

## William Bolcom

### Uit : Cabaret Songs

Texts: *Arnold Weinstein*

#### Fur (Murray the Furrier)

My Uncle Murray the furrier  
was a big worrier  
but he's no hurrier now – not today.  
He's good and retired now  
Didn't get fired, now  
Fulfils his desires on half of his pay.

He eats in the best of dives  
Although he dines alone.  
He buried two wonderful wives  
And he still has the princess phone.  
It's the best of all possible lives  
Owning all that he owns on his own.

You see, he never took off a lot,  
And used to cough a lot,  
Fur in his craw from hot days in the sore.  
Worked his way up to the top.  
Was the steward of the shop.  
Has a son who is a cop and he is free!

My uncle Murray the retiree  
Loves this democracy  
And says it very emphatic'ly.  
He lives where he wishes. when he wants does the  
dishes,  
Eats greasy knishes, yes sirree!  
He is free!

No guilt, no gift for no host,  
He goes, coast to coast,  
Coughing, coughing.  
My Uncle Murray the furrier  
No, no worrier he.

#### Places to live

Places to live! Give me places to live!  
Wonders to wander to, places to live!  
My feet are dreaming of new dust, new dirt;  
My hips want to swing in a cellophane skirt.  
Give me my change in a celluloid note  
While I buy wooden hats from the factory boat.

Places to live! Give me places to live!  
Wonders to wander to, places to live!  
My tonsils are longing to hum a new tune;  
I'm dying to dance by the dark of the moon  
With mustachioed Mounties in deep purple kilts  
And me in blue velvet on flaming red stilts.

Places to live! Give me places to live!  
Give me wonders to wander to, places to live!  
My soul is keening for new forms of faith!  
I need a new God more than Henry the Eighth  
To take off my feathers and give me release,  
And I'll kneel in the sand and I'll drown my valise.

Places to live! Give me places to live!

## The Actor

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A man I know  
To keep alive dies for a living.  
To survive!  
To keep alive dies for a living.  
Stands upon a stage each night  
Matinees from two to five to keep the show alive,  
To keep the show alive, dies for a living.

#### Song of Black Max

(As told by the de Kooning Boys)

He was always dressed in black,  
Long black jacket, broad black hat, sometimes a cape,  
And as thin, and as thin as rubber tape: Black Max

He would raise the big black hat  
To the bigshots of the town who raised their hats right  
back,  
Never knew they were bowing to Black Max.

I'm talking about night in Rotterdam  
When the right night people of all the town  
Would find what they could in the night neighborhood of  
Black Max

There were women in the windows with bodies for sale  
Dressed in curls like little girls in little dollhouse jails.  
When the women walked the street with the beds upon  
their backs,  
Who was lifting up his brim to them? Black Max!

And there were looks for sale, the art of the smile,  
Only certain people walked that mystery mile:  
Artists, charlatans, vaudevillians,  
Men of mathematics, acrobatics and civilians.

There were knitting-needle music from a lady organ-  
grinder  
With all her sons behind her,  
Marco, Vito, Benno (Was he strong!  
Though he walked like a woman) and Carlo, who was  
five.  
He must still be alive!  
Ah poor Marco had the syph, and if you didn't take the  
terrible cure  
Those days you went crazy and died and he did.  
And at the coffin before they closed the lid, who raised  
his lid? Black Max.

I was climbing on the train one day  
Going far away to the good old U.S.A  
When I heard some music underneath the tracks.  
Standing there beneath the bridge, long black jacket,  
broad black hat.  
Playing the harmonica, one hand free to lift that hat to  
me:  
Black Max, Black Max, Black Max.