

## COMMENTARY



Dr. William Warfield, poetry recitation at Schiller Institute conference, January 1998.

# An Evening in the ‘Simultaneity of Eternity’— with Shakespeare, Keats, and William Warfield

On Sept. 21, 2001, members of the Houston chapter of the Schiller Institute had the great honor, privilege and sheer pleasure of spending an evening of poetry recitation and discussion with Dr. William Warfield, one of the great masters of the last fifty years in the art of poetic expression in both Classical singing and poetry, proper. Also present, and adding a particularly lively and playful element, were the inimitable Sylvia Olden Lee, renowned vocal coach and critic, and Schiller Institute vice-president Amelia Boynton Robinson, in honor of whose ninetieth birthday the following day’s concert was being given.

The Schiller Institute poetry group presented to Dr. Warfield a work-in-progress, consisting of a group of poems by William Shakespeare and John Keats, unified under a single concept, which we had been preparing for presentation at the annual Schiller birthday-fest on November 18. The discoveries made in the sessions preceding, and especially in that wonderful evening, constitute the subject matter of this report.

Although the connection between the poems at first seemed serendipitous, it became evident in the course of discussing them—especially, how to *recite* them—that, although the authors were writing two hundred years apart, there was clearly a dialogue occurring between Shakespeare and Keats on the nature of mortality, and how human beings can transcend it. This became especially poignant in light of the tragedy of September 11, and the sense of the mission of sublime art with which Dr. Warfield had determined to go ahead with the concert in spite of this. It confirmed in all of us the belief that above all, poetry and music must convey *passion*—passion which can only occur as a living, breathing idea from one human being, planted in the soul of another—or else they are but sterile, lifeless words on a page, over which foolish academics spin endlessly boring commentary. This manifests itself in recitation, in particular, because it is then that the psychological blocks which prevent one from connecting with one’s *own* passion, and the

## Sonnet

After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains  
For a long dreary season, comes a day  
Born of the gentle South, and clears away  
From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.  
The anxious month, relieved of its pains,  
Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May;  
The eyelids with the passing coolness play  
Like rose leaves with the drip of Summer rains.  
The calmest thoughts come round us; as of leaves  
Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—Autumn suns  
Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—  
Sweet Sappho's cheek—a smiling infant's breath—  
The gradual sand that through an hour-glass runs—  
A woodland rivulet—a Poet's death.

—John Keats

fear of connecting with another's, becomes apparent, and can be overcome. For this reason alone, the struggle is worthwhile—whatever the outcome—for it can only make us better people.

Chronologically, the first poem we had decided to tackle was the Keats sonnet “After dark vapours have oppress'd our plains,” although its real beauty and profundity were not apparent until we

had worked through the Shakespeare sonnets later.

### ‘After dark vapours’

The first, “gut,” reaction of everyone to this poem, was one of perplexed, yet oddly satisfied attraction. Try as we might, no one could adequately explain in the logical, deductive terms of everyday discourse, the strange way in which the succession of images in the last six lines seem to make sense, to “work.” On the face of it, after all, they would seem to be in a paradoxical relationship to the foregoing eight lines, or octet, with its straightforward, albeit intensely beautiful description of the joy in Spring's eternal renewal. The rich sensuality of the image of the eyelids playing with the coolness, stands in contrast to the increasing abstraction of the images that follow, culminating in “a Poet's death”; an idea that should be mournful, yet here seems beautiful. Despite their diversity, all of these elements—“leaves budding,” “fruit ripening,” etc.—are momentary glimpses of processes of change—moments we want to hold onto, yet sadly and inevitably, they elude our grasp. The concluding line, suggesting a hidden and subtle music, and then the passing of even the mortal life of the creator of the song, the Poet, only heightens the melancholy, yet is still somehow consistent with the whole which precedes it.

How do we reconcile this apparent paradox? Stated differently, how do we reconcile this longing for joy in the beautiful, with the fleeting, temporal nature of everything in the physical realm? Is there nothing enduring and eternal? Although infinitely more could be said of this poem, it was decided that it would be a worthy goal, to at least communicate this paradox, by demonstrating the *change* occurring from the first, eight-line section, into the last, six-line part, slowing down to allow the full effect of each of the separate images to sink in, so that the mind could “hear” the paradox.

