

SAMPLE

past

the

stage

of

speaking

POETRY FOR PERFORMANCE

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# **past the stage of speaking**

poetry for performance (sample)

Sample Book version 1.00

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# Preface

These poems were written for performance at open-mic nights during the 1990s.

This short volume contains a sample of the contents of the main **past the stage of speaking** book.

The complete book includes over one hundred poems, sixteen of which are for children. All the verse was specifically written to be read aloud.

The poems were mostly written without punctuation, with the line breaks determining where the pauses take place. I've added some punctuation now, to help.

# Poems

# DNA

It was rain that started summer  
and put words into my mouth  
taking tips from off the west wind  
it told me what to do  
and determined I should follow  
made a path that led to you.

The rain that made the summer  
opened clouds before the dawn  
started a reaction  
among chemicals that formed  
the basis of a structure  
that love can build upon

in the field where I'm standing  
stretching out my arms  
I can hear the song beginning  
to follow its commands  
and the lyric that I'm singing  
is written on my palm.

It was near the end of summer  
but the start of life within  
with a purpose clear in focus  
I was ready to begin  
and the rain that fell upon me  
was the start of everything.

# spirits of the air

(after Shelley)

Oh there are spirits of the air  
and whispers on the evening breeze  
that I have heard with thoughts threadbare  
in darkness, captured on those seas  
of troubled sleep and trapped in nets  
lie restless doubts and lost regrets

as all around the voices speak  
of what was done and what forgot  
and how each plan is incomplete  
and why all progress must be stopped  
when all at sea in depth of night  
I cannot tell each wrong from right;

adrift, distressed and far from shore  
I search for light in distant sky  
and ask these spirits to withdraw  
their whispered fears away from sight  
and let be free each caught concern  
until the calm of sleep returns.

# the creation

you made me out of nothing  
you carved me out of stone  
you ploughed me from the earth  
and fashioned me in bone

you made me out of nothing  
you took me from the night  
you tore me out of granite  
and breathed me into life

you made me out of nothing  
you pulled me from the storm  
you drew me out of oceans  
and covered me in warmth

you made me out of nothing  
you dried me from the rain  
you gave me eyes to see with  
and then you spoke my name

# Poems for Children

# wild animals

If anyone asks you to look  
after their pets for a day  
before you agree  
check their pedigree  
and see if they're wild or they're tame.

Ask them to tidy your room  
or set up the table for dinner.  
if with roaring and noise  
they eat your soft toys  
you probably should reconsider.

For the snarling beyond the locked door  
there may be a straightforward reason  
to be on the safe side  
put your brother inside  
and see if he ends up eaten.

The remaining poems can be read in “**past the stage of speaking**”, full version.

The titles of the additional poems are:

- the translation
- merely a madness
- on the road
- in the corner of my eye
- incapable of her own distress
- extinction
- giant steps
- explication
- Arcadia
- the disciples
- 4AM
- Terra del Fuego
- the same old song
- Yo-kylä itä
- the poetic life
- in the long run
- blueprints
- under the surface
- on the tip of my tongue
- the music makers
- the things I’m wanting
- molto vivace
- mistaking the cure
- for just this moment
- a failure of government
- for the sweetness within
- the careful gardeners
- lost words

- in the similitude of a dream
- Lucrezia as Poetry
- insulation
- vertreibung
- a categorical failure
- you are
- procrastination
- pilgrimage
- the ticker-tape parade
- that sense of purpose
- the swimmers
- the perception of our promise
- snowdrifts
- looks like rain
- MS Estonia
- Robert Mitchum
- Frozen Together
- fehgeleh zingers
- subject/object
- west country dawns
- ambient islands
- to settle my account
- Upper West Side
- roadside pub garden
- Guanahani
- the lost certainties of northern europe
- full moon Mississippi
- favourite blue raincoat
- all summer long
- a glimpse of a better plan
- the way that you act
- Saturday Night Fiver
- Hero and Leander

- hardcore traffic
- cetaceans/sentience
- sentience/cetaceans
- a direct line
- Vermont café scene
- Brief Lives
- with glittering eye
- Shakespeare's Agent
- a café scene
- prophet of his generation
- the Marxists have a party
- all under the bridge
- habituation
- Summer without Monika
- winter nights
- low tide at Stranraer
- midsummer day
- continental drift
- Colette
- kitchen balcony
- a determined impression
- enchantments
- at first there was the word

## POEMS FOR CHILDREN

- Spring: the rabbits
- Summer: the pond-skater
- Autumn: bonfire night
- Winter: the cold
- Mexico
- The West Indies
- Spain
- England

- France
- Norway
- pets
- big animals
- sea creatures
- the small things
- The Christmas Eve Adventure