SELECTED MODERN SETTINGS OF EMILY DICKINSON POETRY BY OSVALDO GOLIJOV, RICKY IAN GORDON, LORI LAITMAN, JAKE HEGGIE, LIBBY LARSEN, ANDRÉ PREVIN, AND JULIANA HALL

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

While choosing songs for a recital featuring works based on Emily Dickinson's poetry, Renée Fleming wrote to Ricky Ian Gordon that she considered Emily Dickinson to be "America's Goethe."[1] This observation is quite profound. In the world of classical singing, Goethe is recognized not only as a giant of German literature, but also as a poet whose work was inherently suited to musical settings. His poetry was set over and over throughout the Romantic era. It is difficult to quantify how many times his poetry has been set to music. Lieder.net has compiled 2,733 settings of his poetry, [2] and if nothing else, this gives us a good indication of the sheer volume of composers who revered his work.

There are, of course, other writers whose poetry has been set to music many times. Lieder.net also lists 1,076 settings of poetry by William Shakespeare, 6,932 by Heinrich Heine, 1,350 by Joseph von Eichendorff, and 337 by Victor Hugo.[3] However, all of these poets and writers were men. The female voice is typically under-represented in art song, both as poet and composer. When a female poet joins the ranks of these writers and her words are set again and again, this is indeed worth noting. According to Carolyn Lindley Cooley's *The Music of Emily Dickinson's Poems and Letters*, Emily Dickinson's poetry had been set nearly 3,000 times as of 2003[4]. I could find no other female poet whose work was set as many times by as many composers.

It is, of course, no surprise to most singers and teachers of singing that there are a large number of musical settings of Dickinson's poetry. When asked to name a few notable settings,

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[1] Ricky Ian Gordon, *Too Few the Mornings Be: Eleven Songs for Soprano and Piano* (New York: Carl Fischer, LLC, 2009), 2.

[2] The LiederNet Archive, http://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_name_list.html?Type=Authors&Letter=G (accessed September 2, 2016).

[3] Ibid.

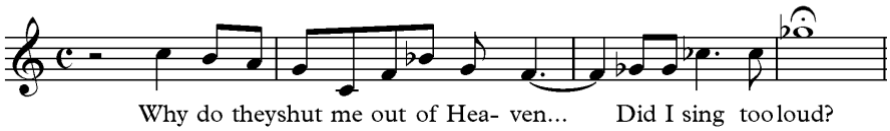
[4] Carolyn Lindley Cooley, *The Music of Emily Dickinson's Poems and Letters* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2003), 121.

the first composer that comes to mind is almost invariably Aaron Copland. His "Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson" (1950) have become standard in mezzo and baritone repertoire and other voice types often adopt them as well. Ernst Bacon and William Bolcom are also composers whose names will often come up.

However, Copland wrote "Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson" in 1950: well over half a century ago. Many singing teachers and singers have a tendency to cling to these standards and revisit the songs many times over. It is not my intention to discourage the performance of these songs, as they are indeed masterpieces. However, copies of her original manuscripts have only been published and widely available since 1980. The original, handwritten manuscripts defy traditional methods of publication. Spaces are added in ways that are hard to replicate in print. Sometimes words were misspelled – intentionally or not – on her original copies, which were "corrected" by editors prior to 1980. These editions would often change her punctuation, spelling, and spacing in ways of which the poet may not have approved in order to reflect a more normalized writing style. The edition that published Dickinson's poetry with its original, "uncorrected" punctuation was released in 1955: five years after the publication of Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*.

Recent literary critics tend to believe that such "corrections" may have removed some of Dickinson's original meaning. Punctuation, word choice, and spelling are all aspects of poetry that can greatly influence a composer's choices in setting the words to music. My intention is to direct attention to some of the modern composers who have been breathing new life into these poems and bring new points of view to Dickinson's works in the past 30 years, especially now that we are in an era in which her original manuscripts are more readily available. I hope to see whether or not these living composers approach her poetry as a casual lover of the written word, or if they give attention to the detail that has gone unnoticed or lost for so many years. Does modern Dickinson scholarship inform their work, and if so, how? To give an example of how

these aspects of Dickinson's poetry might have affected earlier interpretations of her work, let us look at the first two lines of Copland's "Why do they shut me out of Heaven?"



Example 1: Aaron Copland, "Why do they shut me out of Heaven?" from Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson, mm. 1–4.[5]

Copland brilliantly highlights Dickinson's humor in this poem by setting the word, "loud," on a G-flat above the staff. However, Copland was using a version of Dickinson's poem that did not have her original punctuation. Her original punctuation is as follows:

> Why – do they shut me out of Heaven?
> Did I sing – too loud?[6]

I believe it is reasonable to assume that most composers would puzzle over the dashes in these lines. Are the dashes indicative of a breath? Did the poet intend the reader to pause or to hold out the word before it? But since Copland did not have access to an edition with them when he was composing his cycle, we do not know how – or even if – the original punctuation would have affected his setting.

For the purposes of this study, I have narrowed my field of inquiry to works by seven modern composers and their works: Osvaldo Golijov's *How Slow the Wind: for Soprano, Clarinet, and String Quartet*; Ricky Ian Gordon's *Too Few the Mornings Be: Eleven Songs for Soprano and Piano*; Lori Laitman's *The Perfected Life: Text from Poems of Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886)* and *Four Dickinson Songs*; Jake Heggie's *How Well I Knew the Light: Two Songs*

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[5] Aaron Copland, "Why do they shut me out of Heaven?" from *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1951), 12.

[6] Christanne Miller, ed., *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (Cambridge, MA: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 133.

for Soprano and Piano, *Newer Every Day*, and *The Faces of Love*; Libby Larsen's *Chanting to Paradise: Four Songs for High Voice and Piano on the Poetry of Emily Dickinson*; André Previn's *Three Dickinson Songs,* and Juliana Hall's *Syllables of Velvet, Sentences of Plush*. I chose these composers because they are all well established in the field, and their styles contrast quite a bit with one another (and on a personal note, I enjoy their music immensely).

Chapter 2: Emily Dickinson

Dickinson's Life

Emily Dickinson was the middle child of three children born to Emily Norcross Dickinson and Edward Dickinson. The family lived in Amherst, Massachusetts, and Samuel Dickinson, Emily's grandfather, had been one of the founders of Amherst College. The men in her family all chose professions in law or politics. Their home, known as "The Homestead," was divided much like a modern condominium, with her immediate family on one side and her grandparents on the other, but with a shared kitchen.

Dickinson's early education was at the Amherst Academy, a religious school with lots of structured prayer time, but that also allowed Dickinson to learn about botany, science, literature, and music. She learned to play the piano and sing and was known for improvising her own pieces at the piano. The close friendships she developed with the girls there lasted into her adulthood. She continued her education at the Mt. Holyoke Female Seminary, where she was able to read books her father would have censored had she still been at home. Around this time, it was revealed that George Eliot, one of Dickinson's favorite authors, was actually a pseudonym for a female author. In addition, one of Dickinson's favorite books, *Jane Eyre*, was revealed to have also been anonymously written by a woman (Charlotte Brontë). These two revelations were highly influential for Dickinson, and she began to develop her plans for one day becoming a writer herself. Her education was cut short when she became ill in 1849, and when she recovered, her father did not allow her to return to school.

Subsequently, due to their mother's declining health, Emily and Lavinia had to take over the management of the household, the entertainment of their father's clients and guests, and the care of their mother. Austin, their brother, lived in the house next to theirs with his wife, Susan,

whom Emily called, "Sister Sue."[1]

As time went on, Emily became more and more withdrawn from society. It is tempting for a contemporary audience to label Emily as agoraphobic due to her reluctance to leave the house and her insistence that she not even come downstairs to meet with visitors. However, most experts speculate that Emily's self-imposed hermitage was the choice of a devoted artist. Ultimately, we cannot posthumously diagnose Dickinson from a psychological perspective or discern her reasons for never leaving the house. What we can surmise is that this odd decision led the people of Amherst to refer to her as "the Myth."[2] As Wendy Martin states in *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson,* her decision to dress almost entirely in white also set her apart from the world. She writes, "Whether the choice of dress was practical (white was easy to launder and mend), symbolic (mourning, virginity), or a type of self-chosen uniform (poet, bride), the clothing was different and therefore noticed and mythologized through small-town gossip."[3]

Between 1874 and 1883, many of Dickinson's family members and friends died, including her father and her favorite nephew. In addition, in 1881, Austin began a scandalous affair with a married woman named Mabel Loomis Todd. He often saw his mistress at The Homestead to keep the affair from his wife, who discovered her husband's – and Emily's - betrayal, resulting in a great deal of damage to the friendship between Emily and Susan. As Martin states:

> Regardless of whether or not Dickinson condoned her brother's behavior, Susan Dickinson read Dickinson's silence as approval. The pain and scandal caused by the affair between Austin and Mabel Loomis Todd would eventually play a role in the controversial first publication of Dickinson's letters and poems – Sue refused to share her copies of poems and letter with Mabel, and Mabel edited references to Sue out of the published letters.[4]

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[1] Wendy Martin, ed., *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15.

[2] J. Brooks Bouson, ed., *Critical Insights: Emily Dickinson* (Hackensack, New Jersey: Salem Press, Inc., 2011), 3.

[3] Martin 18-19.

[4] Ibid., 22.

In 1884, Dickinson began to suffer "fainting spells."[5] She suffered her last spell on May 13, 1886 and remained unconscious until her death two days later. Lavinia subsequently found over 1700 poems in Dickinson's bedroom, many of which were bound by the poet's hand in little books that had been stitched together. Dickinson's organizational system and reasoning for the order in which the poems were bound is unknown.

Dickinson requested that all of her poems be burned after her death. Lavinia originally intended to obey this request. Emily's aversion to publication most likely stemmed from the few experiences she had in which she submitted a poem for publication, but it ended up being published in a highly edited format. Editors often sought to "correct" her punctuation, spelling, and rhyme schemes, and sometimes gave her poems unwanted names. Eventually, she wrote, "Publication – is the Auction/ Of the Mind of Man."[6] But upon seeing the breadth and quality of the poems in question, Lavinia chose to defy her sister's wishes. She and Dickinson's family and friends saw to the publication of her poems and letters.

Dickinson's Time

In understanding Dickinson's writing, some historical context is necessary. Dickinson lived during a time of great upheaval, and as in any time in which the world was changing quickly, there were forces for progress that conflict with a yearning for normalcy. We see this dichotomy in her work and in the world she inhabited.

In the town of Amherst and the surrounding area, the Congregational Church was the most influential religion. There was considerable peer pressure to proclaim one's "conversion experience," so as to hold one's self up as one of God's few chosen ones.[7] Emily was the only

[5] Ibid., 22.
[6] Ibid., 115.
[7] Ibid., 26.

member of her family to refuse to profess such a conversion experience. In Dickinson's mind, to declare herself a saved Christian in the vein of the Congregationalists would have been "to give up the world." (L67, no. 23)[8] That was something she was unwilling to do.

Transcendentalism was a popular intellectual movement that "included many writers, most notably Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman."[9] It "praised humankind's ability to transcend the mortal world through reflection, intuition, and an openness to nature."[10] While the Puritans sought to remove the clergy as a necessary intermediary between God and man, the Transcendentalists took this one step forward and promoted a relationship with God through nature rather than through any one Church. They promoted self-reliance, and in a world that was being taken over more and more by industrialization, they preached a need for nature and community. We can easily see the influence of Transcendentalist thought in Dickinson's works.

Emily also grew up as the concept of "Manifest destiny" was taking hold of the American mindset. Many felt it was a religious duty to expand the borders of the United States west. In addition, the abolitionist movement and the Civil War occurred during Dickinson's lifetime, and members of her community were killed fighting for the North. Tuberculosis and other diseases ran rampant during this time, and Emily's view of the cemetery allowed her to observe death from a very intimate point of view. Many of her close friends were prominent abolitionists. At the same time, the recognition of personhood that was being debated as a result of the abolitionist movement shone light on the women's rights movement. Her sister-in-law hosted abolitionists and suffragists at her home, including Harriet Beecher Stowe and Wendell Phillips.

Altogether, we see that society as a whole was especially concerned with questions of the existence and nature of God, unusually high death rates, an expanding world in which family and

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[8] Ibid., 60.
[9] Ibid., 32.
[10] Ibid.

friends were often separated due to advances in technology (such as the railroad expansion west), and civil rights of minorities and women.

In addition, Dickinson's world had undergone a rather large change in the world of hymns and church music before her birth that would end up being quite influential to her poetry. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was a prominent preacher and hymn composer of his day. His works usually followed a set structure and the poetry was straightforward and not very flowery.

> Watts has since become known as the "father of the modern hymn" and his influence is recognized on a global scale as being someone who radically altered the mode of church practice with his support of congregational hymn singing. Watt's preference for this simple but taut structure that encourages plainness of language was perceived by some as evidence of a lack of poetic skill. However, this unadorned style can be connected to Watts's politics and position as a Dissenter with Puritan roots.[11]

This is the music with which Dickinson was raised. This is what was played in her church. The structure of hymns had a direct effect on the structure of her poetry.

Publication History

After her death, Dickinson's friends and family began the arduous and contentious task of compiling and publishing her works. At first, Lavinia turned to Susan Dickinson for help with compiling the works, but Susan failed to make much progress with the task. Lavinia then turned to Austin's mistress, Mabel Loomis Todd. Naturally, this enraged Susan, who withheld the letters and poems that Emily had written to her for the first publications. Mabel Loomis Todd enlisted the help of Thomas Wentworth Higginson – a writer who had served as a sort of mentor to Dickinson. Together they managed to edit and compile the poems into three books entitled *Poems* (1890), *Poems: Second Series* (1891), and *Poems: Third Series* (1896). Meanwhile, Emily

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[11] Victoria N. Morgan, *Emily Dickinson and Hymn Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1988), 28.

Dickinson's niece, Martha Dickinson Bianchi published Susan's collection of Dickinson's poetry. All of these collections were highly edited. The poems were given titles, even though Dickinson never used titles for her poems. Her grammar and spelling were "corrected," and her punctuation was revised to reflect more standard punctuation rules. Her lines were organized into stanzas that went against the way that Dickinson herself organized the spacing of her lines.

However, in the 1950's a scholar named Thomas Johnson devoted himself to restoring the poems to more closely reflect their original format, while working within the constraints of publishing technology. The varied spacing that Dickinson used in her original poetry was impossible to replicate, but he restored her irregular use of capitalization, removed the superfluous titles, and added back in her dashes. He also tried to restore the chronology of the poems to the best of his ability. In 1955 he released *The Poems of Emily Dickinson Including Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts*, which as the title implies includes the variations of her poetry that she wrote as well. She would often send a poem to a friend, and then change a few words and send the poem to another friend. (It should be noted that Johnson's work was released five years after Aaron Copland's *Twelve Songs of Emily Dickinson* was published.)