With this in mind, we resolved to leave Keats for the time being and revisit our old friend, William Shake-



EFNS/Stuart Lewis



EFNS/Stuart Lewis

“Poetry and music must convey passion!” Dr. Warfield sings Classical lieder at Schiller Institute conferences in 1999 and 2000.

spare. It is worthwhile to interject here a relevant biographical note regarding Keats. He did, in fact, think of himself as being in a dialogue with the great creative minds of the past, especially Shakespeare, whom he regarded as his guide and spiritual mentor; even when away from home, he never sat down to write without his cherished portrait of Shakespeare hanging before him. Keats had initially been inspired by the freer, less formal, more personal poetry of his contemporaries, Leigh Hunt and William Wordsworth, but had come to recognize that, if poetry were to again achieve its noble mission to uplift humanity to true freedom, it must combine the power of Classical forms and subject matter, with this personal intimacy that could truly move the heart. He called this, the “greeting of the spirit”; the individual human psyche approaching the infinite, the sublime, and making this process transparent to others, so that they could re-create it in their own minds. As we shall see later, the breakthrough represented by his great odes, written toward the end of his short life, was the outcome of this project.

But back to Shakespeare. When reviewing numerous sonnets for inclusion in our program, several “popped out,” as it were, because they so directly addressed the subject matter discussed in the Keats sonnet—namely, man’s mortality, and the fleeting, transitory nature of seemingly everything in this life. Two sonnets in particular, numbers 64 and 65, are almost like bookends, one borrowing imagery from, and partially answering the paradoxes in, the other. Indeed, we decided to recite them as a unity, one flowing seamlessly into the other with no pause, although spoken by two different individuals.

#### Sonnets 64 and 65

Many of our one-hour practice sessions had been devoted to how to recite these poems with the necessary passion and energy to make the ideas transparent; and, indeed, Dr. Warfield addressed this movingly in our discussion, by suggesting that, for instance, when saying the phrase, “When I see sometime lofty

towers down-ras’d,” we think of, and feel the full emotional weight of the all-too-recent collapse of the World Trade Center. This is particularly important, in view of the fact that Shakespeare’s sonnets are almost always recited in such a dry and monotonous tone, or else in an artificial, meter-and-rhyme-dominated sing-song, as to be virtually incomprehensible, thus adding to the popular perception of them as the subject of stuffy, academic lectures, rather than the passionate messengers to our souls they were meant to be.

This difference becomes immediately evident in the first two lines of Sonnet 64. If one reads these lines in the usual lifeless, formal way, stressing only the

#### Sonnet 64

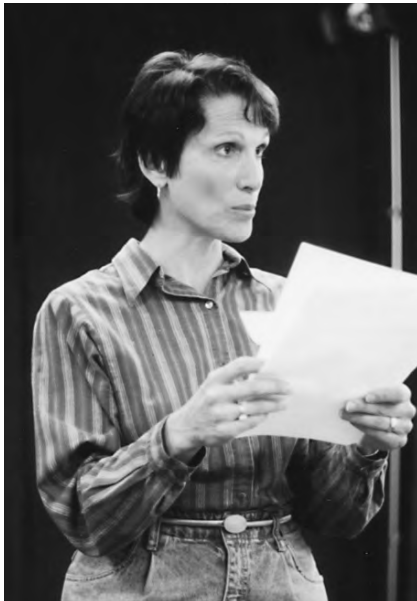
When I have seen by Time’s fell hand defac’d  
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;  
When sometime lofty towers I see down-ras’d,  
And brass eternal, slave to mortal rage;  
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,  
And the firm soil win of the wat’ry main,  
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;  
When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded with decay;  
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat,  
That Time will come and take my love away.

