

Classic Poetry Series

Joe Dolce
- poems -

Publication Date:
2012

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Joe Dolce(1947 -)

Joseph "Joe" Dolce (born 1947 in Painesville, Ohio) is an American-born, Australian singer/songwriter who achieved fame with his multi-million-selling song, "Shaddap You Face", released under the name of his one-man show, Joe Dolce Music Theatre, in 1980. The single reached number one in 15 countries, it has sold more than 350,000+ copies in Australia, remaining the most successful Australian produced single in music history for thirty-two years and selling an estimated six million worldwide. It reached No. 1 on the Australian Kent Music Report Singles Chart for eight weeks from November 1980. The track kept Ultravox's "Vienna" off the number one singles spot in the United Kingdom.

Biography

Dolce was born in 1947 in Painesville, Ohio and formed various bands including Headstone Circus. with Jonathan Edwards (musician) who subsequently went on as a solo artist to have a charting hit song in the US 'Sunshine'. Dolce relocated to Melbourne, Australia in 1978 and his first single there was "Boat People"—a protest song on the poor treatment of Vietnamese refugees—which was translated into Vietnamese and donated to the fledgling Vietnamese community starting to form in Melbourne. His one-man show, Joe Dolce Music Theatre, performed in cabarets and pubs with various line-ups including Lin Van Hek as singer/performance artist.

In July 1980 he recorded the self-penned "Shaddap You Face", for Full Moon Records label at Mike Brady's new studios in West Melbourne. When in Ohio, Dolce would sometimes visit his Italian grandparents—they supplied the inspiration with "What's the matter, you?" and "Eh, shaddap". He wrote the song about Italians living in Australia and first performed it at Marijuana House, Brunswick Street, Fitzroy in 1979. Dolce paid A\$500 for the recording and spent \$1000 on the music video clip, which was created by Melbourne filmmaker, Chris Lofven. It became a multi-million-selling hit, peaking at No. 1 on the Australian Kent Music Report Singles Chart for eight weeks from November 1980, in UK from February 1981 for three weeks, also No. 1 in Austria, New Zealand and Switzerland. Dolce received the Advance Australia Award in 1981.

Follow up single, "If You Want to Be Happy" charted in Austria (No. 7) and New Zealand (top 40) but not in Australia. Dolce's subsequent singles included "Pizza Pizza", "Christmas in Australia" and "You Toucha My Car I Breaka You Face" and he released two albums during this period, 'Shaddap You Face' and 'The Christmas Album'. With Lin Van Hek, he formed various performance groups

including *Skin the Wig*, *La Somnambule* (1984) and the ongoing *Difficult Women* (1993). Van Hek and Dolce co-wrote "Intimacy", for the 1984 film, *The Terminator's* soundtrack. He has continued to perform solo shows and with his longtime partner, Van Hek, as part of their music-literary cabaret *Difficult Women*.

Over the last two years Dolce has achieved recognition as a serious poet and essayist winning the 25th Launceston Poetry Cup in Tasmania and having forty-five poems and twenty-five new song-lyrics selected by Les Murray for publication in *Quadrant* (magazine) . *Quadrant* also published ten of his essays including: 'Biblical imagery in the Songwriting of the Creative infidels: Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Nick Cave and Paul Kelly' (Jan-Feb 2012) and 'Hey Mr Cowbell Man: Sir Christopher Ricks' Dylan's Visions of Sin' (Mar 2012) . He has had poetry, essays and song-lyrics published in *Meanjin*, *island*, *Contrappasso*, *The Canberra Times*, *Little Raven*, *Cordite*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *Carmenta*, *Journey*, *Vine Leaves*, *Divan* and *Antipodes* (USA) . His first book of poetry *HATBOX* was released in 2010.

Bogong Moth

A Bogong moth
darts out of darkness
to seize fire -
it's burned away its tarsi,
yet continues to swoop,
kiss, careen, sizzle,
fluttering and candle-banging
like fawn-crazed Nijinski.

I look up from my book
accepting the immortal,
fatal dance
of life and light,
like Icarus's father
resigned to watch
his flying boy
hurl against brilliance.

When you were a baby
night crying,
often the only way
to pacify you
was to bundle you
in your satin blanket
and walk along
Seventh Avenue.

The percussion of traffic noise,
street lamps, flashing head
and tail lights,
opened your brown eyes wide.
You were intoxicated
and I soon lost you to sleep . . .

O my little son, cocooned there
in that middle-aged man
who hasn't spoken to me
for years -

what flickering galaxies
do you fling yourself against now
for sleep,
far beyond my reach?