In 1960, Johnson published a reading edition with the variations removed. This was the gold standard in Dickinson research until 1981, when R. W. Franklin published a collection of the copies of all of the manuscripts, thus solving the problem of traditional printing techniques being unable to replicate Dickinson's spacing. Cristanne Miller's *Emily Dickinson's Poems As She Preserved Them* was published in 2016, and this edition presents Dickinson's poems in the order of her fascicles, with Dickinson's punctuation, spelling, and line spacing, as well as showing how she would later go back and edit her work. The Emily Dickinson Archive (edickinson.org) has scanned copies of all of her surviving handwritten poems. All of these works have led to a much more accurate way to explore Dickinson's intentions as an author. While a composer before 1955 can be forgiven for not knowing that editors had distorted Dickinson's works, a composer today

has no such excuse. For the purposes of this work, I will be referring to Dickinson's poetry according to Johnson's numerical system, as it is the most widely used in Dickinson scholarship.

The dilemma for composers is that because Thomas Johnson's work on Dickinson's poetry is rather recent, these newer, more accurate versions of her poetry are protected under copyright. Older versions of Dickinson's poetry, as published by her family, are no longer subject to copyright laws. The composer, then, has a difficult decision. Will they avoid paying money to use Dickinson's poetry the way she set it by using her family's versions? Or will they respect the poet's wishes and pay for the corrected versions?

Characteristics of Work

Critics such as Harold Bloom (qtd. in Bouson) have asserted that Dickinson was a poet with "a mind so original and powerful that we have scarcely begun, even now, to catch up with her."[12] She was a product of her time, with strong tendencies towards transcendentalism and romanticism, but she was also ahead of her time, with her almost post-modern poetic construction. While reading Dickinson's poetry, certain things become quite apparent to the audience. First of all, we cannot help but identify that Dickinson concerns herself with a small number of subjects, most notably death, nature, wrestling with questions of spirituality, the domestic sphere, and relationships with loved ones. Secondly, her economy with words is quite notable. She could fit a world of meaning and ambiguity into a few small lines, prompting Jasha Hoffman to say, "It would be hard to deny that Emily Dickinson was a master of the miniature."[13] Thirdly, she uses punctuation and spacing to create pauses in her poetry that take on a meaning of

[12] J. Brooks Bouson, "On Emily Dickinson," in *Critical Insights: Emily Dickinson*, ed. J. Brooks Bouson (Hackensack: Salem Press, Inc. 2011), 6.

[13] Jasha Hoffman, "The *Paris Review* Perspective," in *Critical Insights: Emily Dickinson*, ed. J. Brooks Bouson (Hackensack: Salem Press, Inc. 2011), 26.

her own. And finally, she sometimes subverts what seems to be an obvious opportunity to rhyme in a way that can be jarring to the audience.

I. Frequent Themes

Common themes of Dickinson's poetry include a fascination with death, a worship of nature, music, an elevation of everyday domestic things, and her internal conflicts with religion and spirituality. It is easy for those of us in the twenty-first century to affix a sort of Gothic view to the self-proclaimed "Woman – in white" due to her preoccupation with death, but such fascination was commonplace at the time. Death was everywhere. Infant mortality rates were high, and life expectancy was low for adults as well. Typhoid fever was rampant, the Civil War took a large toll on the population, and other maladies made death a constant companion for all. The main difference between Dickinson's view of death and her contemporaries' views was that Dickinson did not share their certainty that there was a Heaven. She seemed to hope for it but suspected that it might not exist.

Dickinson's frequent musical references are worth mentioning. She often compared herself to a songbird in her poet and referred to the composition of poetry as "singing." In fact, she was considered quite a good singer when she had studied music at Amherst Academy. Judy Jo Small asserts, "She did not share our hesitancies about the 'musical' aspect of poetry but in fact often thought of poetry as song and of herself as a singer."[14] Female poets especially were associated with songbirds, singing from the quiet domesticity of the home, much as the songbird sings from its cage. But the idea of poetry and music being related was not exclusively limited to female poets. For example, Thomas Carlyle, a satirical writer and philosopher whom Dickinson admired, said, "A *musical* thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost

[14] Judy Jo Small, *Positive As Sound: Emily Dickinson's Rhyme* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 27.

heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the *melody* that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul."[15]

II. Characteristics of Dickinson's Poetry: Brevity, Punctuation, and Capitalization.

In addition to concentrating on a small number of themes in her poetry, Dickinson also employed various characteristics that set her apart from other poets. Her poems were mostly quite short, with punctuation and capitalization that did not follow traditional grammatical rules. The brevity she employed helped give her poems the impression of intimacy with the reader. As Margaret Freeman states, "longer discourse is equated with distance and lack of familiarity, and shorter discourse is equated with closeness and intimacy… It [her poetry] is colloquial, short, with many gaps and elisions."[16]

> Dickinson threw away the traditional rules of rhyme, meter, grammar, and punctuation.

> She abandoned standard meter and rhyme, threw conventional grammar out the window, and forced her readers to work to understand her meaning… Her declaration to Thomas Wentworth Higginson that "while my thought is undressed – I can make the distinction, but when I put them in the Gown – they look alike, and numb," demonstrates her need for raw, unadorned thought rather than traditional words confined in "Gown."[17]

Perhaps the best example of this is her use of the dash. Martin tells us,

> The Dickinson trademark – the dash – breaks lines apart, forcing the reader to pause and reconsider and providing a visible, physical space for thought… Dickinson's unconventional use of punctuation, especially the dash, serves almost as a kind of musical notation that guides the rhythm of the lines.[18]

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[15] Ibid., 36.
[16] Freeman, 76.
[17] Martin, 33.
[18] Ibid., 41.

According to Helen McNeil, the dash is also a way to continue the conversation past the end of the poem. She says, "The dash that ends so many Dickinson poems is a graphic indication that the debate does not finish with the poem."[19] In this way, the poetry can function as an incomplete cadence or as the middle of a musical phrase, which if set to music, gives the composer a say in the interpretation and conclusion of the thought.

She would use capitalization in a very odd way, not adhering to the English rule of capitalizing proper nouns and the first word of a sentence exclusively, nor adhering to the German rule of capitalizing those things plus all nouns. There is debate among scholars as to whether or not certain letters were even capitalized or not in their original versions, due to Dickinson's poor eyesight and propensity to write with a pencil at night. Many poems were so faint, they could not even be read.[20] However, her rebellious spirit can easily be seen in the ways in which she flouts the rules of grammar and syntax.

IV. Rhyme, Meter, and the Subversion of Both

Another poetic device that she often employed was the use of "slant" rhyming, also known as partial rhyming. Slant rhymes are things that almost rhyme, but don't quite. It subverts the expectations of the audience. When Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson first published Dickinson's poetry, they "found it necessary to 'correct' many of her rhymes to accord with public taste," and Higginson went so far as to apologize for Dickinson's perceived errors in rhyme, saying, "…one can no more criticize a *faulty rhyme* [emphasis mine] here and there than a defect of drawing in one of Blake's pictures. When a thought takes one's breath away, who cares to count the syllables?"[21] As time went on, modern readers have not been so

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[19] Fred D. White, Approaching Emily Dickinson: Critical Currents and Crosscurrents since 1960 (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008), 19.

[20] Martin, 118.

[21] Small, 5.

quick to dismiss her poetic skills as rhyming becomes less and less necessary for poetry. Judy Jo Small quotes Henry Wells as saying that although "there is 'no simple formula,' [he] still holds that '[i]n the richly modulated music of her lyrics, full rhyme may be compared to the musician's major mode, half rhyme to the minor mode. The latter connotes indecision, pensiveness, quiet grief, or spiritual numbness."[22] She goes on to quote Charles Anderson, who said of Dickinson that, "Exact correspondences of sound could not convey the dissonances that reached her ears from a fractured universe, though she could use them in moments of renewed faith or as ironic musical symbols of a world whose orderliness was illusory."[23] Small made a careful study of Dickinson's use of rhyme and came to the conclusion that the instances in which Dickinson avoided perfect rhyming schemes were intentional. She states:

> Of the thousands of variant words the variorum edition shows she considered in the process of composition, there are, according to my count, fewer than two hundred instances where she either alters or considers altering one of the words that make up an end rhyme… Even when she does offer variants for rhyme words, about three-quarters of those would not appreciably alter the sound character of the words they would replace. That is, full rhymes would stay full, and partial rhymes would usually stay partial.[24]

[22] Ibid., 6-7.
[23] Ibid., 7.
[24] Ibid., 21.

Chapter 3: The Composers and Their Songs

As we turn our attention to the composers and the pieces that are the focus of this study, each song will have a summary of its range and degree of difficulty. The degree of difficulty will be divided into three categories: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. In some cases, I have labeled some pieces, "Beginner to Intermediate," or "Intermediate to Advanced." These classifications are of course, highly subjective, and individual teachers' opinions will vary greatly on whether or not a song is appropriate for a certain singer. These distinctions are simply a guide for the voice teacher or soloist to use when approaching this repertoire for the first time. For text sources, I have used Thomas Johnson's numbering system.

Osvaldo Golijov

Golijov was born in 1960 in Argentina. His parents were both Jewish and Eastern-European. His mother was a pianist, which meant that music was all around him in his home. He was "raised surrounded by chamber classical music, Jewish liturgical and klezmer music, and the new tango music of Astor Piazzola."[1] He studied piano and composition and then moved to Israel to study at the Jerusalem Rubin Academy at the age of 23. In 1986, he moved to the US and studied with George Crumb at the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his PhD. In addition, he studied with Oliver Knussen at Tanglewood. He became very well-known due to his collaborations with the Kronos Quartet and the St. Lawrence quartet, but it was his large-scale oratorio, *La Pasión según San Marcos*, that truly catapulted him to fame. He developed an affinity for Dawn Upshaw's voice and composed several song cycles for her. His opera, *Ainadamar*, starred Upshaw and the recording received two Grammys in 2006.

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[1] OsvaldoGolijov.com, "Biography/Photos," http://www.osvaldogolijov.com/bio.htm (accessed August 21, 2017).

Having been immersed in so many different cultures through his upbringing and life experiences, Golijov's style is quite eclectic, to say the least. He has said that he "modulates cultures like other composers modulate keys."[2] In his *Pasión*, for example, one can find a fusion of Afro-Latino musical styles, Cuban batá drumming, the use of Brazilian instruments, conga drums, an accordion, and a use of electronics "to create sonic waves inspired by minimalism."[3] Many of the cultures referenced in *La Pasión* were there not because of his immersion in these cultures, but from the cultures of musicians and dancers with whom he collaborated in making that work.

How Slow the Wind
Range: C4 to B-flat 5
Tessitura: C4 to F5
Opening key signature: F minor
Voice type: Soprano
Instrumentation: Clarinet and String Quartet (also available for Orchestra)
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Publisher: Boosey & Hawkes, distributed by Hal Leonard
Text Source: J1571 and J1637

"How Slow the Wind" (2001) takes the text from two very short Dickinson poems and combines them. The original poem that begins with the line, "Is it too late to touch you, Dear?" was part of a letter to a friend named Mrs. Edward P. Crowell.[4] The first line was separated from the rest of the lines in such a way that it is unclear if that line is supposed to be part of the poem or part of the letter, but to Dickinson, letter-writing was also an art form and it is often difficult for scholars to differentiate between her prose and her poetry. The letter was sent to Mrs. Crowell before the family left for a trip to another country.

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[2] Marc Gidal, "Contemporary 'Latin American' Composers of Art Music in the United States: Cosmopolitans Navigating Multiculturism and Universalism." *Latin American Music Review/ Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 31, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 55.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Thomas Johnson, "Thomas Johnson's note on poem 1637," Dickinson Electronic Archives, **http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/crowell/jnp1637.html** (Accessed January 20, 2018).

The first poem, however, was part of a letter written when Dickinson's eyesight was truly failing her. She would write the letters of her words to be quite large, and often could only fit a few words on each line. It is possible that what is written above is the complete poem. However, some scholars argue that the entire letter was a poem. The letter was written to Mrs. Edward Tuckerman in 1883 after Dickinson hurt her foot. She comments on how slowly she moves due to her injury.

Without historical context, the composer's interpretation of the poems are much more desperate than the spirit in which they were originally written. But with Dickinson's pensive nature, it is quite possible that having a beloved friend take a trip and hurting her ankle would turn her thoughts to death.

Golijov changes the text in a few different ways. The first and most obvious way in which he changes the text is through the use of repetition as a compositional device. He repeats the text "How slow the wind how slow the sea" several times throughout the song. He skips the line, "how late their Feathers be!" at first and moves on to the second poem. He plays with the line "Is it too late to touch you, Dear?" by repeating sections of it over and over. He expands it into, "Is it too late to touch you touch you dear? Late to touch you to touch you touch you dear?" He repeats "love marine and love terrene," and then repeats the word "love" several times before moving on to "celestial too." Finally, at the end, he puts in the line, "how late their feathers be," which he also repeats. Composers often use repetition to emphasize aspects of the poetry that the composer deems to be most important and effective. Reordering lines of poetry is also not unheard of. (Although, as this is an instance in which Dickinson rhymed the word "sea" with the word "be," to separate those rhyming lines is a bit of an odd choice.)

What is less common, however, is removing the poet's capitalization and punctuation. The punctuation can usually inform the setting of the music. These particular poems, however, are so short and so simple that the trademark dashes are only at the end of the lines. It makes

sense for the composer to pause at the end of a line, with or without a dash, and Golijov has done this.

In this case, the removal of Dickinson's trademark dashes doesn't seem to significantly alter the flow of when she intended the reader to pause. I can find no reason, however, to eliminate Dickinson's preferred capitalization. This is something that the audience would not see, so it does not impact performance. However, the poetry has been altered in the score itself. The publisher presents the poem as follows:

> **How Slow the Wind**
> By Emily Dickinson
>
> How slow the wind
> How Slow the sea
> How late their feathers be.
>
> Is it too late to touch you, dear?
> We this moment knew:
> Love marine and love terrene,
> love celestial too.[5]

There are no dashes, and no odd capitalizations, other than that of the word "slow," which is not a word that Dickinson herself capitalized. It is possible that the publisher made these changes and Golijov did not do them himself. Moreover, the musical edition does not specify that these are two different poems (though the composer's website does make this distinction), and simply names both of them "How Slow the Wind" by Emily Dickinson, despite the fact that neither poem had a name. Perhaps these changes were made by mistake, but if not, it is troubling to see the poet's words once again being "corrected" as they were in the 1800's.

However, the lack of attention to the scholarly history of Dickinson's poetry does not detract from the beauty of this setting. This piece was originally written for string quartet, and

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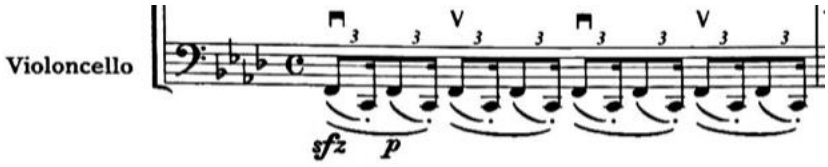
[5] Osvaldo Golijov, *How Slow the Wind* (New York: Hendon Music, Inc., Boosey and Hawkes, 2002), preface.

was commissioned by Cecilia Wasserman in memory of her late husband, Herb Wasserman. Golijov also dedicated it to the memory of his friend, Muriel Sturbin, who died in an accident. He wrote, "I had in mind one of those seconds in life that is frozen in the memory, forever – a sudden death, a single instant in which life turns upside down, different from the experience of death after a long agony."[6] It was written for Dawn Upshaw's voice, and is approximately eight minutes in length.