This thought is as a death, which cannot choose  
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

#### Sonnet 65

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,  
But sad mortality o’ersways their power,  
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,  
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?  
O, how shall summer’s honey breath hold out  
Against the wrackful siege of battering days,  
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,  
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?  
O fearful meditation! where, alack,  
Shall Time’s best jewel from Time’s chest lie hid?  
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?  
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?  
O none, unless this miracle have might,  
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

—William Shakespeare



*Poetry recitation at the Friedrich Schiller birthday-fest, a month after preparation with Dr. Warfield. Left: Susan Schlanger. Right: Commentary author Dan Leach.*

syllables suggested by the text, the crucial germ of the idea to be developed later is completely destroyed. The text of a poem is, after all, only the footprint of the idea, like the score of a musical composition, which no one but a lunatic would mistake for the actual music itself. For instance, the iambic pentameter, in which all sonnets are strictly written, would dictate that the word “fell” would fall on a short, or unstressed, syllable, yet to clearly convey the contrast between the lamentable ravage of Time, and the foolish pride with which we mortals pursue the things of this world, the “rich proud cost,” requires that “fell” be stressed, and heard in apposition to that “rich proud cost,” so that it rings in the ear. The next two lines amplify the thought of the lack of permanence in anything in the physical realm. The second quatrain, or four-line section, also begins with “When I have seen,” but since a new idea is being introduced, that of endless, cyclical change, it must be stated differently, as if to say, “Okay, here’s another way of looking at it, another hypothesis.” But in the third quatrain, both of these ideas are treated as equally discouraging; both say that time, or change, will destroy anything that I try to hold onto, to possess, even

that which I consider most sacred, “my love.” The concluding couplet must be read with great, and honest, feeling, for it expresses the darkest and most desperate thought that we can have—that it isn’t even worthwhile to possess the object of our love, for we will eventually certainly lose it, or it will change. Warfield clearly recognized this, and pointed out that when one says, “This thought,” one must pause to let the full weight of “this thought”—the entirety of the poem up to this point—sink in.

Thank God that Shakespeare didn’t leave it at that! Sonnet 65 provides a partial answer to this conundrum, but as we shall see, it is more fully addressed in Sonnet 73, and really developed in all its richness two hundred years later by Keats.

Part of the challenge in reciting Sonnet 65, is to make sure that the first two lines are heard clearly as the summation of the entirety of Sonnet 64, in condensed form. This sets up the paradox upon which this poem is based, namely, if Time destroys, or changes, all of these things, and beauty resides in the world of the senses, how then can beauty survive? The contrasting violence of the words, “rage” and “wreckful siege,” with the tender vulnerability of “a flower” and “Summer’s honey breath,” heighten the sense of the hopelessness of the cause of beauty, if even “rocks impregnable” and “gates of steel” cannot protect it. Dr. Warfield stressed here, as he always does in the case of singing, the full enunciation of all the consonant and vowel sounds in these crucial phrases. It is an aspect of Shakespeare’s poetry which is very helpful in communicating its meaning, that he chose words whose musical qualities, their sound, are consistent with, and amplify, their idea content.

The third quatrain, beginning with “O fearful meditation!,” must be conveyed with a genuine fear and dread of returning to the desperation of Sonnet 64, and drive toward the seemingly hopeless plea of, “Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?.” If “O none” is said in almost a resigned manner, it helps to set up, especially if there is a long pause

at that comma, the ray of hope that breaks through at the end of this poem. Shakespeare even has a little fun, playing with the paradox involved in coupling “black ink” with “shine bright.” But in a deeper sense, the paradox is that through the medium of the words on the page, which to the senses are only black ink, something beautiful and enduring does, in fact, shine. He is beginning to get at the idea that, through love, which is not a matter of the senses, but of a higher, spiritual nature, we can, in fact, transcend Time. As we shall see, this idea becomes the subject, in a more moving and personal way, of Sonnet 73.

Concerning the ending, Dr. Warfield made the point that the entire poem as a single idea, including the ending, must be in one’s mind from the very first word, shaping and coloring every phrase toward that effect. One must make the *intention* of the poet one’s own intention, and let that guide the process, getting all ego or performance considerations out of the way. This principle became particularly important in dealing with the challenging problems posed by Sonnet 73.