Joe Dolce

Daybirth

for Lin van Hek

Lin née Whitehead fair-headed of all
a mirrorpool at foot of the waterfall
these the Old English bard might call
fine flax or flowering Linden tree
the drunken Scot staggering see
or Eibhleann when French uprooted to Éirinn
by Norman invaders settling therein
the pleasant and beautiful radiant fair Lin
the steepest ravine the precipice
the black pool as in Dublin
some Gaels would insist
but all entwined fire
there by her love lit
breithlá sona duit. *

* irish Gaelic for Happy Birthday.

pronunciations

breithlá sona duit (BREH-huh SON-uh gwit)
Eibhleann (AVE-linn)
Éirinn (AYR-ihn)
Gaels (gales)

Joe Dolce

Sketch

The sketch was done when
we were both much younger
friends commented on the uncanny
accuracy i achieved his eyes clear and
ready to receive Light his hair
curled and soft on his neck before
it became marred with blood
lips moist full and ripe
to speak the Word he would soon be given

now i am old and they bless
my old friend as The Last Prophet
it is no longer possible by Law
to depict him in any way

still i have this early sketch
friends said it was an accurate likeness
i can never show it to anyone now
Followers would destroy both it and me
what shall become of it?

i will roll it carefully
wrap it in tiraz cloth
appeal to the King of Cockroaches
O Kabi:kaj do not eat this paper
and seal it in a sturdy Meccan urn

perhaps one day after i have entered Paradise
someone will find it
in a more generous time
when it is no longer forbidden
to gaze upon His image.

Joe Dolce

The Darking Bog

'Twas earl a morn
it zoofed a horn
and hunched the yarrit log,
bereft of sense
atop the fence,
squirched a darking bog.

My nerves were shearit
my ears were fearit
my eyes were tearit with slog,
as I trumped the floor
to me deaf neighbour's door
to complain of the darking bog.

The hinge made squeakit
the door made creakit
two eyes squint peekit the nog
from a fly flecked face
as I fetched my case
re: the neeze from the darking bog.

His lips pursed 'O',
his eyes drooped low,
his head shook 'No', agog,
his finger shook,
'twas my mistook,
he'd got no darking bog.

I wouldn't budgit,
'Yer mind's gone fudgit,
yer cudgit's lost a cog,
my eardrums blister
from the fogging fister
of the squark of yer darking bog! '

Well, he scroomed a roar
& with a 2-be-4
tried to nobble me nog,
I ducked the swoosh,

and give him a push
back on the darking bog.

The mad bog yellit....
and screamed and fellit
his eyes popped jellit his nog,
a slurping gurgle
from the flattened furgle
then silence, the darking bog.

Ten years flewit,
the firbuds grewit,
the rain renewit the slog,
now only heard
was the burpèd slird,
no more the darking bog.

Joe Dolce

The Green-Eyed Boy Of The Rain

Somehow we drifted into this wet place
i just couldn't feel any pain
he came and stole her away from me
the green-eyed boy of the rain.

i wanted to kill him to tear him apart
until nothing of him would remain
when i thought of him kissing her mouth
the green-eyed boy of the rain.

i thought i had rights to her body and soul
now i can't even say her name
i drove her away and right into the arms of
the green-eyed boy of the rain.

Anger and sorrow become the same thing
two sides of a dark window pane
i'd give everything to see her look back from
the green-eyed boy of the rain.

Joe Dolce

The Left

Barack Obama is Left
so is George H. W. Bush

10% of the world is Left
first identified in a fetus
by the hand held closest to the mouth
Sign of the Devil from sinistrality sinister
Latin sinus meaning pocket Roman togas
having only one on the Left side
German linkshänder French gauche clumsy graceless awkward
Dutch twee linkerhanden hebben is to have two Left hands
in Hebrew Left symbolized power to shame society
brought to Christianity as Natural Evil by Ambrose of Milan
in Ghana to sleep on the Left side is to be dead
an insult to shake with the Left
but encouraged as in india for chamber pots and excreta
southpaw goofy cack-handed from Latin cacare
downunder a Molly-Duker
not always negative
Roman augures proceeded from the East
the Russian levsha a skilled craftsman
in Leskov's Tale of the Cross-eyed Lefty
items somewhat inconvenient for the Left:
cameras can openers fishing reels
on-off switches on dangerous machinery
firearms chequebooks boomerangs
the QWERTY keyboard favours Left
3000 English words typed with only the Left
compared to 300 with the Right
the Left earns 10-15% more than the Right
statisticians say Left is increasing

Clinton is Left
so was Reagan.

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