Compositional devices the composer uses echo his use of the text. That is, he repeats patterns and melodies throughout the piece in a way similar to how he repeats the text. He comes back to small figures and large figures in various ways over and over. The piece begins with a quiet, frantic motion in the strings. It is a pattern of eighth notes and sixteenth notes with a triplet figure over them. The eighth note is on F2, and the sixteenth note is on C2.



Example 2: Osvaldo Golijov, *How Slow the Wind*, m. 1.[7]

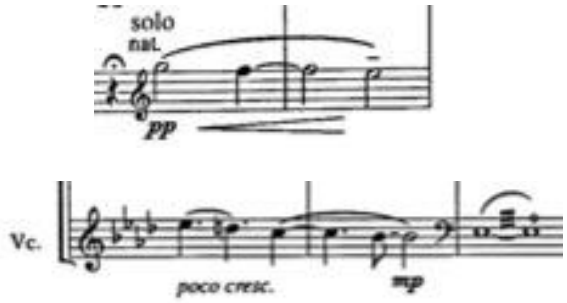
The pattern starts in the cello part, then is taken up by the viola one third higher a measure later. After another measure, the second violin enters, but this time, while the rhythmic pattern is the same, the notes are D4 and C4. Altogether, I will call this section "Motive 1" for the purposes of this description. The clarinet enters, playing the notes that the singer will echo. I will henceforth refer to this melodic figure as "Melody 1." Golijov specifies in measure 5 that the strings should play *sul ponticello*, which means that they should play with the bow on or very near the bridge. This gives a metallic sound to string instruments. It's a technique often used to

[6] Osvaldo Golijov, OsvaldoGolijov.com, "Works," http://www.osvaldogolijov.com/wd10.htm (accessed August 21, 2017).

[7] Golijov, *How Slow the Wind* (New York: Hendon Music, Inc., Boosey and Hawkes, 2002) 1.

create a "ghost-like" sound. In this case, it seems to give the impression of wind or water during a storm. The frenetic motion of the strings paired with the very sweet, slow, legato lines of the clarinet give the audience a feeling of being in the middle of the storm, but not feeling the rain or wind. It seems to describe that feeling of shock that is the first stage of grief when a loved one dies.

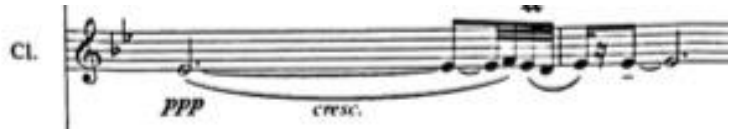
The first violin takes over the melody in measure 11, and then all the strings come together on a single note played *sul ponticello* before moving on to section A. At the beginning of the A section, a new melody begins in the cello and works its way through the other instruments in the string quartet, one by one.



Example 3: Osvaldo Golijov, *How Slow the Wind*, mm. 15–19.[8]

I will refer to this melodic line as "Melody 2." As the cello begins the melodic line, the second violin is marked "*sul tasto*," which means that it is playing on the fingerboard. It is a technique used to soften the sound of the instrument. When the first violin finally ends the melody at B, Golijov returns to that frenetic motion that began the piece, "Motive 1." The clarinet enters in m. 28, with a a figure of 32nd notes playing a Latin-flavored trill.

[8] Ibid., 3.



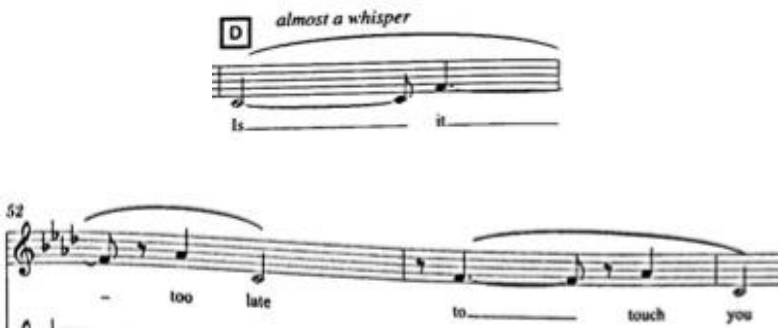
Example 4: Osvaldo Golijov, *How Slow the Wind*, mm. 28–29.[9]

This trill figure will be called "the trill" for the rest of this paper. At measure 29, the voice finally comes in, repeating "Melody 1." The clarinet repeats the trill figure under the voice at measure 35. At measure 37, the first violin imitates the trill figure, and the clarinet repeats a shortened version of it as the lower strings come together and once again return to a chord marked "*sul ponticello*."

Section C begins with the voice repeating Melody 2 on an unspecified vowel, marked "Vocalize: '*underwater*' until D." This indication in the voice creates the feeling of *sul tasto* we previously saw in the second violin. The cello doubles the melody down the octave for four measures, and then the melody is passed to the viola, which doubles the voice for four measures. The second violin then doubles the melody for a measure, and is then joined by the first violin to accompany the voice on the melody until D.

The D section begins with a descending line in the cello and viola, a new melody in the voice, and a pattern of sixteenth notes vacillating between A-flat and C in the clarinet. The rhythms of the new melody are similar to the voice's first entrance, but the tune is different. It utilizes the notes in an F minor chord in the second inversion, and it just keeps outlining that chord over and over with odd, syncopated rhythms.

[9] Ibid., 4.



Example 5: Osvaldo Golijov: *How Slow the Wind*, mm. 51–54.[10]

Meanwhile, the sixteenth note pattern gets passed from the clarinet to the second violin, then briefly to the first violin, and back to the second violin. The clarinet then takes up the pattern in measure 54 but transforms the figure into eighth note triplets. This duple versus triple meter combined with the low, descending line in the cello and viola, makes it sound as though the ground is slipping away from underneath the singer. As the singer brokenly asks, "Is it too late to touch you, dear?" Golijov creates the sensation of feeling out of control. The triplet pattern slows to a duple pattern on eighth notes in measure 57, starting in the clarinet part, and then continued by the violins in turn. When it comes back to the clarinet, the clarinet further slows the pattern to two sets of triplet quarter notes, which the violins slow down further in measure 62. Section D concludes on an augmented A-flat chord with the strings playing *sul ponticello* again.

The E section is entirely instrumental. The cello plays a low melody, replete with the Latin trills we saw in the clarinet part in measure 28. The rest of the strings outline very simple chords to support the melody.

The F and G sections are condensed versions of sections B and C. They begin with Motive 1 in the cello, viola and second violin. The Clarinet enters in m. 82 with the trill motive, and then the voice enters in m. 83 with Melody 1. Motive 1 restarts in m. 85, and the voice resumes Melody 1, while the clarinet plays with variations of the trill motive. The first violin

[10] Ibid., 6 – 7.

comes in with a very slow ascending line before adopting the trill motive in m. 92. At G, Melody 2 comes into play in the vocal line as before. However, in m. 98, the voice begins to play with the trill motive. This is a keening cry. Although it is still marked, "underwater," the trills make the voice seem more present in a way. It sounds almost improvisatory, which helps it sound more human and passionate.

Without breaking off the section, Golijov brings the voice into a new melody at measure 105, but then at m. 109, section H is marked, and the instruments return to their pattern from section D in which they start with the 16th note pattern that slows through duple and triple meters. But this time, the instruments only vacillate a half step instead of a third. Instead of the ground receding from beneath the singer's feet, now it feels like there is no ground at all, and the singer is floating either in air or water.

Section I begins with the cello and the viola starting the first motive at the same time, and the clarinet and the voice starting the trill motive together above them. They will continue to play with these Latin flavored trills for the rest of the piece, culminating in m. 138, in which they trill down to the low part of the soprano's voice. As the lower voiced instruments continue the driving motion of motive 1, the first and second violins experiment with colors and harmonics.

We can easily feel Golijov's initial intention with this piece. The voice part has a keening quality throughout, with moments of intense grief, especially at the end with the Latin trill motive. But it also has moments in which the voice part feels as though it cannot move properly: a feeling of walking in sand, or trying but being unable to run as in a nightmare. It is altogether a brilliant portrayal of the emotion of shock and overwhelming despair over the sudden death of a loved one.

This piece would not be a good choice for a less developed singer. I would recommend that it be given only to advanced graduate students and professionals. First of all, it is a rhythmically difficult piece for the singer. The syncopation would throw off most undergraduate singers. Secondly, it requires a good deal of heft in the middle to lower range of the soprano

voice, especially towards the end: specifically, in mm. 126–127 on the word "feathers," and again at mm. 134–135, and mm. 138–139 on the descending lines with the trills. A young singer might be overly tempted to push too much to achieve the desired color. It would be a better piece for a more mature singer.

Ricky Ian Gordon

Ricky Ian Gordon's cycle *Too Few the Mornings Be* was written specifically for Renée Fleming, in the knowledge that she was going to do a show called *My Business is to Love* with the actress Julie Harris. In the show, Ms. Harris was to play Emily Dickinson, and Renée Fleming was going to play Lavinia, and songs based on Dickinson's poetry would be interspersed throughout the piece. He had already written "Will There Really Be a Morning?" for Fleming, which she often used as an encore on her recitals. According to Gordon, "Having heard about this event in advance, I wrote Renée this cycle *Too Few the Mornings Be* in an effort to worm my way in!"[11]

Gordon's family was the subject of the book *Home Fires: An Intimate Portrait of One Middle-Class Family in Postwar America* by David Katz.[12] The book itself focuses on his family as a whole, beginning when his father came home from the war and moved his wife and daughter from Manhattan to Long Island.

Gordon was born in 1956 in Oceanside, NY. He was the youngest of four children, and the only boy. Of his eldest sister, he said, "my sister Susan would put me to bed reading poetry. So I was instilled, right from the beginning, with a love of poetry."[13] This experience led him to consider poetry to be very comforting. "This whole thing of being put to sleep with poetry caused

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[11] Gordon, Too Few the Mornings Be: Eleven Songs for Soprano and Piano (New York: Carl Fischer, LLC) 3.

[12] Leslie Holmes, "A Conversation with Ricky Ian Gordon, Part 1" *The Journal of Singing* 70, no. 3 (January/February 2014): 365.

[13] Ibid.

poetry to become sort of a lullaby for me. I learned, early, to go to it for solace, for clarity, for understanding."[14] Gordon grew up on Long Island and faced severe bullying from his peers. Eventually, his family had to move to escape the bullying.[15] Of the suburban atmosphere of his childhood, Gordon said, "They were insular. They were narrow. We were all born different so whatever kind of norm there was to fit into in the suburbs didn't fit any of us… me least of all."[16] However, some of his closest childhood friends remained his friends into adulthood and had a huge impact on his career. "My two best friends, Peter Randsman and Arthur Levy, went into music. Peter became an agent for opera singers, and Arthur is one of the biggest voice teachers around. He teaches Audra McDonald, and a lot of other famous people."[17]

He studied piano, composition, and acting at Carnegie Mellon University. "My least favorite thing," he stated, "is crook-of-the-piano art song singing. It's dead. I don't really work with singers who do that, these days. I feel like, if it's not theater, what's the point?"[18] Despite this apathy towards the traditional presentation of art song, Gordon has not avoided the genre. On the contrary, in addition to *Too Few the Mornings Be*, he has also encountered acclaim for his cycle *Green Sneakers for Baritone, String Quartet, Empty Chair, and Piano* (2008), which was written about the loss of his partner, Jeffrey Grossi, who died of complications from the AIDS virus in 1996.[19] His art songs have been performed by the likes of Dawn Upshaw, Renée Fleming, Audra McDonald, and many others. His operas have been staged by Cincinnati Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis, Houston Grand Opera, and others. His style is often compared to musical theater and cabaret styles. He has been compared to Barber, Jerome Kern, Kurt Weill, Gershwin,

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[14] Ibid., 367.
[15] Ibid., 366.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 365.
[18] Ibid., 367.
[19] Stephen Holden, "Remnant of Grief: A Cycle Inspired by a Death from AIDS, Ricky Ian Gordon's Work in American Songbook Series," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/08/arts/music/ricky-ian-gordons-work-in-american-songbook-series.html?_r=0 (accessed January 20, 2018).

and Sondheim.[20] Of his musical style, Stephen Holden of the *New York Times* wrote, "Mr. Gordon's settings… dance freely across the line between a sophisticated post-Sondheim Broadway style and strait-laced art song. He writes extremely singer-friendly music that conveys the happy-sad mood swings of an open-hearted child."[21]

In all honesty, I can think of very few singers who would find all of the songs in this cycle to be suitable for their voice. Despite the fact that the composer wrote the songs for Renée Fleming, not all of them seem to be appropriate for a full lyric soprano voice. Some of them are absolutely suited to a darker, richer voice, like Ms. Fleming has. However, some of them are light and trip up effortlessly in the upper register, and it is my opinion that a lighter voice would do them more justice.

Too Few the Mornings Be, published by Carl Fischer, contains the following songs:

1.) Too Few the Mornings Be
2.) If All the Griefs I am to Have
3.) The Bustle in a House
4.) This is my Letter to the World
5.) You Cannot Put a Fire Out
6.) Bee! I'm Expecting You!
7.) Poor Little Heart!
8.) I'm Nobody! Who Are You?
9.) How Happy is the Little Stone
10.) Estranged from Beauty
11.) Will There Really Be a Morning?

1. Too Few the Mornings Be
Range: C4-G5
Tessitura: medium-high
Voice type: light soprano
Instrumentation: piano and voice
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J 1186

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[20] Leslie Holmes, "A Conversation with Ricky Ian Gordon, Part 2" *Journal of Singing* 70, no. 4 (March/April 2014): 491.

[21] Steven Holden, "Music Review; Composer's Happy Leap Into the Beauty of Poetry," *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/30/arts/music-review-composer-s-happy-leap-into-the-beauty-of-poetry.html?src=pm (accessed January 20, 2018).

"Too Few the Mornings Be" is written with an irregular meter. It stays mostly in 5/8, but occasionally breaks into a measure of 2/4 or 4/4 and, for two brief measures, 7/8. Despite this metric irregularity, the setting is relatively simple, reflecting the simplicity of the poem, which describes happiness as a fleeting thing that cannot stay, because, "No lodging can be had." The poem is very simple for Dickinson, with no dashes, no ambiguity of meaning, and no odd spelling or capitalization. Gordon sets the poem in its entirety. It is light and happy, and well suited to a lighter soprano voice who feels comfortable in their upper register. An undergraduate student could easily master this song and incorporate it into their repertoire.

2. If All the Griefs I am to have
Range: C4-A6
Tessitura: high
Opening key signature: G major
Voice type: soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J1726

"If All the Griefs I Am to Have" is based on a similarly simple poem by Dickinson. The only odd aspect of the poem is the lack of rhyme at the end, despite the rest of the poem having rhymed throughout, which Gordon somewhat tempers by adding the word, "Oh," to the end of it. It is interesting that Gordon adds this "Oh" to the end of the song, because as the poem stands, that subversion of expectation by having the last line not rhyme is quite emblematic of Dickinson's style. Gordon's addition of the "Oh" does not make the line rhyme, but it softens the shock that the lack of rhyme would have given the listener. Gordon marks the tempo as "Joyous," and it has a light, skipping quality. Again, this is a good song for an undergraduate level singer.

