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JULIANA HALL

LETTERS FROM EDNA

8 Songs for Mezzo Soprano and Piano

on Letters of
Edna St. Vincent Millay

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Cover design by David Sims.

TO MR. FICKE AND MR. BYNNER

(December 5, 1912)

Mr. Earle has acquainted me with your wild surmises. Gentlemen: I must convince you of your error; my reputation is at stake. I simply will not be a "brawny male." Not that I have an aversion to brawny males; au contraire, au contraire. But I cling to my femininity!

Is it that you consider brain and brawn so inseparable?—I have thought otherwise. Still, that is all a matter of personal opinion. But, gentlemen: when a woman insists that she is twenty, you must not, must not call her forty-five. That is more than wicked; it is indiscreet.

Mr. Ficke, you are a lawyer. I am very much afraid of lawyers. Spare me, kind sir! Take into consideration my youth—for I am indeed but twenty—and my fragility—for "I do protest I am a maid"—and—sleuth me no sleuths!

Seriously: I thank you also for the compliment you have unwittingly given me. For tho I do not yet aspire to be forty-five and brawny, if my verse so represents me, I am more gratified than I can say. When I was a little girl, this is what I thought and wrote:

Let me not shout into the world's great ear
Ere I have something for the world to hear.
Then let my message like an arrow dart
And pierce a way into the world's great heart.

TO ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

(February 9, 1913)

Shall I give your regards to Broadway,—now that I am here within hailing distance of it? To any question that you might raise concerning my presence in this locality I could only answer, "I'm here because I'm here because I'm here." And I might add that I expect to take a few courses at Columbia this semester.

Yesterday I got a note from Sara Teasdale, inviting me to take tea with her. Whaddayouknowaboutthat! The news of my arrival has sprud clean from here to East 29th Street!

How do I like New York? O, inexpressibly! Yes, the Public Library is! No, the subway isn't! O, the St. Patrick Cathedral!—Quite too sweet, I assure you! And the view—charming, charming! So many roofs and things, you know; warships, and chimneys, and brewery signs—so inspiring! Yes, to the Madison Avenue Presbyterian! Dr. Coffin is wonderful. O, my dear,—tremendous!

TO ANNE GARDNER LYNCH

(December 23, 1921)

I have just got your letter. Oh, if I could just get my arms about you!—And stay with you like that for hours, telling you so many things, & listening to all that you must have to say.—I love you very much, dear Anne, & I always shall.—Ours was a perfect friendship—I knew it at the time—and it is still just as true. I would do anything in the world for you, & I know that you would for me.—And it doesn't matter if we never write, and never see each other, it is just the same,—except that it would be so nice to see each other!

TO HARRIET MONROE

(March 1, 1918)

Spring is here,—and I could be very happy, except that I am broke. Would you mind paying me now instead of on publication for those so stunning verses of mine which you have? I am become very, very thin, and have taken to smoking Virginia tobacco.

P.S. I am awfully broke. Would you mind paying me a lot?

TO NORMA MILLAY

(May 25, 1921)

I am working like the devil, which is why I don't write more letters—& I suppose you are, too—which is why you don't write more letters,—but it does seem a long long time, little sweet sing, since us heard from each other!—I have your beautiful photograph right up in front of me on my work table, & as I do a lot of work, I just naturally has to look at it, whether I want to or not, but the joke is on it, because I allus wants to!

TO ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

(July 9, 1943)

I have wanted so often to write you—not that I like writing letters—I loathe it—but just that I have wanted to write to you. About what, I don't know, in particular.—Perhaps to ask the advice of the Sage of the Hill—perhaps to tell you that the young wrens in the house under the peak of the ice-house are flying this morning (and what a to-do! And what beautiful singing from their father!—as if to say: some day you will have as handsome feathers as I, and a tail that sticks up straight behind your rump, and a song as beautiful as mine—you boys, that is,—and even you girls will have fun, engineering long twigs through small doorways!)—this is just to say Hello, darling Artie.—

TO ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE

(October 24, 1930)

It's not true that life is one damn thing after another—it's one damn thing over & over—there's the rub—first you get sick—then you get sicker—then you get not quite so sick—then you get hardly sick at all—then you get a little sicker—then you get a lot sicker—then you get not quite so sick—oh, hell

TO MOTHER

(June 15, 1921)

Do you know, almost all people love their mothers, but I have never met anybody in my life, I think, who loved his mother as much as I love you. I don't believe there ever was anybody who did, quite so much, and quite in so many wonderful ways. I was telling somebody yesterday that the reason I am a poet is entirely because you wanted me to be and intended I should be, even from the very first. You brought me up in the tradition of poetry, and everything I did you encouraged. Some parents of children that are “different” have so much to reproach themselves with. But not you, Great Spirit.

If I didn't keep calling you mother, anybody reading this would think I was writing to my sweetheart. And he would be quite right.

