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AudioBooks

POETRY



A Lover's Gift

From Her to Him

POETRY • PROSE
MUSIC

Read by
Laura Paton

NA138812D

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1. **How Do I Love Thee** Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)

The relationship between Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning began after he wrote to her to praise her poetry. She was a permanent invalid, and they wrote to each other for four months without meeting. Their eventual courtship was marred by Elizabeth's domineering father, and they were only able to escape the strain he placed upon them by eloping to Pisa. For the last fifteen years of her life they were never separated.

How do I love thee: let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, – I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death

Music: 'Dank Sei Dir, Herr', Ochs

Takako Nishizaki/Polish National Radio SO/Breiner

8.223586

2. from **The Song of Solomon**

'...let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice,
and thy countenance is comely.'

Music: '**Ombre Mai Fù**' from '**Serse**', **Handel**

Takako Nishizaki/Polish National Radio SO/Breiner

8.223586

3. **A Birthday** Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit:
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

Music: **Andante** from **Violin Concerto in E minor Op. 64**, **Mendelssohn**

Takako Nishizaki/Slovak Philharmonic/Jean

8.550153

4. *from* **Romeo and Juliet** William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Act II Scene II

'O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love;
And I'll no longer be a Capulet...'

Act III Scene III

'Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging...

Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.'

Music: **Romeo and Juliet, Tchaikovsky**

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Leaper

8.553017

5. '**Vissi d'arte**' *from* **Tosca, Puccini**

Miriam Gauci/BRT Philharmonic Orchestra/Rahbari

8.550606

6. **Letter** from Marianna Alcoforado (1640–1723) to the Marquis of Chamilly and St. Leger (1634–1715)

'I know that my love for you is sheer madness, yet I do not at all complain of the violence of my emotions'.

Marianna Alcofarado, a Portuguese nun, fell in love with an army captain, the Marquis of Chamilly and St Leger, as he rode past her convent one day. They embarked upon an affair but the threat of scandal forced them apart. He later published her letters under the title *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun*. This quickly became a classic text, inspiring, amongst others, Elizabeth Barrett Browning whose *Sonnets from the Portuguese* are based upon it.

Music: **Saraband** from **An English Suite, Parry**
Capella Istropolitana/Leaper

8.550331

7. Letter from Mary Wollenstonecraft (1759–1797) to Gilbert Imlay

‘Cherish me with that dignified tenderness which I have only found in you’.

8. To My Dear and Loving Husband Anne Bradstreet (c.1612–1672)

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompence.
Thy love is such that I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Music: **Andante, Holberg Suite, Grieg**
Camerata Cassovia/Walter

8.551108

9. We Two Kuan Tao-Sheng (13th Century AD)

You and I
Have so much love,
That it burns like a fire,
In which we bake a lump of clay
Molded into a figure of you
And a figure of me.
Then we take both of them,
And break them into pieces,
And mix the pieces with water,
And mold again a figure of you,
And a figure of me.
I am in your clay.
You are in my clay.
In life we share a single quilt.
In death we will share one coffin.

10. Letter from Julie-Jeanne-Eléonore de l'Espinasse (1732–1776) to the Comte de Guibert

'Good night. My door has not been opened once today, but what my heart palpitated. There were moments when I feared to hear your voice, and then I was disconsolate that it was not your voice. So many contradictions, so many contrary movements are true, and can be explained in three words: *I love you*'

Julie de l'Espinasse literally died of a broken heart. Her first great love, the Marquis de Mora, left her due to his ill health, and she became involved with another man, the Comte de Guibert. On the day she and Guibert became lovers, de Mora died, and Julie de l'Espinasse never recovered from her grief.

Music: **Mondnacht** from **Liederkreis, Op. 39, Schumann**

Takako Nishizaki/Polish National Radio SO/Breiner

8.223586

11. from Psychology Katherine Mansfield (1888-1922)

‘Just for a moment both of them stood silent in that leaping light. Still, as it were, they tasted on their smiling lips the sweet shock of their greeting.’

Music: **English String Festival, Elegy, Op. 58, Elgar**

Capella Istropolitana/Leaper

8.550331

12. Letter from Katherine Mansfield to John Middleton Murray

‘Life is too short for our love even though we stayed together every moment of all the years’.

The love affair between Mansfield, one of the finest short story writers of the 20th century and Murray, a leading literary critic, was passionate but brief – she died of tuberculosis at the age of 34.

Music: **Piano Concerto in C minor, Op. 18, Rachmaninov**

Jenő Jandó/Budapest SO/Lehel

8.550117

13. Letter from Heloïse (1101–1164) to Abelard (1079–1142)

‘The pleasures of lovers which we shared have been too sweet – they can never displease me, and can scarcely be banished from my thoughts.’

Abelard was an eminent French philosopher and Heloïse a young student of seventeen when they met and fell in love. A secret child and marriage ensued, after which Abelard disguised

Heloïse as a nun so that she could hide safely in a convent away from her disapproving uncle Fulbert. Tragically, Fulbert perceived this move as Abelard's unchivalrous abandonment of his niece and sent a band of men to forcibly castrate him. Abelard became a monk, and Heloïse had no choice but to take the veil. Twelve years after their separation, a correspondence developed – the letters by Heloïse, then an Abbess, a poignant, vivid honesty.

*Music: **Andante, Violin Concerto in D major, Tchaikovsky***

Takako Nishizaki/Slovak Philharmonic/Jean

8.550153

14. from Wuthering Heights Emily Brontë (1818–1848)

'My love for Heathcliffe resembles the eternal rocks beneath - a source of little visible delight but necessary. He's always, always in my mind.'