3. The Bustle in a House
Range: A#4-A ♭ 6
Tessitura: low for soprano
Opening key signature: E Minor
Voice type: Full lyric soprano
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J1078

The third song in the cycle is called "The Bustle in a House." Gordon sets the poem in its entirety, and only repeats the last line, "Until eternity." However, either Gordon or his publisher has eliminated all of Dickinson's capitalizations and dashes. The audience will not notice the omission, and none of the dashes are in places that would change the setting, but the omission doesn't seem to serve a purpose for the song.

We should notice that although the lines don't end in full rhymes, they have partial rhymes of similar sound qualities. For example, Death and Earth both end in "th," which gives the lines a feeling of similarity, even though they do not exactly rhyme. Likewise, the words 'away' and 'Eternity' create a kind of visual rhyme by both ending with 'y.' Gordon's repetition of "Until Eternity" breaks Dickinson's syllabic pattern. Both stanzas here have syllable patterns of 6-6-8-6. To add this other "Until Eternity" either makes the last stanza 6-6-8-6-6 or 6-6-8-12, depending on how it would be laid out. But again, repetition is a fairly common compositional device, often used for emphasis, and it does not subvert Dickinson's meaning.

This third song of the cycle is much more dramatic than the first two. This is a song that was clearly written to make use of Fleming's depth of tone and darker colors, as well as her skill with dramatic interpretation. The poetry is about the practical business that takes place in a house the day after a loved one dies. Dickinson references "The Sweeping up the Heart" in a way that refers to the household chore of sweeping up the hearth before company comes over, to make room for a new fire. Grief must be set aside to make way for the business of death. Gordon deals with this by having an ever-present 32nd note rhythm under the voice. In other words, as we go about dealing with these practical details, emotions are roiling beneath the surface. An

undergraduate singer could absolutely sing this song, but it is better suited for a singer with a warmer, more dramatic voice than the first two songs.

4. This is My Letter to the World
Range: A4-A6
Tessitura: Very wide, both high and low
Opening key signature: A minor
Voice type: Soprano with good low notes
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J441

"This Is My Letter to the World" is the first example of the lack of inclusion of the dash affecting the setting of the song in this cycle. Whether the omission was intentional or not is a question only the composer can answer, but the omission of Dickinson's original punctuation has altered the way that the poetry was set to music.

The dashes around the word "Sweet," in particular are omitted in Gordon's setting, and this changes the way one would read the poem aloud, and in turn, it changes how it would be set to music. Instead, the line is changed to "For love of her, sweet countrymen,/Judge tenderly of me." This does not exactly change the meaning of the poem, but it removes the implied pause. Dickinson's dash seems to imply that the poet is portraying either a moment to perhaps think of the word she wants to use, or a bracing breath that needs to be taken to gather one's courage before going on. These possibilities are eliminated with the removal of her dash.

Nevertheless, it is a lovely setting, and one that would be useful for teaching a singer not to carry weight from the lower register to the upper register, as would be the temptation as the voice spans two octaves from an A3 in m. 12 to an A5 in m. 14. This is a song for someone who has already established a certain degree of ease and flexibility throughout their range. It is a short song, but the challenge lies in making the voice sound smooth and keeping the breath connected from the lowest notes to the highest.

5. You Cannot Put a Fire Out
Range: E♭4 - B5
Tessitura: medium high
Opening key signature: E♭ major
Voice type: soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J530

"You Cannot Put a Fire Out" once again omits dashes and capital letters, but in this case, it does not affect the setting of the song. Gordon uses a pattern of 32nd notes in the piano part to illustrate first the fire and then the flood that cannot be stopped by simply ignoring it. The singer has the option of using a much shorter version, skipping from m. 17 to an alternate ending that goes from m. 37 – 40. If the singer decides to do the longer version, however, the words are repeated and the melody is modulated up a step, but still very similar to the way it was done the first time. The major difference between the first and second iteration of the poem is in the piano part, which becomes more varied and expansive, with more harmonies and a greater distance in intervals between notes, while maintaining this driving 32nd note rhythm. The fire and the flood are depicted in this second verse as raging more and more out of control. The shorter version may be preferable when doing the entire cycle for reasons of time constraints, but the piece loses a great deal without the added harmonies and energy of the piano part. This shouldn't be hard for most undergraduate sopranos, provided they have a comfortable B5 within their range. The shorter version only goes to A5, so for sopranos who are still having trouble with their top, the shortened version is available.

6. Bee! I'm Expecting You!
Range: C♭4-G ♭ 5
Tessitura: medium high
Opening key: A Major
Voice type: soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J1035

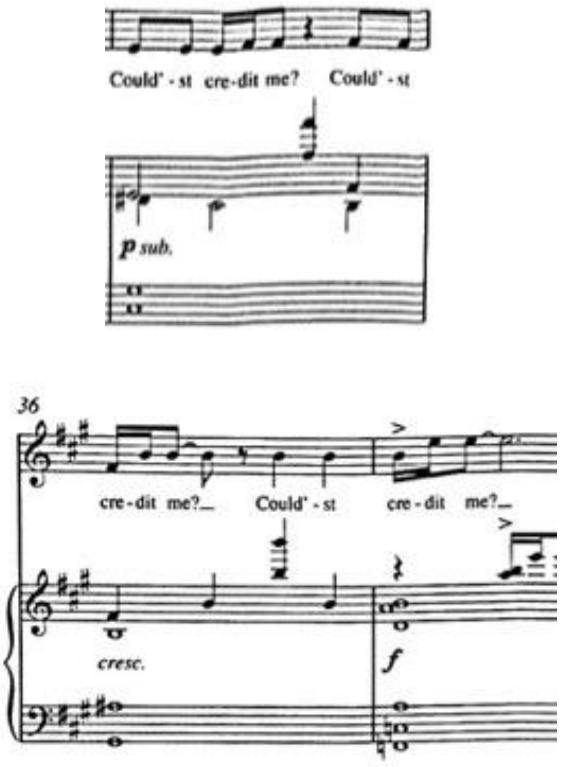
For the setting of "Bee! I'm expecting you!" we once again see Gordon's version lacking the punctuation and capitalization of the Dickinson poem, but there are no dashes in the middle of sentences to affect the pace of how the poem should be read. The most striking features of this setting are the piano trills that mimic a bee's buzz, and the quintuplet patterns that indicate the bee gliding on the breeze. Gordon has the voice become more disjointed and staccato when talking about the frogs, imitating the frogs' leaping. In m. 32, the poem asks the bee to come and "Be with me." Gordon has the dynamic level drop to a *subito piano*, as though the singer is shyly making this request. The melody is quite charming. The singer's task is to keep the voice riding the breath and navigating the register changes with the many leaps and wide range. For example, in m. 11, the singer starts on D4 and leaps up to G4, C5, and then F5 in one measure. This is a worthwhile challenge for an undergraduate soprano, and the sweetness and lightness of the poetry help alleviate the urge to carry the weight of the lower register up to the high register.

7. Poor Little Heart!
Range: C4-G5 (optional B ♭ 5)
Tessitura: medium high
Voice type: light soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J192

Gordon's setting of "Poor Little Heart!" is another example of the unfortunate loss of Dickinson's punctuation slightly changing the setting of the poetry. When looking at her original manuscript,[22] we notice that Dickinson underlined some of the words, which changes the emphasis, if not the meaning. Dickinson writes, "I would not break thee:/ Could'st credit me? Could'st credit me?" These underlined words were not italicized or underlined in all print

[22] Emily Dickinson, "Houghton Library - (81b) Poor little Heart! J192, Fr214," Emily Dickinson Archive, http://www.edickinson.org/editions/5/image_sets/85566 (accessed August 21, 2017).

versions of her poetry, so it is possible that Gordon's copy did not have this distinction. Regardless, it is not observed in Gordon's setting, so the words "I" and "me" are not brought out.



Example 6: Ricky Ian Gordon, "Poor Little Heart!", mm. 35–37.[23]

It would be good if singers know this, so they can try to put more emphasis on those words in their interpretation. I am also perplexed as to why Gordon chose to set the word "could'st" as a two-syllable word. Not only does this require the singer to use an odd, neutral vowel for the "'st" syllable, but it disturbs the syllabic pattern of the poem. Each stanza has a syllabic pattern of 4-5-8, but breaking up "Could'st" into two syllables makes the third stanza be 4-5-10 instead.

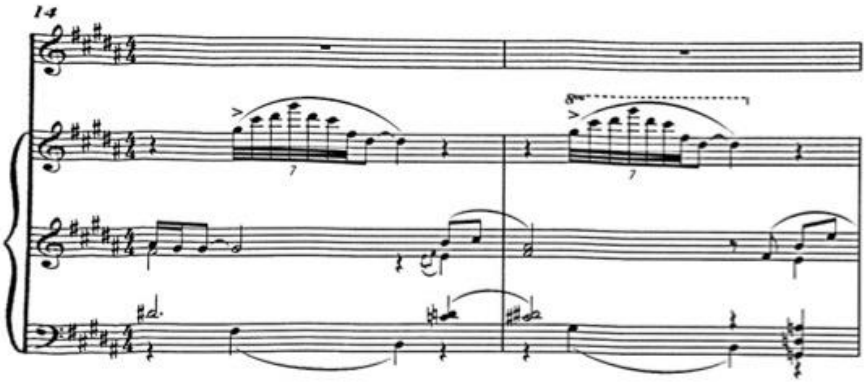
Despite these critiques, it is a beautiful setting. He marks that it should be "Tender" and "through vails [*sic*]." The piano begins by playing the first melody up an octave from where the voice will sing it. The voice mimics the melody, and then the piano echoes the last two notes up

[23] Gordon, "Poor Little Heart!", *Too Few the Mornings Be* (New York: Carl Fischer, LLC., 2009), 28.

an octave in the measure after the singer. This happens over and over throughout the piece after the singer asks a question of the "Poor Little Heart." This echo is important. While Dickinson's original poem suggested that she was speaking to another person's heart – as we see especially from her underlining of "I" and "Me," which suggest that another person has hurt this heart and she would be kinder to it – Gordon's setting suggests that the singer is speaking to her own heart. The echo implies that no one is there to answer the question. The loneliness inherent in the questions: "Did they forget thee?" and "Did they forsake thee?" take on deeper meaning with this interpretation. There is no one around to care for the speaker, and they are reduced to treating their own emotional wounds. It is a heartbreaking setting. This song in particular seems to be better suited to a lighter voice. A young coloratura could do well with the soft high notes, while a heavier voice would run the risk of making the song sound too dramatic.

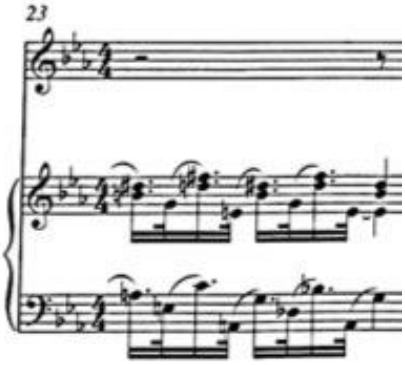
8. I'm Nobody! Who are You?
Range: C#4-G#5
Tessitura: medium high
Opening key signature: B Major
Voice type: light soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J288

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?" is another song in which the loss of Dickinson's idiosyncratic punctuation altered the way in which Gordon set the poetry, but it does not affect the meaning. He has marked this piece, "Honestly (simply)," and the straightforward rhythms of the voice and piano help establish a feeling of forthright honesty. After the first stanza, the piano repeats the voice part, adding a septuplet figure on the second beat of measures 14, 15, and 20.



Example 7: Ricky Ian Gordon: "I'm Nobody, Who are You?", mm. 14–15.[24]

This septuplet figure seems to call to mind the whistle of a bird. This contrasts nicely with the image of a frog in the second stanza. The frog tells its name "the livelong June - / to an admiring Bog!" Gordon illustrates the frog with a figure of bouncing dotted 32nd notes and 64th notes.



Example 8: Ricky Ian Gordon, "I'm Nobody! Who are You?", m. 23.[25]

Again, this is a song for a lighter voice. The high notes mixed with the light humor make it more appropriate for a coloratura or soubrette.

[24] Gordon, "I'm Nobody, Who are You?", *Too Few the Mornings Be* (New York: Carl Fischer, LLC., 2009), 33.

[25] Ibid., 34.

9. How Happy is the Little Stone
Range: E ♭ 4 - A6
Tessitura: medium high to high
Opening key signature: A Major
Voice type: Light, high soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J1510

"How Happy is the Little Stone" is a perfect song for a college-aged coloratura. The little 32nd-note figures that are followed by bouncing up into head voice make this a great opener for a recital or a set if excerpted from the cycle. It is in a waltz tempo with many areas of give and take. Gordon's piano part here is chordal, and the singer enters with a lilting melody that repeats throughout the piece. The singer should have a good grasp of light high notes, and the song should be an exercise in simplicity of expression. To overdo the delivery would ruin this piece. It is lighthearted and simple and should be performed as such.

10. Estranged from Beauty
Range: C4 – G5
Tessitura: medium high
Opening key signature: C Major
Voice type: lyric soprano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J1474

The tenth song in the cycle, "Estranged from Beauty," is marked "Slow; free, colla voce," and for most singers, the challenge will be to not rush. The song is really about the eternal, and the long, held out notes in both voice and piano are what brings "infinity" to mind. No dynamic changes are listed throughout the whole song, but a seasoned singer will know that the dynamic levels should be somewhat varied to avoid the sensation of being stagnant and stuck in this feeling of eternity. It should never be loud, per se, but the voice should always be either getting louder or softer, especially on notes that are held. This is one of the songs that you can see why Gordon wrote it for Fleming, who is known for her sparkling, quiet high notes and long lines.

11. Will There Really Be a Morning?
Range: A4-A6
Tessitura: medium
Opening key signature: B ♭ Major
Voice type: lyric soprano
Degree of difficulty: Beginner to Intermediate
Text Source: J101

Finally, we come to "Will There Really Be a Morning?" Out of the entire cycle, this is probably the one that most closely resembles a musical theater or cabaret piece. The melody is quite memorable. The combined lines of "Will there really be a 'Morning'?/ Is there such a thing as 'Day'?" have the effect of a great sigh. This is achieved by this leap up on the word "morning" and the descent on "a thing as day." This motion is repeated throughout the piece, and the overall effect is quite glorious. The poem is repeated in its entirety two times, with a lush piano interlude in between. The second time the poem is sung, it is marked, "more intense," and the piano part helps to emphasize this intensity in the places where the singer is not singing. The climax is only an A6, and it is on a neutral vowel on a forte dynamic level. The difficulty is not in range or agility for this song, but the singer who attempts this piece must have a bit more depth to their tone, and an ability to bring out rich colors.