### Sonnet 73

Here again we have three distinct metaphors in each of the three quatrains, each denoted by the phrases, “in me behold,” and two of, “In me thou see’st,” reversing the direction of “when I have seen” of Sonnet 64. The poet is now contemplating his own aging and eventual death, in three successive images, each of a more abstract, more spiritual beauty, yet conveying a rising passion, which seems paradoxical, given the rather somber tone of the first quatrain. It is this *cognitive passion*, as the soul frees itself from the senses, that is the peculiar beauty of this poem, and which cannot be faked with mere histrionics. The first quatrain must fully convey the melancholy idea of Autumn, with its brief, suspended moment of introspective reflection as we remember what has passed, and, although conscious of the coming Winter—perhaps, even, *because* of that—

feel a deeper, more profound sense of beauty. The second quatrain amplifies and deepens this idea; for, what could be more fleeting, yet beautiful, than the sunset and the twilight which follows? The line, “Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest,” heightens the paradox, and must be read in a way which is not morbid, for although directly referencing death, in the context of the beautiful imagery in which it is situated, the phrase, “that seals up all in rest” speaks of a peace and beauty that is of a higher nature, which invites the soul beyond the physical.

What now unfolds out of this, the “glowing of such fire,” echoing the glow of the sunset, is truly a purer and higher kind of passion, because of what has gone before. The fact that Shakespeare compares it to embers which will soon be burned out, along with the fuel which nourished them, does not diminish the sublime emotion we feel, especially if “such fire” is read with anything like the poet’s own passion. The breakthrough represented by this poem, and the way in which it answers the paradox of Sonnets 64 and 65, is contained in the concluding couplet. It is by seeing the beauty of another human being reflecting that “glowing” of passion, and loving that, despite the physical decay and diminution, that a higher order of beau-

### Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruin’d choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
In me thou see’st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou see’st the glowing of such fire  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed whereon it must expire  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

—William Shakespeare



Poetry recitation, Schiller birthday-fest. "How do we reconcile the longing for joy in the beautiful, with the fleeting, temporal nature of everything in the physical universe?"

ty, transcending the physical, is constituted. This kind of love, which seeks this higher, eternal nature of Man, is what the Greeks called *agapē*, and its manifestation in art is *the sublime*.

We shall encounter it as the explicit subject, and in its most universal form, when we return to our friend, Keats. But it is important to reflect, before leaving Shakespeare, that his sonnets, taken in their entirety, are one, unified sublime work of art. What we have investigated in just these three examples, is but a mere glimpse of the universe of intricate, interwoven ideas, which plumb the depths of the human heart, and pose life's most profound questions in metaphorical terms which appear, reappear, answer, or partially answer, these fundamental questions, over the span of the many years in which Shakespeare wrote them. Friedrich Schiller, in his "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry," wrote that Shakespeare, at least in his plays, is an example of a "naïve poet," in that he depicts Nature and the human heart as if removed and objective. "Sentimental poetry" is, for Schiller, that in which the poet's own relationship to the subject is evident, and it is through that relationship that we are moved.

Although Schiller's discussion is directed to the plays, Shakespeare's sonnets, on the other hand, are one of the purest examples of sentimental poetry of the best sort, and point the way to further development of its potential by Keats and Shelley. (Schiller himself pointed out that the same poet could write in the naïve or sentimental mode at different times, or even in the same work.)

If one now revisits the Keats sonnet "After dark vapours," how much richer and more powerful it is! Keats, addressing the same issue as Shakespeare, now reverses the imagery which prompted the reflection. Instead of Autumn and its melancholy, it is Spring, with its fullness of life and its promise. Keats passes from the sensuality of lines 7 and 8 to the quick succession of images of ever more abstract beauty at what is called the "turn," through the simple statement, "the calmest thoughts come round us," indicating that we are going into a world of thought, of ideas. Although volumes could be written on each one of these images, their overall effect, the idea which unifies them, is one of potential, living potential, caught, as it were, in a moment of repose. This is a recurring theme in Keats' poetry, to which he referred in his letters, and is central to the breakthrough he made with the great odes, especially the "Ode On A Grecian Urn," which we will examine later.

