

# **Tennessee Dance and Blues**

for Clarinet in A and Piano or String Quartet

**Based on Poems by Tennessee Williams  
Music by Bruce Trinkley**

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Tennessee Williams was born March 26, 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi. He began writing and publishing his poetry while a student at the University of Missouri. Although he always wanted to be a poet, he began a remarkable career as a playwright with the success of *The Glass Menagerie* in 1944. He wrote several volumes of poetry, many short stories, as well as the plays and screenplays for which he is most famous. He died in New York City on February 25, 1983.

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The original song cycle, *Tennessee Williams Songs*, was composed during a residency at Dorland Mountain Arts Colony in Temecula, California in March 2017. Three songs from the cycle were transcribed for clarinet and piano in State College, Pennsylvania in October 2020.

The present version is dedicated to Smith Toulson and Diane Gold Toulson, with gratitude and admiration. Duration: approximately 5 minutes.

## Preface (from manuscript collection, Butler Library, Columbia University)

It hasn't all been useless. Unless the box is destroyed the words that had value will rise again. Mine, all that mattered much of me except my response to your love, mostly that given me by those whom I never met: so many letters unanswered because the letter to you all was still being written: if writing survives, in mine you'll find all my answers, signed with my love. All my writing has been a letter to you, 'you all' as we say in the South.

## **1. Youth Must Be Wanton**

Youth must be wanton, youth must be quick,  
Dance to the candle while lasteth the wick,

Youth must be foolish and mirthful and blind,  
Gaze not before and glance not behind,

Mark not the shadow that darkens the way –  
Regret not the glitter of any lost day,

But laugh with no reason except the red wine,  
For youth must be youthful and foolish and blind!

## 2. Gold Tooth Blues

Now there's many fool things a woman will do  
To catch a man's eye, she'll wear a tight shoe,  
She'll wear a light dress and catch a bad cold  
And she'll have a tooth pulled for a tooth of gold.

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

Now gold in the bank is a wonderful thing,  
And a woman looks nice with a nice gold ring,  
But, honey, take a tip, and the tip ain't cold,  
Your mouth's no place to carry your gold!

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

Some late Sunday mawnin' when you're still in the hay  
And you want a little lovin', your sweet man'll say,  
With a look that'll turn your heart's blood cold,  
Woman, that gold tooth makes you look old!

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

When he don't have a dollar but he must have his drink,  
He'll sneak up behind you at the kitchen sink,  
And before you can holler, I'm telling the truth,  
He'll brain you with a blackjack and pull your gold tooth!

*I'm a gold tooth woman with the gold tooth blues  
'Cause a gold tooth makes a woman look old!*

## 3. Kitchen Door Blues

My old lady died of a common cold.  
She smoked cigars and was ninety years old.  
She was thin as paper with the ribs of a kite,  
And she flew out the kitchen door one night.

Now I'm no younger'n the old lady was,  
When she lost gravitation, and I smoke cigars.  
I feel sort of peaked, an' I look kinda pore,  
So for God's sake, lock that kitchen door!