Lori Laitman

Laitman (b. 1955) is known for being one of the most prolific living composers of vocal music. So deep is her dedication to the composition of art song that her website html address is www.artsongs.com. She has written over 250 songs and four operas.[26] "The American song composer, Lori Laitman, has been lauded by reviewers as one of the most extraordinary song composers working today, likening her to Ned Rorem," according to Sharon Mabry, who wrote

[26] Lori Laitman, "Biography," Lori Laitman: Composer, http://artsongs.com/biography/ (accessed August 21, 2017).

about one of her song cycles for the *Journal of Singing*.[27] She goes on to say, "She has an innate ability to capture the essence of textual meaning, a keen perception of vocal nuance, and a lavish intellectual and musical vocabulary that she uses with a facile ease."[28] After going away to college at the tender age of sixteen, Laitman earned a Master of Music from the Yale School of Music, *magna cum laude*.[29] In an interview conducted through email, Laitman revealed to this author what she expects from a performer who approaches one of her songs:

> I expect that a performer would learn the music well. At the very least, I expect that the notes will be sung correctly and my markings will be honored. I would hope that the singer would know how the vocal line interacts with the accompaniment, and vice-versa. Then, I would love for the performer to "lift it off the page" — to have the performers make the music come alive, as if they themselves had composed it on the spot. I hope that the performers perform with honesty and emotion, and that the resulting music has a natural flow that will reach the audience emotionally.[30]

Four Dickinson Songs is a set written for mezzo-soprano which Laitman wrote in 1996, but it requires a mezzo voice that has easier access to the higher notes in the voice and an ability to leap up to high notes with ease. This would not be a set for a young undergraduate singer. She wrote the songs to be done as a cycle and in the liner notes said, "The combination of these poems allows for dramatic musical contrasts within the cycle."[31] However, the songs could be excerpted.

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[27] Sharon Mabry, "The Masterful Lori Laitman," *The Journal of Singing* 64, no. 1 (September/October 2007): 95.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Lori Laitman, "Biography," Lori Laitman: Composer, http://artsongs.com/biography/ (accessed August 21, 2017).

[30] Lori Laitman, e-mail message to author, September 16, 2016.

[31] Lori Laitman, *Four Dickinson Songs* (Enchanted Knickers Music- BMI, 1996, distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints), 1.

***Four Dickinson Songs*, published by Enchanted Knickers Music (BMI), distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints**
1. Will There Really Be a Morning?
Range: B ♭ 3 – G#5 (Soprano key)
Tessitura: Medium High
Voice type: Available in Soprano or Mezzo-Soprano keys. I am using the Soprano Key.
Instrumentation: Voice and Piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J101

"Will there really be a Morning?" is the first song in the cycle. While Gordon's setting of this poem was more wistful, Laitman's setting seems to be more earnest. The piece is marked mezzo forte at the beginning, and there is only a single note in the bass line given as an introduction before the voice comes in. The first line goes from D4 to E5, setting the stage for the wider range that is required of the singer for this set. There are several large leaps up to notes at the top of the treble staff, which immediately indicates that this is a set that is more suited to those who have had some time to develop some ease in the higher part of their voice. At the same time, it is an excellent piece for developing the skill of leaping from low notes to high notes. Laitman employs some rather obvious word painting choices by setting words such as "mountains," "tall," and "bird" at the top of the staff. The accompaniment is not overly challenging, consisting mainly of chords and outlined chords. While it is very tonal, there are enough melodic surprises to make the piece interesting, and it is very beautiful.

2. I'm Nobody
Range: B ♭ 3 – A5
Tessitura: mostly high, but also spends time below the staff
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J288

The second song is "I'm Nobody," another song that is based on a poem that Ricky Ian Gordon also set. While Gordon's setting relied heavily on Dickinson's mention of the "frog," allowing a frog's pace of hopping to dictate the lazy tempo of his piece, Laitman's tempo is much

more playful. The piece is set in cut time, and she marks the tempo as a half note equaling a metronomic setting of 92. She employs large leaps again in this piece, just as she did in the first, and the range is B ♭ 3 to G5. The phrase "To an admiring bog," is quite melismatic with one melisma on the word "admiring" lasting three measures and covering nearly two octaves. She marks this section with the phrase, "have fun here."[32] It is a very fun piece, and a wonderful contrast to the first song.

3. She Died
Range: B ♭ 3 – A5
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J150

"She Died" is the third song in the set, and it sits in marked contrast to the two songs that come before it. Rather than rely on leaps or vocal acrobatics, this piece requires a great deal of lyricism and expressivity, along with an ability to bring out the wide range of dynamics in the piece. In addition, the voice line often harmonically clashes with the piano, which can be very challenging. For example, when the singer sings the line, "The Angels must have spied," the word "spied" is set on an F sharp 5. While the singer is singing that note, the piano plays an E in the bass line, and then a G in the right hand. It is a ¾ measure, so two out of the three beats of the measure feature the piano part clashing with the voice part. This song requires a large range, a good ear, and a great deal of dynamic control.

[32] Lori Laitman, *Four Dickinson Songs* (Enchanted Knickers Music- BMI, 1996, distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints), 10.

4. If I…
Range: C4 – A ♭ 5
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J919

Finally, we have "If I…" as the fourth song in the cycle. She wrote it for her father's 80th birthday. The song is marked simply, "lyric," with a tempo of ♩= c. 68. The melody is simple and very tuneful. She marks that, "The tempo should be somewhat flexible throughout."[33] The range of the piece is not as large as some of the other songs in the cycle. It ends on a simple hum. Out of the four songs, it is probably the least challenging, but also the most beautiful.

For Laitman, the emotional experience of the audience is of utmost importance. Her music is deeply personal and must be approached from the singer's own personal life experience. She said:

> Just as I filter the poem through my own experiences, the greatest musicians I have worked with filter my music through their experiences, and thus bring something of themselves to my music. Their interpretations sometimes reveal more to me about my music than I realized was there. When my poets have said similar things to me about my settings of their poetry, I consider this the greatest compliment.
>
> In my songs, voice type and timbre are not as important as giving an honest and emotional performance. For this reason, I feel that my songs generally work well for many different voice types. Only a few songs, because of the text, are really limited to a certain fach.[34]

Laitman is usually eager to allow her songs to be transposed for any voice type, and these songs are no exception. She didn't feel that any gender or voice type should be excluded from singing *The Perfected Life*.

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[33] Laitman, *Four Dickinson Songs* (Enchanted Knickers Music- BMI, 1996, distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints), 21.

[34] Lori Laitman, email message to the author, September 13, 2016.

This cycle consists of three settings of Dickinson poetry, which were all written to commemorate a different loved one's birthday. "All three of these songs were birthday presents," she said, "and I often turn to Emily Dickinson for such presents..." She went on to say, "I wanted to create something of beauty for the world, and create birthday gifts for my beloved friends and father. Every song of mine is simply my interpretation of the poem."[35]

***The Perfected Life*, published by Enchanted Knickers Music (BMI), distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints**
1. An Amethyst Remembrance
Range: C4 – E ♭ 5
Tessitura: medium
Opening key signature: none indicated, but song begins in B ♭ Minor
Voice type: Offered for Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, and Baritone. I will be using the mezzo-soprano key for this study.
Instrumentation: Voice and Piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J245

"An Amethyst Remembrance" is based on the Dickinson poem that Johnson listed as J245. The first line, which is how many people name Dickinson's poems, is "I held a Jewel in my fingers –." Of this setting, Laitman told me that she wrote it:

> …for my dear friend Joanie Glick's 50th birthday. At the time I hadn't thought of this, but now, a decade later, perhaps the meaning of the poem — that physical items will always decay or fade but the beauty and memory of the item can last forever — has taken on more meaning, and seems appropriate for such a milestone birthday.[36]

Laitman retains Dickinson's punctuation in her setting. There is only one slight difference in capitalization between her setting and Dickinson's, and that is on the last two lines. Dickinson's original poem says, "And now, an Amethyst remembrance/ Is all I own – ." In Laitman's version, "amethyst" is not capitalized, and "All" is. In addition, Dickinson's version

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.

says, “I woke – and chid my honest fingers,” but in Laitman’s version, “chid” has been changed to “chide.” It is possible the publisher made these errors, and in the beginning of the score, the poem has been printed correctly with none of these changes. Nevertheless, this attention to detail with regards to capitalization and punctuation, including Dickinson’s trademark dashes, is refreshing to see! I asked Laitman about how Dickinson’s unique use of punctuation affects her compositional choices in setting Dickinson’s poetry, and she said, “In Amethyst Remembrance and the other songs, all the notes attached to dashed words are elongated in rhythm, and I think this is how I approached them. To me, it wasn't even a conscious effort. I just did my best to set everything naturally.”[37]

The song is marked “♩=76, but EXTREMELY flexible,” and at the end of the song, the composer has written, “The markings are guidelines. The song is extremely flexible in tempo. Please be expressive above all.”[38] Throughout the song, she has marked the places where this flexibility is encouraged with directions such as, “*relax*,” “*a tempo*,” “*push*,” and “*take time*.” The range is not overly challenging, and while there are a lot of accidentals and a few surprises in the vocal line, the melody is lovely and easy to sing. Most of the words are in the middle of the voice, allowing the singer to enunciate properly. The piano part ends the piece by echoing the melody line of “an amethyst remembrance,” and trailing off instead of closing to an obvious cadence. It is marked “let the sounds ring,” rather than have the piano just cut off. “An Amethyst Remembrance” is in a changing meter of 3/4, 4/4, and 2/4, and goes fairly slowly, so even with the changing meter, it is not hard to count.

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[37] Lori Laitman, e-mail message to author, January 9, 2018.

[38] Lori Laitman, *The Perfected Life*, “An Amethyst Remembrance” (Enchanted Knickers Music [BMI], distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints, 2005) 3.

2. Dear March
Range: B4 – F5
Tessitura: Medium
Opening key signature:
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J1320

The second song, "Dear March," was, in Laitman's words, "written for another dear friend: James Sinclair on his 59th birthday. Here I was looking for a poem that would provide a nice, dramatic contrast to the lyricism of the first song."[39] This is indeed a contrast from the first song! Whereas "An Amethyst Remembrance" is slow and lyrical, "Dear March" has a frenetic energy, and is full of irregular, changing meters. It starts in 5/8, and changes to 7/8 after only two measures. Then, after another two measures, it has a measure of 9/8, and from then on, it only stays in a meter for a single measure before changing to another meter. This goes on from measure 5 to measure 19! In quick succession, Laitman takes us through 9/8, 4/8, 3/4, 7/8, and so forth. This quick motion from meter to meter creates a feeling of frenetic energy, which suits the poetry very well.

The rest of the song, beginning with m. 19 in the piano, is in 3/4. At this point in the poem, March has come in, and the narrator is entertaining her old friend. The mood calms down as the two "friends" are able to catch up. In m. 42, after the words, "Who Knocks? That April," Laitman introduces a knocking figure of two 32nd notes and an eighth note. After five measures of trying to gain admittance, the motive stops, and we are to assume that April gave up and left. It is a charming song, and despite the changing meter, it would not be too hard for an undergraduate to master.

[39] Lori Laitman, e-mail message to author, January 9, 2018.

3. The Perfected Life
Range: C4 – F5
Tessitura: middle
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J1142

The final song is the one for which the cycle is named. Laitman wrote it for her father's 90th birthday. She said,

> The message of *The Perfected Life* felt particularly appropriate as a present for my father's 90th birthday. The first line, "The Props assist the House" also was a bit of an inside joke for our family, as my mother's maiden name was Propp, and she certainly assisted my father during their nearly 75 years of married life.[40]

It is marked, "♩= 84, but very flexible throughout." The first thing that strikes the listener about the song is the way that Laitman illustrates the building of a house in the way the voice and the piano work together. We see this in mm. 8–14. The words are, "And then the Props withdraw/ And adequate, erect/ The House support itself." The piano line descends in mm. 9 – 10 as the voice line slowly ascends in mm. 8–12. It is as though this house is standing up straighter as it tests its balance without the props to hold it up, the way a person would test their balance after an illness or injury. By measure 13, the house can stand by itself. Then, as the house "ceases to recollect" the people who built it, the piece slows and the voice line descends. The business of living takes over the house's attention with this return to normalcy we see in the music.

When asked what age and what level of experience singers should have before attempting these songs, Laitman replied:

> I am not a voice teacher so this question is a bit hard for me to answer. I don't consider these particular songs to be extraordinarily difficult, but anything I write really requires good musicianship, so in that sense, all of my songs are difficult. If I had to guess, I'd say intermediate to advanced level, and perhaps very appropriate for college age singers and older.[41]

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[40] Lori Laitman, e-mail message to author, September 16, 2016.
[41] Ibid.

What seemed to matter to Laitman, much more than the level of talent or vocal maturity that a singer may possess, was a dedication to expression and musicianship. This makes this set perfect for undergraduates, as it can challenge their musical skills without being too vocally taxing. It would be very satisfying to work on colors that can be achieved with the voice to help express the words, and since the words are set so easily in the middle range, diction can be fully exploited to bring out the text.

***Days and Nights*, published by Enchanted Knickers Music (BMI), distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints, 1995.**
2. They Might Not Need Me
Range: C#4 – G5
Tessitura: medium high
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: voice and piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J1391

"They Might Not Need Me" is a quick, fun song. The beginning tempo is marked, "♩ = 184 with lots of flair." Laitman employs a tango rhythm in the piano part, which gives this song a playful feeling. This effect is created by the driving rhythm of the bass line, which consists of a rhythm of two dotted quarter notes followed by a quarter note. She sets the line, "They might not need me – yet they might –" in a rather playful way. She uses quarter notes exclusively for, "They might not need," and then the word "me" is held out for 9 beats. All of this is on a mezzo forte dynamic level. Then, "yet they might" is only set at mezzo piano, and it is only two eighth notes and a quarter note. Although Dickinson's dashes are not marked in the music, they are left in the poem at the beginning of the publication, and the lengthening of the word "me" seems to be the way in which Laitman observes Dickinson's punctuation in this case.

The tempo is relaxed in mm. 32 and 33 to "♩ = 120 dolce, legato,"[42] in a 6/4 meter. It goes back to common time when the voice enters in m. 35 and speeds up to ♩= 144, still slower than in the beginning of the song. This part of the song will be the most challenging part for most singers due to its chromatic setting right in the secondo passaggio. The phrase "A smile as small as mine," has chromatic movement on all the words, with the exception of the word, "A." From the word, "smile" on, we have the notes F#, F♮, E, F, and then back to F#. This would be very difficult for a beginner to sing. The next line features the highest note of the song, which is an A6 on the word "small." It would be very hard for a beginning singer to let a high note on an "ah" remain in a forward position.

When we get to m. 47, Laitman returns to the feel of a tango, but with a different bass rhythm this time. She at first uses the rhythm of a dotted quarter note (or a quarter note followed by an eighth note rest), an eighth note, and then two quarter notes in mm. 47, and 49–50. The piano part is marked, "Have fun!"[43] Then, when the voice comes in, the piano's bass line changes to a quarter note, a half note, and then another quarter note for mm. 51–55. M. 56 is the word "Need," set on a G5. The singer would have to modify the vowel significantly to avoid sounding shrill.