The reason why the image of "a Poet's death" seems to be coherent with the mood of this poem, why it has a calm beauty to it, as it did in the Shakespeare Sonnet 73, is because, when we have been effectively transported into this realm of ideas, we are aware, at least intuitively, that the poet, or we ourselves for that matter, don't really die; we live through our participation in these ideas, which share in the eternal. Keats spoke in one letter of a "brotherhood of the mind," where people of all times meet, go down separate paths, then meet again. He was motivated by an intense desire to connect with the beautiful souls who had gone before him, distill their essence into his own being, and create ever more powerful

## Ode On A Grecian Urn

### I

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

### II

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

### III

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

### IV

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garland drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

### V

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

—John Keats

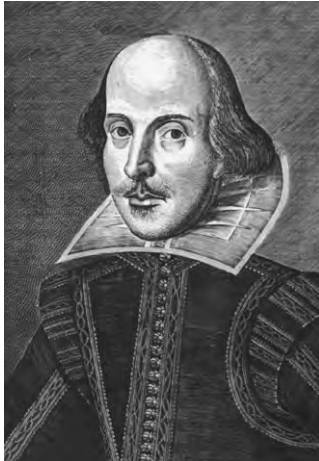
ideas to communicate to future human beings. Although never using the exact terminology, Keats had an innate concept of what Lyndon LaRouche has called the "simultaneity of eternity." This is nowhere better seen than in the "Ode On A Grecian Urn," which together with the other odes, represents the culmination of a process of experimentation and struggle over several years to bring forth a new and more powerful medium for this idea.

### 'Ode On A Grecian Urn'

This poem represents, by far, the greatest challenge for recitation, not merely because of its length, but because of the passionate tone, coupled with what would seem to be the most abstract subject, at least on the surface. For the poet

pours his heart out not to a lover, or to lament some loss, but to a cold, dead object, upon which are static images, created by some unknown hand, thousands of years ago. But precisely therein lies its point: he states it at the beginning of the second stanza, "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter." It is the "unheard melodies" within the realm of ideas, which we can re-create over the ages, and through which we can communicate with future generations, which, despite being prompted by a physical process, constitute a higher beauty than anything directly apprehended by the senses.

Keats here, again, as in the sonnet, reverses the paradox which Shakespeare posed. Instead of lamenting the passing of beauty and the lack of fulfillment in



William Shakespeare



The Granger Collection, New York

John Keats

even possessing the object of our love in the mortal world of time and change, he is contemplating, and causing us to have a passionate feeling for, a world in which love and happiness, although never achieving sensual fulfillment, are eternal. There is something truly sublime, captured in the line, “For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!,” which seems to lift us completely out of the wild sensuality of the first stanza. In the third stanza, he expands on this thought, reaching the climax of joy with “More happy love!, etc.,” and then, with the crucial reflection that it is, after all, still *human passion*, however unchanging and forever young, returns to contemplate our actual condition, now seemingly even more unfulfilled after this experience—with “a burning forehead and a parching tongue.”

Up to this point, the challenge in reciting this poem largely consists of mustering the required emotional intensity and clarity to convey the scene almost as if it were a drama, albeit a highly unusual one, without affectedness; for the drama is not in the past or the present, or really even on the urn, but in the mind. The end of stanza III leaves us feeling that the paradox is still unresolved, and must be read so as to clearly contrast with the “happy, happy love” which precedes it. However, what comes next requires an almost religious sense of mystery to be effective, and, indeed, its essential religious significance is clearly indicated in the first four lines. Keats suddenly turns from the scene of riotous merry-making and the desire to experience happiness forever, to this more somber procession led by a priest with a heifer to be sacrificed. He then, just as suddenly, turns to the image of the little town, emptied of its people, although it is evident from the phrase, “*what* little town,” that it is not actually pictured on the urn, but exists as an hypothesis in the poet’s, and our, mind. The tender feeling with which he personifies and directly addresses it, produces a strange, and melancholy—yet completely uplifting—effect.

There was much debate in the group over how to understand, let alone recite,

this passage. One thing, however, is certain; neither Keats, nor any great poet, ever resorted to mere *symbolism*, the logician’s trick of substituting one apparently similar term for another. Metaphor, on the other hand, is a higher form of irony, in which two seemingly inconsistent ideas are juxtaposed to each other, creating a paradox which induces the mind to conceptualize a third idea, which resolves the paradox. Although never explicitly stated, this idea, or a succession of such ideas, is the true subject of the poem. These are the melodies heard not by the sensual ear, but by the spirit. The poet is, in effect, speaking to the inner cognitive processes of our minds, the place beyond the reach of logical, deductive language, yet, paradoxically, using language to get there! It is never so simple as to say, “what does this *stand for?*,” or, “what does this mean?,” but rather, ask “what change is this causing in those inner cognitive processes, considering its relationship to all that has gone before it?”

