

Old-Fashioned Love Songs

PART I

Preamble

(Aaron Grad)

Let's begin this examination
Of timeless, universal love,
And the questions that arise
In the pursuit thereof.

How I wish a simple explanation
Could reveal the path of pure delight,
But love is blind, and cast in shadows,
And I am lost without your light.

So here I stand in your illumination
And attempt to open wide my heart.
For only fear and self-deception
Could ever hold us apart.

My approach may be outdated,
But true love will always be sincere.
It's the flush that follows Cupid's arrow,
And the wish that you were near.

Come again! Sweet love doth now invite

(Music by John Dowland; Lyrics by Anonymous)

Come again! Sweet love doth now invite
Thy graces that refrain
To do me due delight,
To see, to hear, to touch, to kiss, to die,
With thee again in sweetest sympathy.

Come again! That I may cease to mourn
Through thy unkind disdain;
For now left and forlorn
I sit, I sigh, I weep, I faint, I die
In deadly pain and endless misery.

Gentle Love, draw forth thy wounding dart,
Thou canst not pierce her heart;
For I, that do approve
By sighs and tears more hot than are thy shafts
Did tempt while she for triumph laughs.

Music Theory

(Aaron Grad)

In the beginning, there was one.
But unison is not harmony.
And then there were two,
And a shifting understanding of stability.
Then the triad! The seventh! Diminished seventh!
French augmented sixth!
Altered chords!
All that tension and release.

When I was in music school
I was a restless punk.
I chafed at following the rules,
That music theory bunk.
I was there to strut my stuff,
To flirt and condescend;
But you were there to call me out
And now I understand that

Love is not Gregorian chant.
It is getting intertwined with you,
To stretch and modulate together
Until we find our root.

Dissonance for its own sake
Is such a load of hooley!
We don't needlessly complicate
Our composition, do we?
We first clashed because we're strong
And clear in our intentions.
Now, we're sweet as two can be,
We've settled our suspensions, for

Love is not Gregorian chant
It is getting intertwined with you
To stretch and modulate together
Until we find our roots
That spread apart
So leaves can fall,
And it can start again.

I knew right off that you were like no other flame.
More like a wild animal I had no hope to tame.
I tried to play you down, as if it were a game.
To need you was too much to bear:
Such fever and pain.

I attempt from love's sickness

(Music by Henry Purcell; Lyrics by John Dryden
and Sir Robert Howard)

I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am myself my own fever and pain.
No more now, fond heart, with pride no more swell;
Thou canst not raise forces enough to rebel.
I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am myself my own fever and pain.
For love has more power and less mercy than fate,
To make us seek ruin and of those that hate.
I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am myself my own fever and pain.

Am I Worthy?

(Aaron Grad)

Like most people, I hide so well
That I disappear even from myself.

The world is full of such hiding,
All brushing elbows and shifting gazes.

You are not one to hide.
You are so clear and honest
That it makes you dangerous.

Dangerous, I say, because
To truly see you forces me
To see myself so honestly.

It bids me to ask: Am I worthy?

The Non-Pareil

(Music by William Boyce; Lyrics by Anonymous)

Though Chloe's out of fashion,
Can blush and be sincere,
I toast her in a bumper
If all the belles were here.
What though no diamonds sparkle
About her neck and waist
With every shining virtue
The lovely maid is graced.

In modest plain apparel
No Patches, paint or airs
In debt alone to Nature,

An angel she appears:

From gay coquets high-finished
My Chloe takes no rules,
Nor envies them their conquests,
The hearts of all the fools.

Who wins her must have merit
such merit as her own.
The graces all possessing,
Yet knows not she has one:
Then grant me, gracious heaven,
The gifts you most approve,
And Chloe, charming Chloe,
Will bless me with her love.

Risk Management

(Aaron Grad)

How can I be sure that you will care
Before I let you know me?
How can I slow down my heart
Once you have set it beating?

What's the worst that it could be,
If I show up recklessly?
If I swagger in, greet you with the gall
To be irresistible?

I won't crack!
I won't freeze!
I won't fall down to my knees!
It will be oh so nice!
We will be in paradise!

Kissing in the Dark

(Music by Stephen Foster; Lyrics by George Cooper)

Sitting in the cozy parlor
When the nights are long,
While the cricket 'neath the window
Sings his dainty song:
With the one we love beside us
And no eyes to mark,
Oh how gaily glide the hours
Kissing in the dark.

Softly then the vows we murmur
Fall upon the air,
Little hands in ours are folded,

Gently nestling there.
Not a sweeter note of music
Sings the morning lark,
Then is heard when lips are meeting
Kissing in the dark.

Surely then we grow much bolder
For we know this well,
That we whisper 'neath the shadows
All love bids us tell.
Let us bless the golden hours
With no eyes to mark,
That we pass among the maidens
Kissing in the dark!

Love is Here to Stay

(Music by George Gershwin; Lyrics by
Ira Gershwin)

The more I read the papers,
The less I comprehend,
The world and all its capers,
And how it all will end.
Nothing seems to be lasting,
But that isn't our affair.
We've got something permanent,
I mean in the way we care.

