

**Prayer (for violoncello and piano) (date unknown)**

**Edward Joseph Collins, composer**

**Notes by Erik Eriksson (1940-2008), the composer's biographer**

Collins's score indicates that this version of his song by the same title was written for cellist Yensha Slebos. The instrumental arrangement works well, the expressive voice of the cello providing an aspect of soulful supplication equal to that of the human voice; the *andante sostenuto* pacing and the unruffled eighth note *arpeggi* of the accompaniment bespeak resignation and trust at the end of day—or the end of life.

Collins, raised a Roman Catholic, was from young adulthood a fierce critic of organized religion, an agnostic seeker of life's meaning in the natural world. The composer's son, Edward, Jr., relates that his father did, however, "gratefully receive the last rites of the Church, when hospitalized in Chicago at the time of his third and final heart attack."

At the time of this final episode, the sentiments of the *Prayer* apparently entered the composer's mind. Among Collins's papers that survive is a booklet of music manuscript on the first page of which is the *Prayer* cello part written in the composer's hand, followed on the next page by a *Tarantella fantastica* (cello with piano acc.)," marked *vivace* and *misterioso pp*; a heavily penciled double bar indicates that the 28 measures were perhaps the extent of the composer's intentions—or strength.

On the third page, a stickpin affixes a note, possibly from a nurse, to one of Collins's daughters: "Dear Marianna. This is the very last thing he wrote. Your dad was telling me about it. Ellen. I don't believe he considered it finished."