

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

*In the middle of the night,
Beethoven once asked me,
If I knew which musical form,
He most needed.*

*It has taken much of my life,
And I requested many hints,
Along the way.
"Where should I start?"
And he came back the next night,
To say, "Diabelli."*

*Mozart came unbidden another time,
And posed the same question.
I also asked him for a clue,
And he said,
"Magic Flute."*

*Often times while playing a quartet,
Or conducting I see into the music,
It's crystalline structure like amber,
It's clear longing to arrive,
While holding back the infinite.
And when the bows are working in
unison,*

*And even eye to eye is unnecessary
because,
The feeling is so complete,
I loved being overwhelmed by,
The sweet sweat of effort.*

*I'm thinking it is like playing chess,
On too many levels to count,
Like the wren singing at the base,
Of the wild rose on a June morning,
Or the wind off Lake Superior,
That carries all the mystery,
But not the salty air of the ocean.*

*Theme and variations is the answer,
Try Symphony No. 7,
Or the Kreutzer Sonata,
Or better yet,
Just live this day,
Letting go of the past,
And know that love is more,
Than we have a right to hope for.*

*Those brief moments when,
Music and words forever,*

*Exceed description,
And in the pit,
On the stage,
We sense that what we always
Wanted was simply to play,
The notes with all the innocence,
The universe allowed.*

*How many times,
We picked up bow and fiddle,
And listened to the "A,"
Knowing there never would be
perfection,
Just the imperfection of trying.*

*Yet there were a few moments...
Granted in one lifetime together,
Where we came close,
Pure in heart,
Mind calm and quiet,
And the sweet sweat of effort,
In the silence just after the music ended.*

*For Etta and Doug Overland
James D. Hainlen
June 23, 2009*

I haven't sent in a poem for awhile—but it is my greatest sense of joy to write. I wrote this poem for Doug and Etta Overland just before she passed away last year. The poem moves between the overwhelming complexity of music and the simplicity of music—making the metaphor for life: how complex it becomes and yet in the end how simple it is in its necessity for love. *Jim*