ful score

lo - - - - - vers. \_\_\_\_\_

mf pp f

Str. arco

146 mf mp

f

Winds

148

We take

mf f

Str. arco

151

warmth from the fire,

mf f Hn. f

154

but fire goes

mf Str. arco Hn. f mf ff

XIII Horn

158

*mp*

out \_\_\_\_\_ in the pre - sence of \_\_\_\_\_

*mf ff mf ff mf pp legato*

161

*mf*

a - shes; \_\_\_\_\_

*mf ff mp f*

164

*rall.*

*mf mp*

168

$\text{♩} = 108$

*rall.*

but fire goes out in the pre - sence of \_\_\_\_\_

*p p/i XVI XIII (nat.)*

*l.v.*

172

$\text{♩} = 80$

a - shes \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

# Unseen Rain

## 6. Candle

♩ = 72

*p*

sul tasto

Since I've been a -

*m*

*mp*

*f*

*ppp*

5 VII

1 3 3

sul tasto (s.t.)

1 5 2

178

way from you, I on - ly

*i* *m* *a* *m*

sul pont (s.p.) nat. s.t. s.p.

3 2 1 2 3 2 1 2

Keep Es sounding when possible, (fingers 1 & 4 remain on fretboard).

180

know how to weep. pos. norm.

nat. s.t. s.p.

*mf*

3

5 6 3 2 1 2 5

182

*p* Like a can - dle, *mp* melt - ing is who I

s.p. norm.

*mf* *mp*

4 s.p. s.t. 3 3 3 1 1

1 2 3 2 5

185

*p* am. Like a harp, *mp* an - y sound I make is

s.t. s.p. nat. *p* *mf*

2 *p* *i* *m* 1 nat. 4 2 4 2 4 2 1 1

3 2 1 5 6 3 4 2 4 2 3 0 1

189

mu - sic. *pp* Like a

s.p. norm s.t. s.p.

192

can - dle, melt - ing is who I

norm s.t. norm

*mf* *mp*

194

am. Like a

*p* *mp*

s.t. (s.t.)

196

harp, an - y sound I make is mu - sic.

norm

*mf* norm

gliss.

199

s.p. s.t. tap strings near bridge

*ppp* *pp*



# Unseen Rain

## 7. The Door

♩ = 84

*mf*

Hp.

*f* *p* *ff*

gliss. 1

210

*f*

I \_\_\_ have lived \_\_\_

213

on the

*mp*

215

lip \_\_\_ of in - sa - ni - ty, \_\_\_

*mp* *f*

217

want - ing to know

*mf*

rea - sons,

*mf* *f* *ff*

♩ = 120

220

knock - ing on a

Strings pizz secco

*ff*

223

door.

Hp. Winds

*f* *ff*

226

It o - pens.

VII

*mf*

228

♩ = 72      ♩ = 90

*pp* *f* *pp* *ff* *a*

230

I've been knock - ing from the

233

in - - side!

*mp*

234

I've been knock - - ing from the

*f*

236

in - - side!

attacca

Winds

*f*

pizz.

# Unseen Rain

## 8. Stories

♩ = 60

*p* *mf* *p* *mp*

You were a - lone, \_\_\_\_\_ I

Vn. solo

*ff* *mf* *f* *p* *mf*

242

*f* *mp*

got you to sing.

*mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

245

*p*

You were quiet,

*p* *pp*

② *molto legato*

③

*pp* *mp*

248

♩ = 72 *rit.* *mp* *mf* *f* *mp*

I made you tell long stories. I made you tell

fresh

Cello

④ *mp* *mf*

V.S.

251

long stories Ah...\_\_\_\_\_

*f*

253

No - one knew who you were, but they do

*mp* *p*

*>p* *mp* *mf* *p*

256

now.

*f*

CVII

258

*mf* *mp*

*ff*