

William Grosvenor Neil

From a Litany

for soprano, alto saxophone, and guitar

text by Mark Strand

(2023)



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From a Litany by Mark Strand

(There in an open field I lie down in a hole I once dug and I
praise the sky.)

I praise the clouds that are like lungs of light.
I praise the owl that wants to inhabit me and the hawk that
does not.
I praise the mouse's fury, the wolf's consideration.
I praise the dog that live in the household of people and
shall never be one of them.
I praise the whale that lives under the the cold blankets of salt.
I praise the formations of squid, the domes of meandra.
I praise the secrecy of doors, the openness of windows.
I praise the depth of closets.
I praise the wind, the rising generations of air.
I praise the trees on whose brances shall sit the Cock of
Portugal and the Polish Cock.
I praise the palm trees of Rio and those that shall grow in
London.
I praise the gardeners, the worms and the small plants that
praise each other.
I praise the sweet berries of Georgetown, Maine and the
son of the white-throated sparrow.
I praise the poets of Waverly Place and Eleventh Street, and
the one whose bones turn to dark emeralds when he
stands upright in the wind.
I praise the clocks for which I grow old in a day and young
in a day.
I praise all manner of shade, that which I see and that which
I do not.
I praise all roofs from the watery roof of the pond to the
slate roof of the customs house.
I praise those who ha e made of their bodies final embassies
of flesh.
I praise the failure of those with ambition, the authors of
leafltes and notebooks of nothing.
I praise the moon for suffering men.
I praise the sun its tributes.
I praise the pain of revival and the bliss of decline.
I praise all for nothing because there is no price.
I praiase myself for the way I have with a shovel and I praise
the shovel.
I praise the motive of praise by which I shall be reborn.
I praise the morning whose sun is upon me.
I praise the evening whose son I am.

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Commissioned by Robert and Mindy Nathanson

I met Mark Strand at the American Academy in Rome when I was a fellow in composition. I got to know the man before the poetry, his direct, observant, and concise articulation seasoning our conversations at the Academy evening communal meals. During this time, while he was poet-in-residence, he gave several talks where he read his poignant and revelatory prose and poetry. After hearing him, I knew then that I would be interested in setting his poetry. Many years later, when we met again when he was teaching at the University of Chicago, I made my interest known to him and our collaboration began. I first set his *Seven Poems* for piano and digital acoustics that included his recitation of the poem. While in the process of setting that poem, guitarist Rob Nathanson and soprano, Nancy King heard an excerpt and immediately commissioned a version for soprano and guitar. So, I have Mark Strand to thank for the beginning of my 17 years of knowing Rob and Nancy and composing music for them and saxophonist, Laurent Estoppey. Indeed this trio is the instrumentation that I composed for in this latest commission by Rob setting Strand's poem, *From a Litany*. The poem alludes to the liturgical prayer consisting of a series of petitions. In this poem, Strand offers praise to a secular, sensorial world of personal observations and memories that have enriched his life. He begins with a broad appreciation of the natural world around him, and with each repetition of "I praise" the emotion intensifies and turns increasingly inwards reaching a full state of catharsis in the final lines. I set the text with the power of Strand's recitation in my ears; his allusions and ironic juxtapositions inform the color and lyricism of my music. WGN

Duration: 8:20

Score is transposed.

From a Litany

dedicated to Trio Sureño

Mark Strand

William Grosvenor Neil

$\text{♩} = 60$

Soprano

Alto Saxophone

Guitar

$\text{♩} = 60$

3

S.

I praise _____ the clouds that are like

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

XII XII

XII

6 *f* *mp*

S. lungs of light. I praise the

Alto Sax. *mp* *p*

Gtr. *f* *p* VII

9

S. ow - l that wants to in -

Alto Sax.

Gtr. XII ⑤ ④ ③ XII ④

11 *mf* *pp*

S. ha - bit me and the hawk that does

Alto Sax. *mp* *p* *pp* ① VII ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

Gtr. *mf* *pp*

15 A

S. *p* not. I praise the mous-e's fu-ry, the wolf's con-sid - er - a - tion.

Alto Sax. *p*

Gtr. ^{XII} A *p*

19

S. *3* I praise the dog that lives in the house-hold of peo - ple and

Alto Sax.

Gtr. *simile* ②

21 *f* *p* *mf*

S. *3* shall ne-ver be one of them. I praise the whale that

Alto Sax. *mf* *3* *3* *3* *3* *p*

Gtr. *f* *p* *mf* *3* *3*

24

S. *p* *simile* *pp*

lives un-der the cold blan-ket of salt. I praise the for -

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

26

S. *p*

ma-tions of squid, the domes of me-an-dra. I praise the

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

28

S. *mf* *rit.* **B** *a tempo* *p*

se-cre-cy of doors, the o-pen-ness of win-dows. I praise the depth of clos-ets.

