

The text of *Lilacs* is a brief excerpt from Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd." The music mirrors the poet's passionate engagement with life, and with the momentous events of his time—the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln's assassination.

*When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd—and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.
O ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
And thought of him I love.*

*O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night! O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd! O the black murk that hides the star!
O cruel hands that hold me powerless! O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.*

*In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house, near the white-wash'd palings,
Stands the lilac-bush, tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising, delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard,
A sprig with its flower I break.*

.....

*Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself,
Sings by himself a song.*

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*Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk...*

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*With the lustrous and drooping star, with the countenance full of woe,
With the lilac tall, and its blossoms of mastering odor;
With the holders holding my hand, nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine, and I in the midst, and their memory ever I keep—for the dead I loved so well;
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this for his dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird, twined with the chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines, and the cedars dusk and dim.*

duration: c. 5:30