Well, dear, this is enough for now. I will write again soon.

—*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

Letter No. 9 to Mr. Ficke and Mr. Bynner (excerpt); December 5, 1912; Camden, Maine

Letter No. 18 to Arthur Davison Ficke (excerpt); February 9, 1913; New York City

Letter No. 56 to Harriet Monroe; March 1, 1918; New York City

Letter No. 81 to Norma Millay (excerpt); May 25, 1921; Paris

Letter No. 82 to Mother (excerpts); June 15, 1921; Paris

Letter No. 96 to Anne Gardner Lynch (excerpt); December 23, 1921; Vienna, Austria

Letter No. 171 to Arthur Davison Ficke; October 24, 1930

Letter No. 238 to Arthur Davison Ficke; July 9, 1943; Steepletop – Austerlitz, New York

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For Katherine Eberle, for her beautiful performances of my songs

Letters from Edna

for Mezzo Soprano and Piano

To Mr. Ficke and Mr. Bynner

(December 5, 1912)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Juliana Hall
(b. 1958)

Playfully ♩ = 92

3 *mf*

Mr. Earle has acquaint-ed me with your wild sur -

mp

6 *p* *mp*

mis - es. Gen - tle - men: I must con -

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9

vince you of your er - ror; my

12

rep - u - ta - tion is at stake. I sim - ply

Marcato
mf

Marcato
mf

15

will not be a "brawn - y male."

f

Rit. -----

f

Rit. -----

A Tempo

18 *mp*

Not that I have an a - ver - sion to brawn - y males;

mp

Freely (♩ = 60)

20 *mf* *mp*

au con - traire, au - - con - traire. But I

mf *mp*

Freely (♩ = 60) ♩ = 92

23

cling to my fem - in - in - i - ty!

mp

To Arthur Davison Ficke

(February 9, 1913)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

1 Excited (♩ = 126)

Shall I give your re-gards to Broad-way, now that I am

here with-in hail-ing dis-tance of it? To an-y ques-tion that you might raise

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13 *mp* *mf*

con - cern - ing my pres - ence in this lo - cal - i - ty

17 *mp* *mf*

I could on - ly an - swer, "I'm here_ be-cause I'm here be-cause I'm here."

$\text{♩} = 72$

22 *mp*

And I might add that I ex - pect to take a few cour - ses at Co -

$\text{♩} = 126$

To Anne Gardner Lynch

(December 23, 1921)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

1 Very expressive (♩ = 60)

1 Very expressive (♩ = 60)

p

Ped.

3

mp

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

5

p

I have just got your let - ter.

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To Harriet Monroe

27

(March 1, 1918)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

1 Dance-Like (♩ = 160)

mf

mf

mp

mp

Spring is here,

and I could be ver - y hap - py,

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To Norma Millay

31

Edna St. Vincent Millay

(May 25, 1921)

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

Energetic
(♩ = 72) *f*

1 I am work - ing like the dev - il, which is

Non legato
f

3 why I don't write_ more_ let - ters *and I sup - pose_ you are,

mp

5 too which is why you don't write_ more_ let - ters,

mf *f*

* "&" in the poem

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To Arthur Davison Ficke

(July 9, 1943)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

1 Sweetly (♩ = 132)

Legato

mf *f*

mf

I have want - ed so of - ten to write you

mf

Marcato (♩ = 120)

f

not that I like writ - ing let - ters I loathe it

Marcato (♩ = 120)

f

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10 *mf* $\text{♩} = 132$

but just that I have want - ed to write to

13 *mf* $\text{♩} = 69$ Thoughtful

you. A - bout

Rit.

16 *mp*

what, I don't know, in par - tic - u - lar. Per-haps to ask the ad -

To Arthur Davison Ficke

(October 24, 1930)

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

1 Upset about it (♩ = 112-116)

3 *mf*

It's not true that life is one damn thing af - ter an -

6 *f*

oth - er it's one damn thing o - ver *and o - ver

* "&" in the poem

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To Mother

Edna St. Vincent Millay

(June 15, 1921)

Juliana Hall

(b. 1958)

1 Warmly (♩ = 108-112)

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The piano accompaniment starts with a series of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The vocal line enters at measure 1 with a melodic phrase. The lyrics are: "Do you know, al-most all peo - ple love their moth - ers, but I have nev - er met an - y - bod - y in my life, I think,". The score includes dynamic markings such as *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The piece concludes with a final chord in the piano and a fermata over the vocal line.

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11 *f*

who loved his moth - er as much as I love you.

Rit.-----

14 $\text{♩} = 88$ *mp* *mf* *p*

I don't be-lieve there ev - er was an - y - bod - y who did, quite so

$\text{♩} = 88$

17 *mp*

much, and quite in so man - y won - der - ful ways.

p