

Sonnet Scroll

Two Sonnets for Patrick Stewart, who read Shakespeare online during Covid

By David M. Katz

I

You slow it down and speak the speech from home
As if admitting no impediments,
No infectious thoughts into your room,
No intrusions, anxious sentiments,
Just cadences of comfort from your couch.
As close as that. Yet you are far enough
To thwart contamination borne of touch,
Random droplets in the air, a cough.
Every day I come to sit with you
To put this ghastly time and place aside,
Inject your native lightness here anew
Into my thoughts of those who may have died,
Or may be dying, or contaminate
Those in the street who can't self-isolate.

II

Summoning the bard into your lungs
Might be your day's initial antidote
Against the plague. Then, climbing up the rungs
To the apex of the ague in the throat
Of your talent, holding his lines there
As if to muster powder for a shot
At wiping out the virus with a prayer
Or spell enacted in a sacred spot,
You step into the spirit of the thing.
You've got us where you want, and we've got you,
Artful doctor. You begin to sing.
We feel as if we just might make it through.
We step into your seance every day.
You gesture, and the plague has gone away.