It's very clear,
Our love is here to stay
Not for a year, but ever and a day

The radio
And the telephone
And the movies that we know
May just be passing fancies and in time may go.

But oh my dear,
Our love is here to stay
Together we're going a long, long way.

In time the Rockies may crumble,
Gibraltar may tumble,
They're only made of clay.
But our love is here to stay.

PART II

Dopamine

(Aaron Grad)

Here is how a neuroscientist explained it:
Love slows down time.

To be more precise, a surge of loving feelings
triggers the release of dopamine, a chemical in the
brain, bringing bliss and peace and altering one's
sense of time, stretching it out, second by second.

But there's a catch, in that the brain will soon require
ever-greater squirts of dopamine just to feel the
same.

In other words, time wears down love.

Creating a love that can stand up to time is to enter
an arms race, building an arsenal of truth and fun
and generosity, pitted against the crush of passing
time and mindless habit.

This is my battle cry:

Battle Cry

(Aaron Grad)

Every day I fight for you among the thickets
Of responsibilities and obligations.

I fight for you within a battleground
Of dirty dishes and unfolded laundry.

I claw back complacency!
I vanquish boredom!

I wield idle chatter, foot massages, silly voices;
I'll dance a jig to wake you in the morning.
You bear racy love notes, sweet surprises,
Big excursions; you pack the snacks that keep me
satisfied.

We are soldiers of seduction!
We are warriors of wedlock!
We are battle-ready, and our battle cry is:
Now! Now! Now! Now! Now!

Love in a Minor Key
(Aaron Grad)

I will love you in the winter,
Love you when it's dark,
Love you in a minor key.
I will love you when I'm busy,
Love you when you're sick,
Love you inconveniently.

Long ago we passed the stage of butterflies,
'Round the time we first considered
What happens when one of us dies.

Still we love without precaution,
Love through sour moods,
Love among the squabbles.
We will love until our hair turns gray,
And we have lost all our marbles.

Time is lost in love,
And love is lost in time.
All I have to hold is you.

So I'll love you in the winter,
Love with all my heart,
Love until it hurts me,
Love you endlessly.

Speak Low
(Music by Kurt Weill; Lyrics by Ogden Nash)

Speak low when you speak, love.
Our summer day withers away too soon, too soon.
Speak low when you speak, love.
Our moment is swift, like ships adrift,
We're swept apart, too soon.
Speak low, darling, speak low.
Love is a spark, lost in the dark too soon, too soon.
I feel wherever I go that tomorrow is near,
Tomorrow is here, and always too soon.
Time is so old, and love so brief.
Love is pure gold, and time a thief.
We're late, darling, we're late.
The curtain descends, ev'rything ends
Too soon, too soon.
I wait, darling, I wait.
Will you speak low to me,
Speak love to me and soon?

I struggle in our time, an age so fast
(Aaron Grad)

I struggle in our time, an age so fast
And superficial. Where is the romance?
What words from clicking keyboards will outlast
Those etched by quills on parchment's smooth
expanses?
What melody remains that's yet unheard?
A foolish quest this is, to bare my heart
Through tired, worn-out conventions. In a word:
Redundancy, disguised as precious art.

Truth is, under the sun, there's nothing new;
And even skies at night are out-of-date,
Each twinkle having traveled eons through
Our universe at light's relentless rate.
You see, love's fashion never fades: it's old
As stars, sincere as sunshine, pure as gold.

Time After Time
(Cyndi Lauper and Rob Hyman)

Lying in my bed I hear the clock tick,
And think of you.
Caught up in circles, confusion is nothing new.
Flashback—warm nights—almost left behind
Suitcases of memories, time after—

Sometimes you picture me,
I'm walking too far ahead.
You're calling to me, I can't hear what you've said.
Then you say, "Go slow,"
I fall behind. The second hand unwinds.

If you're lost, you can look, and you will find me,
Time after time.
If you fall, I will catch you, I'll be waiting,
Time after time.

After my picture fades and darkness has
Turned to gray.
Watching through windows, you're wondering
If I'm okay.
Secrets stolen from deep inside—
The drum beats out of time.

If you're lost...

The Poetics of Loss
(Aaron Grad)

If we cannot speak of death,
Let us simply say: away.
And if we cannot bear the darkness,
Imagine any night that dawns onto another day.

Although we cannot know
What waits beyond this time,
Whatever may be,
Please stay close to me.
Come away with me.

Come Away With Me
(Norah Jones)

Come away with me in the night.
Come away with me,
And I will write you a song.

Come away with me on a bus.
Come away where they can't tempt us
With their lies.

And I want to walk with you
On a cloudy day,
In fields where the yellow grass grows knee-high.
So won't you try to come?

Come away with me and we'll kiss
On a mountaintop.
Come away with me,
And I'll never stop loving you.

And I want to wake up with the rain
Falling on a tin roof,
While I'm safe there in your arms.
So all I ask is for you
To come away with me in the night.
Come away with me.