

Mary Oliver: *When Death Comes* (1991), reader unknown

Ed Sheeran: *Supermarket Flowers* (2016)

Carol Ann Duffy: *Pemonitions* (2011), introduced by the poet

♪ **James Taylor:** *You Can Close Your Eyes* (1970), in versions with Kate Taylor (the original performer), Joni Mitchell (dedicatee), and Taylor's son Henry (Edinburgh 2026)

Rubens: *The Honeysuckle Bower* (1609, Munich) and *Isabella Brandt* (1625–26, Uffizi)

♪ **Schumann:** *Frauenliebe und Leben* (1840): closing song ("Nun hast du mir der ersten Schmerz getan"), artists as above

♪ **Jonathan Larson:** *RENT* (1996), Angel's funeral (2008 Broadway cast)

Frederick **Ashton** (1904–88, *British choreographer*), Pierre **Bonnard** (1867–1947, *French painter*), Anne **Bradstreet** (1612–72, *American poet*), Elizabeth Barrett **Browning** (1806–61, *British poet*), Margaret Wise **Brown** (1910–52, *American writer*), Adalbert von **Chamisso** (1781–1838, *German poet*), Leonard **Cohen** (1934–2016, *Canadian singer-songwriter*), Carol Ann **Duffy** (1955–, *Scottish poet*), Edward **Elgar** (1857–1934, *British composer*), Jonathan **Larson** (1960–96, *American composer and lyricist*), John **Lennon** (1940–80, *British singer-songwriter*), Ada **Limón** (1976–, *American poet*), Gustav **Mahler** (1860–1911, *Austrian composer*), Joe **Mills** (bdnk, *American poet*), Mary **Oliver** (1935–2019, *American poet*), Christina **Rossetti** (1830–94, *British poet*), Peter Paul **Rubens** (1577–1640, *Flemish painter*), Friedrich **Rückert** (1788–1866, *German poet*), Robert **Schumann** (1810–56, *German composer*), William **Shakespeare** (1564–1616, *English poet and playwright*), Ed **Sheeran** (1991–, *British singer-songwriter*), Taylor **Swift** (1989–, *American singer-songwriter*), James **Taylor** (1948–, *American singer-songwriter*), Anthony **Van Dyck** (1599–1641, *Flemish painter*), Giuseppe **Verdi** (1813–1901, *Italian composer*), Richard **Wagner** (1813–83, *German composer*)

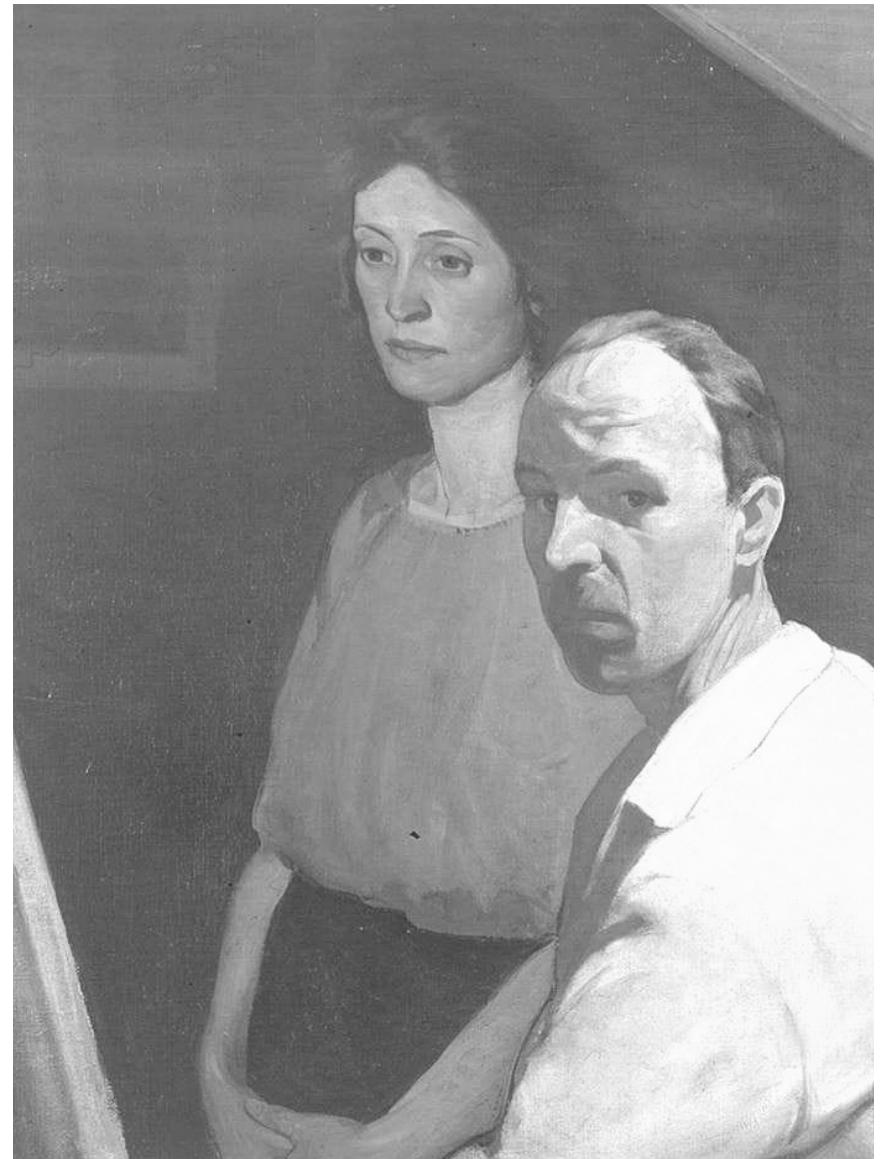
For more detail and lots of color, see the class website:

<http://www.brunyate.com/LoveSongs/>

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Love Songs



5. Love is For Ever

October 19, 2026

5. Love is For Ever

I CAME UPON THE COVER PICTURE ONLY JUST NOW, but it spoke strongly to me in terms of the themes of today's class. Dated around 1919, it is by Scottish painter **James Cowie**, an artist I didn't know. The title (obviously not the painter's own) is *Self Portrait with the Artist's First Wife, Nancy*. It had me wondering about their marriage, the love and sadness on both faces, and the fact that he paints her as a distant figure, while he is entirely present.

I found out that Nancy Cowie died of tuberculosis at age 30, shortly after bearing the couple's first child. So I was right. This final class is about loves that last until death, and even beyond: commitments made for the long haul, the special love of a parent for a child, marriages that have endured severe trial yet have made it through.

Very little of it is about the visual arts, though. I have taken the term "love songs" literally for once, with an emphasis on poems and songs that express love, even in tragedy. When I started out, most of my ideas came from classical music, but I have been listening to a lot of pop, and each section below is cued by a song by the likes of John Lennon, Leonard Cohen, or Taylor Swift. *rb*.

A. Marriage Vows

Marriage and the love between husband and wife.

Van Dyck: *Family Portrait* (1621, St. Petersburg Hermitage)

♫ **Train:** *Marry Me* (video 2010)

♫ **Schumann:** *Frauenliebe und Leben* (1840): "Seit ich ihn gesehen" (1) and "Du Ring an meinem Finger" (4), Angelika Kirchschrager with Melvyn Tan (Paris 2002)

Anne Bradstreet: *To my Dear and Loving Husband* (Helen Mirren)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning: *Sonnet 43* (Judi Dench)

Christina Rossetti: *A Birthday* (James Earl Jones)

Rubens: Portraits of his wife Hélène Fourment with their children (1634, Munich; 1635, Louvre; 1639, Metropolitan)

♫ **Wagner:** *Siegfried Idyll* (1870), opening (Dutch Radio Philharmonic, Karina Canellakis)

B. Parenthood

The bond between a parent and a son or daughter.

♫ **John Lennon:** *Beautiful Boy* (1979)

Margaret Wise Brown: *The Runaway Bunny* (1942), with illustrations by Clement Hurd (unknown reader)

Joe Mills: *How You Know* (2010)

♫ **Verdi:** *Rigoletto* (1851), duet from Act I, scene 2 (Met 1977; Cornell MacNeil, *Rigoletto*; Ileana Cotrubas, *Gilda*)

C. Coming Through

Marital relationships that have endured into middle age, or beyond.

♫ **Leonard Cohen:** *Dance Me to the End of Love* (1984)

Shakespeare: *Sonnet 73* (1978), "That time of year" (Richard Clews)

Ada Limón: *Love Poem with Apologies for My Appearance* (2018)

Pierre Bonnard: *Marthe in the Bathtub* (1946, Carnegie, Pittsburgh)

♫ **Elgar/Ashton:** *Enigma Variations* (1899; ballet 1968), *Nimrod*

D. Death in the Family

Finally, a group of works (mostly songs) dealing with family loss.

♫ **Taylor Swift:** *Bigger than the Whole Sky* (2022)

♫ **Gustav Mahler:** *Kindertotenlieder* (1904), words by Friedrich Rückert (1831): closing song, "In diesem Wetter" (chamber arrangement by Andreas Tarkman; Sara Gouzy, *mezzo*)