Finally, in m. 62, we see the return of the original bass line rhythmic pattern of a dotted quarter note, another dotted quarter note, and then a quarter note. The dance goes on, and the speaker repeats their intention to "let my heart be in sight." All in all, it is a lovely, funny tune. A singer could excerpt it from the set and pair it with other songs for a recital.

4. Over the Fence
Range: F4 – A ♭ 6
Tessitura: medium-high
Voice type: soprano

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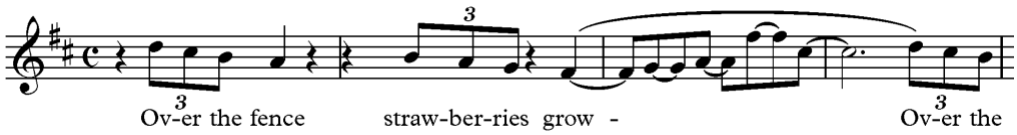
[42] Lori Laitman, *Days and Nights: Poems by Bourdillon, Browning, Dickinson, and C. Rossetti,* (Enchanted Knickers Music- BMI, 1995, distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints), 9.

[43] Ibid., 11.

Instrumentation: voice and piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J251

"Over the Fence" has a very child-like quality about it. The poem is simply about wanting to climb a fence to get to some strawberries, but being unable to do so, because a lady should not get dirty. The poet is a bit resentful that God would get "mad" at her for staining her apron, but that if He were a boy, He would be able to go and get the strawberries. It is lighthearted and tongue-in-cheek but speaks to the rising tide of feminist thought in Dickinson's time.

The song is written in common time for the most part, but the meter changes to 3/4 and 2/4 occasionally. It begins with a rather long piano introduction, in which the recurring triplet figure in the right hand supplies the playful atmosphere. It sounds like a child playing or skipping. When the singer enters with the words, "Over the fence – strawberries – grow – " Laitman does not set it with Dickinson's punctuation in the score, but the rests in her setting are in the same places, with the exception of the word "grow." She writes, "let the words merge here" and connects the word "grow" to the word "Over." It is an interesting way to set the words, and it helps to reinforce the childlike quality of the piece. At first, there are rests after "fence" and "strawberries," as though the singer is breathless. Then the word "grow" is stretched over two measures, with notes spanning a full octave.



Example 9: Lori Laitman, "Over the fence," from *Days and Nights*, mm. 12–15.[44]

[44] Lori Laitman, *Days and Nights: Poems by Bourdillon, Browning, Dickinson, and C. Rossetti* (Enchanted Knickers Music- BMI, 1995, distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints), 21.

In setting the text this way, Laitman uses the voice to illustrate the growth of the strawberries with the word "grow," while also calling to mind a child's excitement in describing a discovery to someone, which is accomplished in the way Laitman carries over the "Oh" of "Grow" to the "Oh" at the beginning of the word "Over." She writes, "let words merge here,"[45] over the phrase as a direction. It is as though the child changes their thought before they have finished a sentence and goes on to the next one without stopping, possibly for fear of being interrupted.

At m. 37, the piano part changes from the childlike triplet runs we saw at the beginning and in the piano interlude from m. 32 – 36 to a quarter note and eighth note triplet figure in the right hand and a staccato quarter note pattern in the left hand. Laitman marks this, "a la Rameau," and directs the singer to "Overact!" when they enter in m. 38.[46] This gives the impression that the speaker has remembered that they are expected to act in a dignified manner. This lasts through m. 44, when the singer trills on the word "scold," and the piano part slowly arpeggiates an A major chord that covers three octaves over the course of a full measure and a beat. As the singer sings "Oh, dear, Oh, dear, I guess" the tempo is marked "still freely." As though the speaker is fretting over the idea of God scolding her for staining her apron. Finally, in m. 48, when the speaker says, "if He were a boy" the tempo goes back to the original tempo. Dickinson asserts that God and boys are free to climb fences as they wish, while girls are not, and the playful triplet patterns come back in the piano part in m. 54. While the song is not too difficult from a vocal perspective, the song requires a talented pianist and a singer with a good sense of rhythm. But the main challenge for the singer is in the expression. The playful atmosphere is so important to Laitman's setting.

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid. 24.

6. Wild Nights
Range: D4-B6
Tessitura: high
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: piano and voice
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J249

Laitman again employs tango rhythms for this piece, which help illustrate the passionate nature of the text. The tessitura of this song is quite high, with large leaps. The first two notes, for example, are A6 to A-flat 5 on the words "Wild Nights!" and this is repeated immediately for Laitman's repetition of the text. Starting the song with this very high note emphasizes the excitement of the speaker. In m. 14, Laitman sets the word "luxury" to have a quarter note triplet on the first syllable, emphasizing the languid quality of the word and the emotion behind it. She elongates the word even further in mm. 30 and 31.

She employs an ABA^1 format for the song, and the B section begins at m. 41. It is marked, "♩=152 Slower, Flowing," and "sudden mood change."[47] The meter changes to 3/4, and the piano part has a slowly arpeggiated chord, giving this section a more romantic, dreamy feel to it. Dickinson's text describes a heart that is "in port." In other words, the heart – being compared to a ship in its port – has settled on who it loves, and it is not necessary to move. This relaxed tempo and accompaniment reflect the relaxed feeling of the speaker having found love.

The tango rhythms come back again in m. 65, signaling the return of the original piano motive. The mood shifts from romantic back to passionate. The voice reiterates the phrase "Wild nights!" at the end of the song and ends with the 's' sound being emphasized for two beats in the final measure. It is marked as "a sizzling sound."[48] All told, this is a very fun set to do, and there is no reason the songs cannot be taken from the original set and grouped with other songs.

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[47] Ibid., 35.
[48] Ibid., 39.

***Two Dickinson Songs*, published by Enchanted Knickers Music (BMI), distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints, 2004.**
1. Good Morning, Midnight
Range: E4-F#5
Tessitura: medium-high
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: piano and voice
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J425

For this set, Laitman writes, "'Good Morning Midnight' and 'Wider than the Sky'… were composed in 2002 as presents for my father's 86th birthday, my mother-in-law's 76th birthday, and for my friend, pianist Warren Jones. The songs can be sung in the order desired. Markings in the score are meant as guidelines – my primary concern is that the singer and pianist be expressive."[49] The first song, "Good Morning Midnight," is in 2/2 meter, with a half note being set at the metronomic marking of 76. It starts out light and quick. The speaker in Laitman's interpretation is rather put out at Day's rejection of her. In m. 15, she marks the phrase "Goodnight – Day!" with a direction of, "cute, tell 'Day' off!"[50] Then, in m. 20, the tempo is slowed to a half note = 66, and the tone becomes more contemplative. The poem speaks of looking back at morning wistfully for this slower section of the song. Here, we see the pain of rejection that we didn't see in Laitman's setting of the opening text. Then, after the singer is done, we see a return of the piano motive from m. 7, up an octave this time, with its lively tempo to end the song.

The difficulty in this song lies in the way Laitman sets some of the words against the piano. For example, when the singer enters for the first time, there is a D in the bass line, which is helpful, but there is also a C# in the piano's right hand, which clashes. Then, in the third measure, the second syllable of the word, "Midnight" is set on an F4 in the singer's line, while the piano

[49] Lori Laitman, *Two Dickinson Songs* (Enchanted Knickers Music- BMI, 2004, distributed by Classical Vocal Reprints), 1.
[50] Ibid., 3.

plays an A-flat ninth chord in the second inversion. In order to find that F4, the singer has to clash with an E-Flat that has been doubled in both hands of the piano. Similarly, the phrase, "Goodnight day," has the singer clashing with the piano on the first and third syllables. While this can be difficult in the beginning for a young singer, it develops an invaluable skill, and since the song is tonal in nature, it is a good introduction to being able to find one's pitch when it is not in the piano's chord underneath the voice.

2. Wider than the Sky
Range: C4-F5
Tessitura: medium-high
Opening key signature: D ♭ major
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J632

Laitman employs a varied strophic form for this song. It is in a 3/4 meter, and Laitman marks it as ♩ = 76, writing that the "tempo should push and pull a bit, not be too straight."[51] The first two stanzas begin with the same melody. Beginning at the words "Blue to Blue," Laitman varies the melody to suit the text's meaning. The third stanza has a similar rhythmic structure, but its melody is different from the other two verses, as if pointing out that comparing the brain to the sky and sea is very different than comparing it to God. It is a lovely, simple song that isn't too hard for the voice or for the piano.

All in all, this set is a lovely, short set for an undergraduate student. It is not overly rhythmically challenging, the range is not too wide, and yet there are many lessons to learn with regards to vowel modification, legato, breath management, and expression. It could easily be combined with other songs to be programmed in a recital.

[51] Ibid., 6.

Laitman's Neo-Romantic style works well with Dickinson's poetry, which was far ahead of her time. When Laitman composes a song, the musical line is first in her thoughts. "I'm always trying to honor the words by creating a musical line that will be good for the singer to sing, which in turn will let a singer easily project the words to the audience. I also aim to create music that will enhance the emotional clarity of the subtext of the words."[52] In her mind, if the musical line does not suit the singing voice, the poetry will be lost. This consideration for the voice and its capabilities is rare in modern composers and reveals her understanding of the vocal mechanism. For her, in order to give the poetry the consideration and care it needs so that it can be understood and fully experienced by the audience, the strengths and weaknesses of the vocal instrument must be taken into account. This makes her music a true delight to listen to and to sing.

Jake Heggie

Heggie did not come from a particularly musical family, but he began piano lessons at quite a young age. He began composing at the age of eleven and began studying composition with Ernst Bacon at sixteen. He moved to Paris to study piano but returned to California to study with Johana Harris. In 1982, after a year of study together, they were married. She was seventy and he was 21. Of his late wife, Heggie said,

> She was the most incredible musician I've ever known… We performed duo piano recitals and concerts all over the country. One of the reasons I love chamber music is that the performance depends on the unspoken communication between the musicians. Johana and I never looked at each other in performance. We just made beautiful music together.[53]

[52] Ibid.
[53] Tom Savage, "High Scorers: Jake Heggie," *Opera News*, January 2000, 11.

Though Heggie received a degree in composition from UCLA, he credits Harris as his greatest compositional teacher, and sites a hand injury as making him focus on composition instead of piano performance.

> …I learned more about composition from Johana than [from] any other teacher. It was her language. Not playing the piano due to my hand injury helped me focus my energy. It wasn't until I recovered and got away from academe that I found the voice and the ease that I liked, and that I could relate to.[54]

Their marriage was based on a deep friendship. Harris supported Heggie's decision to move from Los Angeles to San Francisco in 1993 so that he could openly live as a gay man. He made a new start for himself in San Francisco knowing that he would still be close by to care for Johana. She was diagnosed with cancer in 1989 and died in 1995.[55] "We used to bring a keyboard to the hospital and she tried to play. The disease was so debilitating that eventually she didn't have access to the outlet of music…"[56]

Heggie took a job in the press department of The San Francisco Opera, which gave him access to singers many budding composers wouldn't otherwise be able to know. In particular, he developed a friendship with Frederica von Stade, to whom he gave a song cycle, *Three Folk Songs*. She was impressed with his ability and eventually sang those songs at the Hollywood Bowl. In 1995, he won the G. Schirmer Art Song competition. Von Stade herself sang the song on his demo tape for the competition. This gave him the credibility he needed to start getting more and more singers to want to sing his songs. His first CD, *Faces of Love*, featured many of these singers, including Renée Fleming, Frederica von Stade, Sylvia McNair, Carol Vaness, and Brian Asawa, among others. Heggie's first opera, *Dead Man Walking*, premiered in 2000 at The San Francisco Opera. Since then, Heggie has penned nine other operas, including *Moby Dick*, *It's*

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 12.
[56] Ibid.

a Wonderful Life, and *Great Scott*. *Dead Man Walking* enjoys a status of being one of the few modern operas to have been staged all over the world, and has been performed over 300 times.[57] In addition to his success as an operatic composer, he has composed over 200 songs.[58] Heggie frequently sets poetry by Emily Dickinson. Among the many settings he has done of her poetry are the sets, *How Well I Knew the Light*, *Newer Every Day, The Faces of Love,* and selected songs from *The Starry Night.*

How Well I Knew the Light was performed in January of 2000, nine and a half months before the premiere of *Dead Man Walking*, at UC Berkeley. I asked Heggie what made him want to specifically set these poems, and he said, "It's a funny thing when selecting poetry. I know it's the right poem for me at that moment if I feel a shiver of music when reading it. A kind of recognition, empathy and emotional reaction that informs me there's music there – and that I can further explore the poem with music. And sometimes a poem that didn't speak to me in years past can suddenly jump out at me." He went on to say:

> I set these two for Nicolle Foland in 1999 for a recital we gave together at UC Berkeley in January 2000. I responded to the great love and sense of loss in Ample Make This Bed (which I first heard in the movie "Sophie's Choice") – and I love the terror, confusion and then sense of relief/redemption in The Sun Kept Setting. What a poem! … It wasn't until I set them, though, that I recognized that they are two perspectives on death: in the first it is someone observing a grave, in the second it is the person who has died.[59]

Like Laitman, Heggie retains the original capitalization and punctuation of Dickinson's poems. When asked how he approaches poetry when he's about to write a song, Heggie said that he will, "internalize it, memorize it, explore all the different possibilities it represents, respond to it, and then try to illuminate the emotion of the poem so that I'm not just setting words, but

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[57] Jake Heggie, "Biography," https://jakeheggie.com/biography/ (accessed August 25, 2017).

[58] *The Oxford Companion to Music, Oxford Music Online*, s.v."Heggie, Jake," Ed. Alison Latham, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e7759 (accessed August 25, 2017).

[59] Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, September 24, 2016.

writing music that expresses and takes it in another direction."[60] I asked about how he approaches Dickinson's poetry, specifically her use of the dash. Heggie stated:

> … I take every line break, dash, punctuation, capitalization, etc. into account. But I believe she put all of those in for emotional emphasis and rhythmic color in her poetry – much as I would put in dynamics, phrase markings or color suggestions via registration, orchestration or actual descriptions – I believe Dickinson was doing this in her poetry. They are enormously helpful – but in the end, the best way to honor her work, I feel, is to find what they mean to me personally and set the poem as I hear it and feel it.[61]

***How Well I Knew the Light: Two Songs for Soprano and Piano*, published by Bent Pen Music, Inc.**
1. Ample make this Bed
Range: F4 – A6
Tessitura: high
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: voice and piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J829

The first song, based on J829, is called "Ample make this Bed." The poem describes laying a loved one to rest in a coffin. Heggie's piano parts require a wide reach in the pianist's hands. This wide range in accompaniment gives his songs a rich, full quality, but can make them hard to play. The first two lines are, "Ample make this Bed – / Make this Bed with Awe – ." The unique thing about the way he sets these lines is the difference in emphasis of the two phrases. In the first phrase, the words "Ample" and "Bed" are emphasized. But in the second phrase, he emphasizes "this" and "Awe." The emphasis on the word "this" implies that to Heggie, "*this* Bed" is important. This is not just a bed for any person who has died and is awaiting "Judgment," *this* bed is for a loved one, and it deserves more care than what is normally given to a coffin. He uses a curious pattern in the right hand of the accompaniment.