Alto Sax. *rit.* *a tempo* *pp* *f* *p* *pp*

Gtr. *rit.* **B** *a tempo* *f*

31

S. *mf* I praise the wind, the ris - ing

Alto Sax. *p*

Gtr. *mf*

34

S. gen - er - a - tions of air. I

Alto Sax. *simile*

Gtr. *f*

36

S. *f* praise the trees I praise I praise the trees

Alto Sax. *mf*

Gtr.

39 C *mp* *mf* 3 3

S. on whose bran-ches shall sit the Cock of Por-tu-gal the

Alto Sax. 3

Gtr. C *mp* *mf* 3

41 3 *f*

S. Po-lish Cock I praise the palm trees of Ri - o and

Alto Sax. *f* 3

Gtr. *f*

43 D $\text{♩} = 96$ Più mosso *mp*

S. those that shall grow in Lon-don. I praise the gard-en-ers,

Alto Sax. *mp* $\text{♩} = 96$ Più mosso

Gtr. 3 3 *mp*

46

S. I praise the worms and the small plants that praise each

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

50

S. o - ther. I praise_____ I praise_____

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

XII
②
④
○

54

ritardano

E *meno mosso*
mp ♩ = 60

S. I praise the small plants that praise each o - ther I praise_____

ritardano *meno mosso*

Alto Sax.

ritardano **mp** ♩ = 60

E *meno mosso*
mp

Gtr.

58 *p* *f* *mp*

S. I praise

Alto Sax.

Gtr. *mf* *mp*

64 *f* *p* *mf*

S. I praise I praise I praise the sweet

Alto Sax. *f* *p* *mp*

Gtr. *f* *p* *mf*

68 *p* *mf* *f*

S. ber-ries of George-town Maine and the song

Alto Sax. *p* *mf*

Gtr. *p* *f*

Detailed description: This page contains musical notation for three systems, each featuring Soprano (S.), Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax.), and Guitar (Gtr.) parts. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The first system (measures 58-63) shows the Soprano part with lyrics 'I praise' and dynamic markings *p*, *f*, and *mp*. The Alto Saxophone and Guitar parts provide harmonic support. The second system (measures 64-67) continues the lyrics 'I praise the sweet' with dynamics *f*, *p*, and *mf*. The guitar part includes a box labeled 'F' and triplet markings. The third system (measures 68-71) continues with lyrics 'ber-ries of George-town Maine and the song' and dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *f*. The guitar part features complex triplet patterns and dynamic markings *p* and *f*.

70

S. *mf* **G** of the white-throat-ed spar - row I praise the po - ets of

Alto Sax. *mf* *mp* *p*

Gtr. *mf* **G** *mp* *p*

72

S. Wav-er-ly place and E - le-venth Street, and the one whose bones turn to dark

Alto Sax. *mp*

Gtr. *f*

74

S. *p* *f* *3* *mf* em' - ralds when he stands up - right in the

Alto Sax. *p* *pausa*

Gtr. *p* *f* *pausa*

75

S. wind.

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

mp 6

10

76

S. *ff*

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

10

77

S. *mf* *p*

Alto Sax. *f* *p* *pp*

Gtr. 10 *p* VII

Detailed description: This musical score page contains three systems of music for measures 75, 76, and 77. Each system includes staves for Soprano Saxophone (S.), Alto Saxophone (Alto Sax.), and Guitar (Gtr.).
- Measure 75: The Soprano Saxophone has a long, sustained note with a 'wind.' marking. The Alto Saxophone plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a '6' (sixteenth notes) marking and a 'mp' (mezzo-piano) dynamic. The Guitar plays a series of ten-note chords, each marked with a '10' (tenth notes).
- Measure 76: The Soprano Saxophone has a long, sustained note with a 'ff' (fortissimo) dynamic. The Alto Saxophone continues the rhythmic pattern with a '6' marking. The Guitar continues with ten-note chords, each marked with a '10'.
- Measure 77: The Soprano Saxophone has a long, sustained note with a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic, followed by a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The Alto Saxophone plays a complex rhythmic pattern with a '3' (triplets) marking, starting with a 'f' (forte) dynamic and ending with 'p' and 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamics. The Guitar plays two ten-note chords marked with '10', followed by a final chord marked with 'p' and a 'VII' (seventh) chord symbol.

87 *f*

S. *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

praise all roofs from the wa-ter-y roof of the pond to the slate roof of the cus-toms

Alto Sax. *3* *3* *3*

Gtr. *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

89

S. *3* *3*

house. I praise those who have made_____ of their

Alto Sax. *3* *mf* *3* *3*

Gtr. *3* *f* *3* *3*

91 *ff*

S. *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

bo-dies fi - nal em-bass-ies of flesh. I praise the fail - ure

Alto Sax. *3* *p* *3*

Gtr. *3* *3* *3* *3* *ff* *similie*

94

S. *of those with am bi - tion the au-thors of leaf-lets and note-books of*

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

Meno mosso

96

S. *no - thing. I praise the*

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

Meno mosso

99

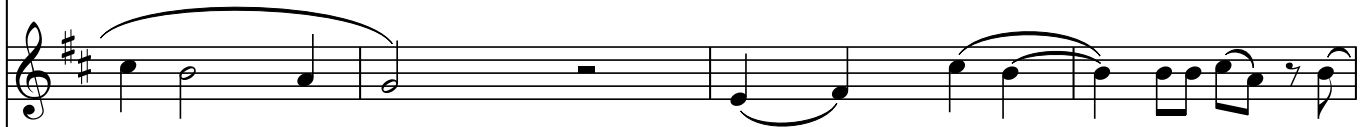
S. *moon for suf-fer-ing men. I praise the sun its tri - butes.*

