

A Prayer for My Daughter

Yeats was fifty-one when he married Georgie Hyde-Lees in 1916. He wrote "A Prayer for My Daughter" on the birth of Anne Yeats in 1919. The "loveliest woman born" in the second to last stanza would be Maud Gonne, the love of his life, and the "old bellows full of angry wind" would be the man she married, Major John MacBride. Both were violent revolutionaries. MacBride had been executed for his part in the Easter uprising of 1916 when the poem was written.

It is one of the most admired works by the one of the most admired poets of the age. Any setting would need to deal with the storm described in the first two stanzas. Mine abates it in the third, leaves out the fourth and fifth, then brings back flurries now and then until the last. The appeal to ceremony at that point invited a brass chorale to close.

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