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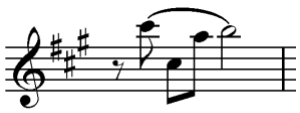
[60] Ibid.
[61] Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, January 9, 2018.



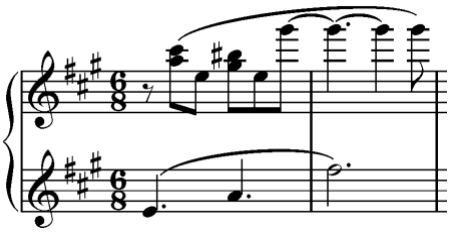
Example 10: Jake Heggie, "Ample make this Bed," from *How Well I Knew the Light*, m. 1.[62]

It goes through many transpositions, but of the 19 measures in the entire song, this pattern is used 11 times, and there are a few more times that snippets of it are used in other keys. This pattern gives a curious tone to the piece. Obviously, the narrator is in mourning, but there is a feeling of curiosity in this melodic motive. It is as though the singer is wondering what death feels like. At the same time, beginning and ending with that motive implies that numb feeling that mourners often have due to the shock of an unexpected death.

2. The Sun kept setting
Range: F#4 – A ♭ 6
Tessitura: high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J1700

"The Sun kept setting" is the second song of this small cycle, and Heggie actually included it in *Starry Night* for mezzo-soprano. That version is transposed to a lower key.

This song also has a curious motive in the piano.



Example 11: Jake Heggie, "The Sun kept setting," from *How Well I Knew the Light*, mm. 1–2.[63]

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[62] Jake Heggie, "Ample make this Bed," *How Well I Knew the Light* (San Francisco: Bent Pen Music, Inc., 2000), 1.

[63] Jake Heggie, "The Sun kept setting," *How Well I Knew the Light* (San Francisco: Bent Pen Music, Inc., 2000), 3.

This motive helps to enhance that sense of horror that Heggie perceived in the poem. The voice has markings such as "confused and a bit frightened," and "more terrified." Then, after "Myself/ Unto my Seeming – make?" the music becomes calm and more lyrical. M. 47 is marked, "Very calm (with resignation)," and the accompaniment becomes soft and chordal as the narrator remembers life before death, but then the horror motive returns in m. 57 as the speaker says, "Tis Dying – I am doing –." It is a haunting song and requires a singer who can dig into that feeling of fear.

The Faces of Love (1999) was not written for just one singer. "I Shall Not Live in Vain" was written for Renée Fleming; "As Well as Jesus?" for Kristin Clayton; "It Makes No Difference Abroad" for Carol Vaness; and "At Last, to Be Identified," for Nicolle Folland. The third song in the cycle, "If You Were Coming in the Fall" was not specified as having been written for a particular singer. The songs are very accessible for younger musicians and audience members who prefer simpler songs with more obvious tonality.

***The Faces of Love*, published by Associated Music Publishers, Inc, and distributed by Hal Leonard**
1. I Shall Not Live in Vain
Range: E4 – A6
Tessitura: medium high
Written for: Renée Fleming
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: voice and piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J919

"I Shall Not Live in Vain" is the first song in the set. This song is not too musically complicated for a young singer, provided they have the ability to float high notes with ease. It is set simply, with no meter changes or complex rhythms. He states the poem in its entirety two times. The first time is slow, with less piano accompaniment. The second time has more movement in the piano to build up the emotion of the piece. The accompaniment has harmonies that at times feel descended from jazz traditions.

2. As Well as Jesus?
Range: E4 – G5
Tessitura: medium high
Written for: Kristin Clayton
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J456

The second song, "As Well as Jesus?" is slow and measured. The rhythms are simple, and the range and dynamics would not be challenging for an undergraduate singer. The tendency most singers would need to work to avoid would be to push when the vocal line ascends and crescendos. It is marked, "Moderately slow – with deep intensity."

3. If You Were Coming in the Fall
Range: C#4 – A6
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J511

"If You Were Coming in the Fall" has a quicker tempo and Heggie employs elements of folk song traditions, which we hear in the dance-like triple meter. The piece is mostly in 6/8, but occasionally goes into 9/8. For the final stanza, however, Heggie abandons this triple meter dance and changes to a slow 2/4 meter, reflecting the speaker's sadness and uncertainty of when they will see their loved one next.

4. It Makes No Difference Abroad
Range: C4 – G ♭ 5
Tessitura: medium
Written for: Carol Vaness
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J620

"It Makes No Difference Abroad" is set a bit lower than the other songs in the set. It requires a singer with a good lower range who can still go up to a G-flat above the staff. Heggie has marked the tempo as, "Directly ♩= ca. 112." This song feels almost cabaret-like in its

simplicity and directness. The rhythms are not complicated, and the meter is 3/2 throughout (with the exception of a single measure of 2/2).

5. At Last, to Be Identified!
Range: F#4 – A ♭ 6
Tessitura: high
Written for: Nicolle Folland
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J174

The final song of the set is "At Last, to Be Identified!" It is also the most musically difficult of the set. The tempo is marked, "Ecstatically," and the piano's triplet rhythms set a frenetic pace for the song. This song would require a larger soprano voice with a confident higher range and an extremely good ear, as the intervals are quite challenging.

All in all, this is a lovely set, but it was written for multiple singers and does not suit a single type of soprano. It would be best for singers to either excerpt a song or two from the set, or to perform the set with multiple singers.

Heggie wrote *Newer Every Day* for Kiri Te Kanawa to sing at the Ravinia Festival in 2014. The title comes from a letter that Dickinson wrote to Louise Norcross, in which she said, "We turn not older with the years, but newer every day."[64] Since the cycle was written to celebrate Te Kanawa's 70th birthday, this title is quite appropriate. It consists of five songs: "Silence," "I'm Nobody! Who are you?", "Fame," "That I did always love," and "Goodnight."

[64] "Letters from Dickinson to Frances and Louise Norcross." Dickinson Electronic Archives. http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/norcross/l379.html (accessed March 16, 2019).

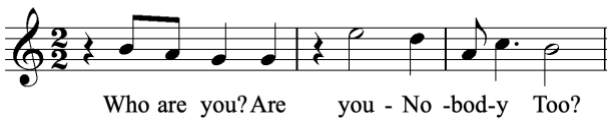
***Newer Every Day*, published by Bent Pen Music, Inc.**
1. Silence
Range: G4 – A ♭ 6
Tessitura: medium high
Written for: Kiri Te Kanawa
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J1251

The first song is based on a four-line poem that was sent to Susan Dickinson in a letter.[65] Heggie's setting is marked, "Gently flowing," and the accompaniment is made to sound like rippling water. This gives the piece a feeling of timelessness. While it is not a musically difficult piece for the singer, it is set primarily in the secondo passaggio, which will make it challenging for many younger singers who have not yet mastered how to float notes easily through that transitional space. For the pianist, the difficult part will be the reach between fingers that often exceeds an octave in each hand.

2. I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Range: G4 – G5
Tessitura: medium
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J288

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?" is a charming piece that begins with a tempo marked, "Spirited." Heggie does not remove Dickinson's dashes from his setting, however at first glance, it is difficult to see how they may have influenced his interpretation of the poetry. For example, his setting of the line, "Are you – Nobody – too?" includes no rests between the words "you" and "too."

[65] Christanne Miller, ed., *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 711.



Example 12: Jake Heggie, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" from *Newer Every Day*, mm. 8–10.[66]

However, the word "you" is elongated into a half note and placed on the highest note of the line. Then, the final syllable of "Nobody" is made longer than the other syllables of the word.

3. Fame
Range: G4 – A5
Tessitura: high
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J1763

"Fame" is a short song, and a funny one. Dickinson compares fame to a bee, and Heggie goes to great lengths to imitate a bee in the vocal and accompaniment parts. Much of the piano part consists of frenetic 32nd note motives that are interrupted only by the bee's "sting" in measure 25. In the voice, he frequently has the voice part emphasize the "z" sound at the end of words such as "has," and "is." He sets the word, "wing" on a G at the top of the staff, which makes the voice sound rather like a bee buzz due to the closed vowel in such a high tessitura. And while Dickinson sets the "Ah" as part of the fourth line, Heggie plays with the "Ah," as though the singer is illustrating the bee's flight with their vocal line, until it abruptly stops with an added, "ouch!" This illustrates the bee's sting to comedic effect.

The challenge of the song is really the tessitura and the fact that the text is set so high. The voice enters on an F# at the top of the staff while singing the word "Fame." This is a diphthong set at the top of the secondo passaggio, which would be difficult for most singers.

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[66] Jake Heggie, "I'm Nobody! Who are you?", *Newer Every Day* (San Francisco: Bent Pen Music, Inc., 2014), 6.

4. That I did always love
Range: E4 – G5
Tessitura: high
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J549

The fourth song of the set, "That I did always love," is slow and tender. Heggie has marked the tempo, "Peacefully ♩= ca. 54." The piano maintains a steady, almost dirge-like rhythm of a quarter note followed by a dotted half note throughout the piece. The poem and song are about the fact that all we can leave behind for our loved ones is the knowledge that we loved them. Musically, it is a simple, direct song, with little of the melodic and rhythmic difficulty that sometimes appear in Heggie's music. The challenge of the song is in the mastery the singer must have of their breath support system. The notes are held out for long stretches and require expert breath management.

5. Goodnight
Range: D4-G5
Tessitura: medium
Opening key signature: E-flat Major
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: piano and voice
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J1739

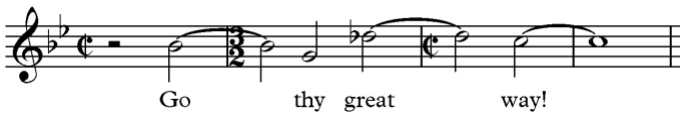
"Goodnight" is set in 6/8 in E-flat major. Heggie marks it, "freely, like a folk melody." Specifically, the rhythmic setting of "Good-bye the Going utter me – Goodnight I still reply," in mm. 6–9 sounds like a folk melody from Ireland or England.

This song opens with the notes of G4 and B-flat 5 played as a chord in the piano. There is very little activity in the accompaniment until m. 17. This helps to enhance the "folk melody" effect, as in their original form, folk melodies were often sung without accompaniment. Heggie sets the first stanza with an easy melody, and the last two lines of this first stanza become the song's refrain. The entire stanza is repeated at the end of the song.

The second stanza is set with a similar melody to the first stanza, with rhythmic changes to accommodate the text. Then the "Goodnight, Goodnight," refrain is stated again. The third stanza is given a unique melody. It is still in 6/8, and still has simple rhythms, but it is marked slower at first and does not have the folk-like rhythms of the rest of the song. Then finally, the first stanza returns to be stated again, this time with an a cappella section from m. 68 – 74. The final iteration of "Goodnight" can be spoken by the singer, if they choose.

***The Starry Night*, published by Bent Pen Music, Inc, 2001.**
3. Go thy great Way
Range: E4 – E ♭ 5
Tessitura: medium
Written for: Kristine Jepson
Voice type: mezzo soprano
Instrumentation: mezzo soprano and piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J1638

Dickinson's poem is short. It possesses none of Dickinson's trademark dashes, but many of her selective capitalizations. At the beginning of the song, Heggie marks in the piano part that although the song is in cut time, the piano should "avoid a heavy 2-count feel." This gives the piece a sense of timelessness, as though the words are floating in space. He furthers this sense of timelessness and weightlessness by setting the singer's part to be syncopated very slowly from bar to bar.



Example 13: Jake Heggie, "Go thy great way!" from *The Starry Night*, mm. 3–6.[67]

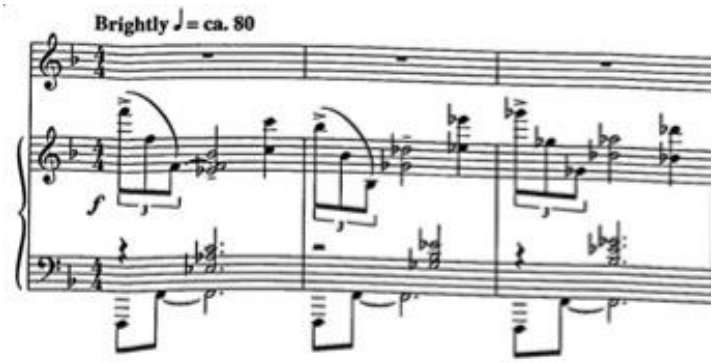
[67] Jake Heggie, "Go thy great way!", *How Well I Knew the Light* (San Francisco: Bent Pen Music, Inc., 2001), 21.

5. The Sun Kept Setting
Range: E4 – G ♭ 5
Tessitura: high
Voice type: mezzo-soprano

See description under "How Well I Knew the Light." This is the same song, it has been but transposed for mezzo soprano for this set.

7. Epilogue: I would not paint – a picture – "
Range: C4 – F#5
Tessitura: high
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J505

Finally, the seventh song is "Epilogue: I would not paint – a picture – ." It is based on a poem from Dickinson's seventeenth fascicle about wanting to be the person who admires art and music rather than the one who creates art. Heggie employs a recurring figure of a triplet in the right hand of the piano that covers three octaves each time. The first triplet is on all F's, the second on all B's, and so on. In the first verse, this seems to refer to a painter's passion as they throw paint onto their canvas.



Example 14: Jake Heggie, "Epilogue: I would not paint – a picture, from *The Starry Night*, mm. 1–3.[68]

[68] Jake Heggie, "Epilogue: I would not paint – a picture," *The Starry Night* (San Francisco: Bent Pen Music, Inc., 2001), 45.

In the second verse, the motive is merely rhythmic, mimicking the more ordered melody of the music of the cornet. The triplets are not used at the beginning of the third verse, which speaks of poetry. It is as though Heggie is referring to the intimacy and privacy one feels while reading poetry. Due to the reduced piano part, the words stand out a bit more, furthering the emphasis on the written word, which is of course the poet's medium. But then finally, as the song reaches the end, Heggie reuses his triplets in their various forms to celebrate the enjoyment of art.

When I asked Heggie what he expects from singers who approach his music he said:

> I want the performer to learn the poems by heart (not just from memory – but by heart) and see how they resonate with words alone. Explore every corner of those poems on their own terms. And THEN see what I've done with music to further express and enhance the emotional journey of the poem. I want the performer to learn the words and notes – of course – but also bring a perspective of their own to the poem: make it deeply personal and about something that matters to them.[69]

This emotional connection to the piece is something Heggie hopes all musicians who approach his work will bring to the table. When selecting musicians with whom he would like to work, he looks for, "A seriousness of purpose, an open heart, excellent technique, a willingness to work hard, explore and discover something BIG – to be vulnerable, expressive, connected and free … and always to be deeply human."[70] He did not necessarily feel that these songs were too difficult for younger singers. He said, "They are not easy songs, by any means. But, I've heard them done well by seasoned professionals and a 16-year old student. It's a matter of talent, artistry, passion, purpose and hard work … I've been surprised by young and old alike!" It is my opinion that these songs suit a warmer, more lyrical voice, and they would not be impossible for undergraduates, but might be better suited to graduate students who carry with them more maturity and more developed musical skills.