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

102

S.  I praise the pain of re - vi-val and the bliss of de cline.

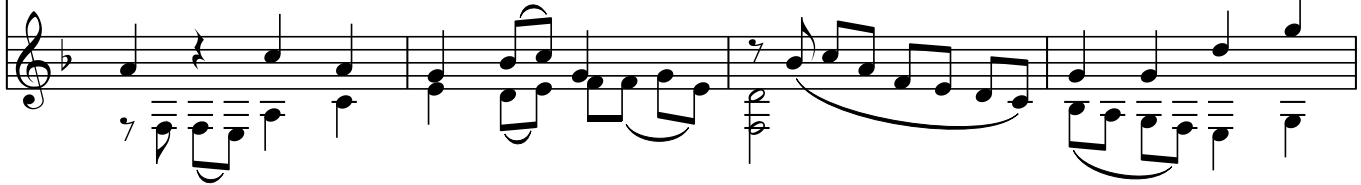
Alto Sax. 

Gtr. 

106 *mf* *f*

S.  I praise all for no - thing be - cause there is no

Alto Sax. 

Gtr. 

$\text{♩} = 92$ **K** Più mosso

110

S.  price. _____

Alto Sax.  *mf* *mp*

Gtr.  *f* *mf*

$\text{♩} = 92$ **K** Più mosso

114 *mf*

S. *I praise my - self for the way I have with a sho-vel and I*

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

117

S. *praise the sho - vel. I praise the mo-tive of praise by which I*

Alto Sax.

Gtr. *f*

121 *f* *mf* *f* *rall.*

S. *shall be re - born. I praise the morn - ing whose sun_*

Alto Sax. *mf* *p* *mp* *rall.*

Gtr. *mf* *f*

126

ff ***f*** ***pp*** **L**

S. is u - pon _____ me. I praise the ev' -

Alto Sax. ***f*** ***mf*** ***pp*** **L** **VII** **XII** **VII**

Gtr. ***pp*** **L** **VII** **XII** **VII**

132

S. ning whose son _____ I

Alto Sax.

Gtr.

137

p **rit.** ***ppp***

S. am. _____

Alto Sax. ***p*** **VII** **4** **5** ***pp***

Gtr. ***p*** **rit.** ***pp***

dedicated to Trio Sureño

From a Litany

Guitar

Mark Strand

William Grosvenor Neil

♩ = 60

⑤ ②

p

mf

p

V ⑤

③ ②

④ ⑤ ② ①

XII XII

XII

② ③

VII

④ ③ ② ①

XII

XII

⑤ ④ ③

① VII

②

⑥

XII

⑤

mf

pp

p

simile

②

①

f

p

mf

3

3

simile

rit.

a tempo

①

f

31

mf

34

simile

XII

①
②
③

f

39

C

f

43

D ♩ = 96

mp

Più mosso

48

XII

②
④

XII

54

ritardano

E ♩ = 60

meno

mp

meno

Guitar

VII
④
⑤

3

61

f *p*

67 **F**

mf *p* *f*

70 **G**

mp *f*

74 *pausa*

p *f*

76

77

p

VII
⑤

4

Guitar

79 H

f *p*

83 I $\text{♩} = 80$

f

86

f

90 *similie*

ff

Meno mosso

95 J $\text{♩} = 60$

p

100

p

105

p

109

f

112

K Più mosso
♩ = 92

mf

117

f

122

rall.

mf *f*

un poco meno mosso

129

L VII XII VII

pp

137

rit.

VII

p *pp*

Alto Saxophone

From a Litany

Mark Strand

dedicated to Trio Sureño

William Grosvenor Neil

⑤ ② ♩ = 60

p *mf* *pp* *mp*

6 *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp*

14 *p* *A*

20 *mf* *p*

24 *p* *pp* *pp* *rit.*

29 *f* *p* *pp* *B* *a tempo*

Alto Saxophone

31

p

3 5 6

35

mf

3 5

XII

39

mf

f

3 5

44

mp

mf

96

51

ritardano

mf

60

57

meno mosso

mp

mf

mp

64 F

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

70 G *mf* *pausa*

p *mp* *p*

75

mp *f* *p* *pp*

78 H

p

Più mosso

83 I ♩=80

mp

87

mf

90

p

Alto Saxophone

93

p

Meno mosso

97 ♩ = 60

p

102

108

mf *mp*

Più mosso

113 ♩ = 92

118

f *mf*

123 *rall.*

p *mp* *f* *mf*

un poco meno mosso

129

pp

136 *rit.*

p *pp*