From this standpoint, it now appears that the effect wrought in us by stanza IV comes about as a result of a shift in focus from the self, to something larger, more universal, and also an emotional state which connects our own longing for the eternal, with the image of this town, in a suspended state, so to speak, looking both backward to the past, and forward to the future, with longing and hope for the return of its people. Are they dead? Not really—for something of their souls is still speaking to us through the medium of this urn, this human work of art, over the millennia. This is one of the best examples of the “simultaneity of eternity” in all of Classical art, and the fact that Keats, himself, is speaking to us through the medium of this poem, this “black ink,” over the centuries, adds another dimension of beauty to this miraculous and uniquely human communication.

Now Keats, reflecting his own amazement with this fact, goes directly to the denouement of the poem, and its famous ending. This urn, this static and silent object, “teases” us out of the tangled knot of paradoxes, the paradoxes of mortal, temporal existence, as does eter-



nity. It is, as is all great and sublime art, truly a friend to man, for it is through beauty that we discover our soul's immortality and that, indeed, is the most fundamental truth of our existence.

Although one could devote a lifetime to the study of the implications of just this one poem, it is especially gratifying when situated within the process which preceded it, as we have seen a glimpse of with Shakespeare, and what came after it, for, unfortunately, poetry never again attained such heights. Poetic composition and recitation have fallen into such degeneracy in the last century, that those, mostly elderly living practitioners of Classical singing and similar artistic standards in poetic speech, such as William Warfield, stand out like giants. Although time didn't permit us to recite the "Grecian Urn" for him that night, he did, toward the end, sensing the overall mood and what we were striving for, offer this reminiscence. He was participating as a soloist in a performance of a mass of J.S. Bach, with the famous Pablo Casals conducting. At a rehearsal, everything, seemingly by magic, came together—orchestra, soloists, and conductor all intensely aware that they were in the grip of a powerful, beautiful, and eternal idea, from God, but mediated through the divine soul of J.S. Bach. After a long silence following the dying away of the last note, with tears in his eyes, Casals said, "Aren't we lucky to be musicians?" The beauty of it is, that through our participation, in whatever capacity, in truly sublime music, poetry, or any other form, we all can just as truly say, "Aren't we lucky to be human?"

It should now be evident where the fundamental optimism of all creative geniuses comes from. What we know of their lives, attests to the fact that, despite physical suffering, persecution or unsympathetic peers, they never wavered in their belief in, and commitment to, this fundamental goodness in humanity. We decided, for that reason, after experiencing this whole process, to conclude our presentation with the poem "To Hope" by Keats, and that is how we shall end this report.

—Dan Leach

## To Hope

When by my solitary hearth I sit,  
And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom;  
When no fair dreams before my 'mind's eye' flit,  
And the bare heath of life presents no bloom;  
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,  
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night,  
Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,  
Should sad Despondency my musings fright,  
And frown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away,  
Peep with the moon-beams through the leafy roof,  
And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair,  
Strive for her son to seize my careless heart;  
When, like a cloud, he sits upon the air,  
Preparing on his spell-bound prey to dart:  
Chase him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright,  
And fright him as the morning frightens night!

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear  
Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow,  
O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer;  
Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow:  
Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed,  
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain,  
From cruel parents, or relentless fair;  
O let me think it is not quite in vain  
To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air!  
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,  
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

In the long vista of the years to roll,  
Let me not see our country's honour fade:  
O let me see our land retain her soul,  
Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade.  
From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed—  
Beneath thy pinions canopy my head!

Let me not see the patriot's high bequest,  
Great Liberty! how great in plain attire!  
With the base purple of a court oppress'd  
Bowing her head and ready to expire:  
But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings  
That fill the sky with silver glitterings!

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star  
Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud;  
Brightening the half veil'd face of heaven afar:  
So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud,  
Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed,  
Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head.

—John Keats