*Music: **Affetuoso, Piano Concerto in A minor, Schumann***

Jandó/Budapest SO/Ligeti

8.550118

15. 'Si, me chiamano Mimi' from La Bohème, Puccini

Gauci/BRT Philharmonic Orchestra/Rahbari

8.550606

16. Meeting Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

If we shall live, we live:
If we shall die, we die:
If we live we shall meet again:
But to-night, good-bye.
One word, let but one be heard –
What, not one word?
If we sleep we shall wake again

And see to-morrow's light:
If we wake, we shall meet again:
But to-night, good-night.
Good-night, my lost and found –
Still not a sound?

If we live, we must part:
If we die, we part in pain:
If we die, we shall part
Only to meet again.
By those tears on either cheek,
To-morrow you will speak.

To meet, worth living for:
Worth dying for, to meet.
To meet, worth parting for:
Bitter forgot in sweet.
To meet, worth parting before,
Never to part more.

*Music: **Gymnopédies 1, Satie***
CSR SO/Lenard

8.550088

17. Letter from Jane Clairmont (1798–1879) to Lord Byron

'I do assure you, your future will shall be mine, and everything you shall do or say, I shall not question.'

The mere mention of Lord Byron's name was enough to set many hearts fluttering – the charismatic author of *Childe Harold* broke many hearts.

18. If Thou Must Love Me Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)

If thou must love me, let it be for naught
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
'I love her for her smile – her look – her way
Of speaking gently, – for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day' –
For these things in themselves,
Belovèd may
Be changed, or change for thee – and love, so wrought
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
A Creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

Music: Adagio, Violin Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Bruch

Nishizaki/Slovak Philharmonic/Gunzenhauser

8.550195

19. from Jane Eyre Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855)

'I had not intended to love him; the reader knows I had wrought hard to extirpate from my soul the germs of love there detected; and now, at the first renewed view of him, they spontaneously revived, green and strong! He made me love him without looking at me.'

Music: Allegro, Serenade, Op. 20, Elgar

Capella Istropolitana/Leaper

8.550331

20. Letter from George Sand to Pietro Pagello

'When you look at me tenderly, I shall believe that your soul is gazing at mine; when you glance at heaven, I shall believe that your mind turns toward the eternity from which it sprang.'

George Sand was the *nom de plume* of Lucile-Aurore Dupin, baronne Dudevant (1804–1876), a Paris-born novelist. Prolific in her output, her first success was *Indiana* (1832) and this was followed by other novels, tales, biographical and critical essays, and dramatic works. She enjoyed liaisons with Chopin, Musset and Flaubert as well as Pietro Pagello, and her letters are of great literary interest even today.

Music: Serenade for Strings, Tchaikovsky

Vienna Chamber Orchestra/Entremont

8.550404

21. from Night and Day Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)

'They brought themselves by these means, acting on a mood of profound happiness, to a state of clear sightedness where the lifting of a finger had effect, and one word spoke more than a sentence.'

Music: Le Jardin féérique, Ma mère l'oye, Ravel

CRSO/Jean

8.550173

22. from Song of the Geishas

At Kataushika the river water
Runs gently, and the plum blossom
Bursts out laughing.
The nightingale cannot withstand so many joys
And sings, and we are reconciled.
Our warm bodies touch,
Cane branch and pine branch,
Our boat floats in toward the bank.

23. 'Un bel di, vedremo' from Madama Butterfly, Puccini

Miriam Gauci/Czecho-Slovak Radio SO/Rahbari

8.660015–16

24. Conviction IV Stevie Smith (1902–1971)

By kind permission of James MacGibbon from *The Collected Poems of Stevie Smith* (Penguin Twentieth Century Classics)

I like to get off with people,
I like to lie in their arms,
I like to be held and tightly kissed,
Safe from all alarms.

I like to laugh and be happy
With a beautiful beautiful kiss,
I tell you, in all the world
There is no bliss like this.

25. Letter from Clara Wieck (1819–1896) to Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

'You require but a simple "Yes?" Such a small word – but such an important one. But should not a heart so full of unutterable love as mine utter this little word with all its might? I do so and my innermost soul whispers always to you. The sorrows of my heart, the many tears, could I depict them to you – oh no! Perhaps fate will ordain that we see each other soon and then – your intention seems risky to me and yet a loving heart does not take much count of dangers. But once again I say to you "Yes".'

Clara Wieck was the daughter of Schumann's piano teacher and an accomplished concert pianist. Robert and Clara fell very much in love, but Clara's father was totally against the marriage. Clara died in 1896.

26. from Molly Bloom's concluding soliloquy – Ulysses James Joyce (1882–1941)

'...and then I asked him with my eyes and he asked me would I yes...and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me to ask again yes so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.'

Music: Siegfried Idyll, Wagner
Polish National Radio SOWildner

8.550498

Cover picture: The Kiss by Gustav Klimt (1862–1918)
Courtesy of Osterreichisches Galerie, Vienna/Bridgeman Art Library, London

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'I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach'

The eloquence of lovers is celebrated in this rich and sensuous collection – the love of women for men. Heloïse, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Katherine Mansfield, George Sands and others express their very real passion intensely – as, in fiction, does Juliet for her Romeo, Jane Eyre for her Rochester and Catherine for her Heathcliffe. With the music of Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Puccini, Elgar and more, here is some of the most tender love prose and poetry in literature.



Laura Paton trained at LAMDA where she won the St. Philip's Prize for poetry and the Michael Warre Award. She has toured the UK extensively in productions as varied as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. She also reads Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and the title role in Dumas' *The Lady of the Camellias* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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