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[69] Jake Heggie, e-mail message to author, September 24, 2016.
[70] Ibid.

Libby Larsen

Any interview with Libby Larsen (b. 1950) is likely to include the word "energetic" at some point. She has composed over 500 works over the course of her career, and has amassed a large catalogue of song literature among those works. She received her PhD in composition from the University of Minnesota, where she studied with Dominic Argento, Paul Fetler, and Eric Stokes. Her first opera, *Frankenstein: the Modern Prometheus* uses a combination of live performance and video and is a commentary on the modern sense of time having been distorted by technology and film in particular. She has written extensively for the voice and tends to use first person, female texts. For example, *Try Me, Good King* is based on the last words of the wives of King Henry VIII, *Songs from Letters* is based on letters from Calamity Jane to her daughter, and *Me* is based on Brenda Ueland's autobiography.

Larsen credits her early Catholic elementary music experiences as largely formative for her compositional development. In *The Muse That Sings,* Larsen says:

> We'd started singing Gregorian chant in the first grade, in a language we didn't know, in a conductorless situation, in a flexible, wet space. Those conditions created a very intuitive, sensitive kind of musicianship… There was no director. Nobody was saying, 'You do this, you do that.'[71]

Larsen's early life and upbringing mirrors Dickinson's in several ways. First of all, they were both born in religious households, and the music of their religions was very influential to each of them. For Dickinson, it was the hymn. For Larsen, it was the Gregorian chant she sang at school and the eclectic music introduced to her by a nun, Sister Collette, who was her piano teacher. According to Larsen:

> She was extraordinary in the kinds of repertoire she gave me. I played very unusual repertoire – Mozart, Bartók, Stravinsky, Japanese music, and boogie

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[71] Ann McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 144.

> right away… But it made sense to me because we learned the church modes and then you have Bartók and you just flow right into that more than Bach actually. The flow of Bartók is much more akin to chant.[72]

Dickinson and Larsen also both had very traditional fathers. According to Denise Von Glahn – Larsen's biographer – Larsen's father adhered to the rather old fashioned philosophy that children should be seen and not heard.[73] While Larsen was encouraged to further her education (unlike Dickinson) and did so, she chose to stay close to home and her family throughout her life, much as Dickinson did. Also like Dickinson, Larsen was unable to resign herself to practicing the religion that was so important to her loved ones. When Vatican II tried to encourage people to have a more personal relationship with God, it also encouraged more modern music instead of Larsen's beloved Gregorian chant. According to Von Glahn, "At the same time that guitars replaced the organ and 'contemporary' urban folk-style songs drowned out chant, the church lost its mystery, and it lost the adolescent Libby."[74] And like Dickinson, Larsen found the spirituality she craved in a connection to nature.

> Scalded by Vatican II reforms and unwilling to endure the removal of all divine mystery, Larsen began a new Sunday-morning ritual around age twelve. She would ride her bike to the nearby park, climb a favorite gingko tree, and sit in one of its crooks to reflect and commune; there she found the transcendence she craved.[75]

For Larsen, when marrying words to music, the most important aspect is rhythm rather than pitch. "…I've never been particularly beholden to pitch as the most important compositional

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[72] Denise Von Glahn, *Libby Larsen: Composing an American Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 19.

[73] Ibid., 13.

[74] Ibid., 35.

[75] Ibid., 68.

parameter. I think pitch actually was more important in another culture. Our language is rhythmic. It's not a pitched language. It's a rhythmic language."[76]

***Chanting to Paradise*, published by Libby Larsen Publishing, 1997.**
1. Bind me – I still can sing
Range: E ♭ 4 – A ♭ 6
Tessitura: high
Voice type: High Voice
Written for: Harriet McCleary
Instrumentation: High voice and piano
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J1005

Larsen is quite explicit in her approach to composition. In the program notes for *Chanting to Paradise*, she spells out exactly what she was trying to do in the first song of the cycle. She states, "My approach to setting an Emily Dickinson's [sic] poem is to try to ferret out the game she set for herself in working on the poem, and then illuminate that game through the musical setting."[77] For the first song, "Bind me – I still can sing," based on Dickinson's poem J1005, Larsen focuses on the way Dickinson treated the vowel *i* throughout the poem. She states:

> In the first line, for instance, *i* is bound by the *b* and the *n* of *bind*, locking away the sound of *i* between two consonants. Yet the next use of the *i* is the pronoun *I,* standing still, independently proclaiming itself free of all consonants. The diphthong *st* launches the *i* in *still,* a soft *i,* perhaps suggesting a timid proclamation of the faith to continue away from that binding. And finally, the *i* in *sing,* a transformative vowel, sung as soft *i,* or *schwa* or even as a bolder *e* – no longer bound by the *b* of *bind.* Now, the *i* of *sing* transforms not only itself, but also the pronunciation of *n,* barely audible as *i* transcends it, free of its ability to stop the vowel's ability to be sung.[78]

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[76] Jennifer Kelly, *In Her Own Words: Conversations with Composers in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 303.

[77] Libby Larsen, *Chanting to Paradise: Four Songs for High Voice and Piano* (Minneapolis: Libby Larsen Publishing, 1997).

[78] Ibid.

The piano is also bound, much like the voice. It is sparse and tied to the pattern in the right hand of a sixteenth note major second chord on G and A, which "resolves" out to a dotted eighth note tied to a dotted half note. The notes in the second chord are F, G, A, and B: two major thirds that are crunched together. This is rather interesting, as it seems as though the A of the first chord has reached down to the F, and the G has reached up to the B, both notes reaching for consonance, but only creating more dissonance in their struggle. The lines of the piano seem to be literally struggling to free themselves from some kind of binding.

For the next line, "Banish – my mandolin/ Strikes true within – " we see her continue to play with the words which contain the letter *i.* The word, "Banish" is marked *subito piano*, and then a quick, 32nd note pattern sounds in the right hand of the piano. This is marked, "*ghost mandolin*" and sounds like a defiant echo, reminding the speaker of the underlying feeling of hope of the poem, which then prompts the speaker to say, "my mandolin strikes true within–." Larsen ignores the line break here in favor of the flow of the full idea. Meanwhile, the piano mimics a lively tune on the mandolin with a series of Major 6th patterns in the right hand. At m. 9, we see the "mandolin" rise in a pattern of 32nd notes that are still only marked *mezzo piano*. We are again given the impression that this captivity does not subdue the poet. Then, in m. 10, we have a *subito fortissimo* with a triplet pattern in both the right and left hand. The right hand descends from the heights that the mandolin had reached while the left hand ascends. They end up with the right hand on A-flat 5, and the left hand on G-flat 4, in a major second interval. We are again "bound" in this way as the voice enters on an ascending octave leap from A-flat 5 to A-flat 6 while singing the word, "Slay." To kill the speaker would seem to be the ultimate form of captivity, and yet Dickinson's poetry assures us that if someone should slay the speaker, "my Soul shall rise." To drive this point across, after this dramatic setting of the word "slay," Larsen again calls back the mandolin rhythmic motive of 32nd notes, and the voice enters again, rising on the word "rise" to G5. Finally, with the words, "Still thine," Larsen makes the line descend as

she repeats it until it ends with the same motion of D to C# that she had on the opening words, "Bind me." Larsen explains her reasoning for this, saying,

> It seems absolutely paramount to end the song this way, going against the freeing of the musical line, in order to place both the singer and the audience squarely in the center of Dickinson's spiritual conundrum which is the genius of the poem. That is, how the spirit, bound by life's challenges, is made stronger, more hopeful, and more infinitely true, through steadfast being, as the word *still* in *I still* and *still Thine.*[79]

The end of the piece is marked *niente* and doesn't have bold double bar lines, so this piece is meant to organically flow into the second song of the cycle: "In this short Life."

2. In this short Life
Range: F4 – A6
Tessitura: high
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J1287

Larsen plays with meter in this song. It is written in 6/8, but Larsen frequently employs duplets in the vocal line to create a feeling that time is rushing by the speaker, and they are observing its flow from the outside. Dickinson's brevity makes her words all the more poignant. We read a short poem of hers, and the words tend to spin in our mind. Her use of spacing also contributes to this sense of Dickinson giving the audience room to think. The words take on a meaning that belies the simplicity of the poem on its surface. Larsen changes Dickinson's text through the use of repetition. This repetition gives the listener time to process the meaning of the words in the same way a reader would pause to contemplate the poetry while reading it.

The left hand of the piano part outlines a G-flat major chord in the 6/4 inversion in the beginning and maintains a pattern of six eighth notes per measure, while the right hand has a rippling, wavelike pattern that subdivides rhythmic pattern of the left hand. As it subdivides it

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[79] Ibid.

into a pattern of 16th notes, it divides them into four groups of a four-note pattern (C, D-flat, F, and E-flat) so the piano is playing both a triple and a duple meter underneath the singer. The challenge for the singer is to be able to count in the midst of this almost static accompaniment, and the best way to do so may be to memorize the chordal changes that happen in the accompaniment.

3. By a departing light
Range: E4 – G#5
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J1714

"By a departing light" is the third song in the cycle. It is based on Dickinson's poem J1714. This poem is devoid of Dickinson's trademark dash, but it possesses her brevity and her way of so perfectly expressing an idea that many may immediately recognize as a truth. It is a double truth, in both the literal sense, and also in the sense of the clarity that comes with the imminent approach of death. The approach of darkness and death help us to appreciate the beauty all around us.

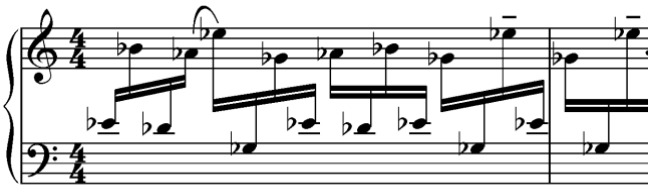
Larsen's setting of the piano seems to mimic the sunset, with its rays fighting to still be seen as the sun disappears over the horizon. She accomplishes this with large, slow interval leaps of one note at a time in the introduction. Instead of having the notes descend to mimic the path of the sun, she has the notes leap up and down, as though they are either individual rays of light, or shadows that are shifting and lengthening as the light source disappears. For example, the first notes in the introduction are G#6, E4, D5, B6. This is a simple inversion of an E-major seventh chord, but it is broken up in a way that would make it challenging to identify it as such. Each note is played as a half note at a tempo of ♩=50. She marks it as "legato, gently, morendo." The pedal is used throughout the piece. The voice comes in quietly at first, but when she states, "There's something in the flight," it is marked *poco crescendo* and the tempo is marked "push forward."

The word "flight" is set with ascending triplets and a figure of 32nd notes going to an eighth note that is tied to a dotted quarter note. It is the quickest figure we have had to this point in the song, and it illustrates the flight of the light beautifully. Finally, the piano is marked "*decrescendo a niente,"* and the two hands slowly separate to their extremes until the left hand reaches B1 and the right reaches B7.

4. Out of Sight?
Range: E4 – A6
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J703

The next song, "Out of Sight?" is quick and lively. The poem is a meditation on the simplicity of the world from a bird's point of view. The bird in Dickinson's poem flies regardless of danger, because it is better to die while flying than to always remain on the ground. She compares this to human beings, who "hide" from Heaven, even though they profess to love it. In other words, while the bird has no fear of death because it lives in the moment, people who claim to yearn for Heaven – and therefore death – avoid danger and do not take many chances.

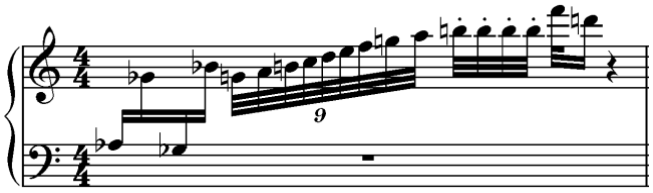
The piece is written in 4/4, but it hardly feels like anything resembling common time. The flight of the bird is represented in Larsen's piano line, which has a repeating pattern (Figure 5 is one instance of this pattern) that creates a shifting sense of meter.



Example 15: Libby Larsen, "Out of sight?" from *Chanting to Paradise*, mm. 1–2.[80]

[80] Libby Larson, "Out of Sight?", *Chanting to Paradise* (Minneapolis: Libby Larsen Publishing, 1997), 9.

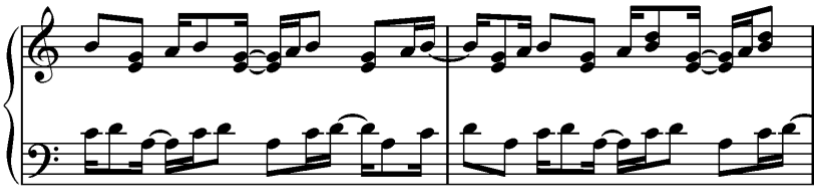
Because the motive is three sixteenth notes longer than a measure of 4/4, the sense of meter is thrown off. But this is only fitting, as the bird cares nothing for meter and only about the flow of the air currents. Larsen uses a lot of text painting in the piece, departing from her flight motive to illustrate certain words. After the words, "See the Bird – " Larsen uses a nonuplet figure, which illustrates the bird's flight, leading to a figure of four 32nd notes and a 32nd note to a dotted sixteenth note, which is the bird's song.



Example 16: Libby Larsen, "Out of sight?" from *Chanting to Paradise*, m. 6.

Then after each exclamation of, "reach it" Larsen uses an ascending 32nd note figure. The bird's song is repeated in the right hand of the piano before descending by a pattern of dotted eighth notes tied to 32nd notes. In mm. 14 and 15, the dynamic changes to pianissimo, and the left hand of the piano rumbles in a low, menacing way, as the singer sings, "Danger!" But then the right hand of the piano responds with the bird's song motive. This illustrates the bird's lack of fear.

Larsen returns to her original motive for the second stanza. The motive begins to transform in mm. 25–28, and by m. 29, it has changed to two different motives: one in the right hand and one in the left.



Example 17: Libby Larsen, "Out of sight?" from *Chanting to Paradise*, mm. 29–30.[81]

The larger motives exceed the length of the measure, which gives the piece the same sense of rhythmic displacement we saw with her first motive. However, what sticks out in this passage are the patterns of G4, A4, and B4 in the right hand, and A3, C4, D4 in the left hand. She has inserted mini motives within her larger motives. Both mini motives are five sixteenth notes in length, but they are displaced from the other line by a sixteenth note. This further adds to the feeling of instability of the meter.

After "Bashful Heaven – thy Lovers small – ," Larsen re-uses the bird song motive to draw the distinction between birds who simply fly, and people who hide from death and Heaven by not taking such risks. Larsen then returns to her original motive, which seems to run out without cadence. It is as though she is saying, "That's life, and it keeps going on that way."

This cycle would be too challenging for most undergraduate level singers. It is a wonderful cycle for a graduate level or professional singer who specializes in modern music and who has a strong, wide range. It is set well for the voice. Larsen studied voice extensively and understands how the voice needs to be treated. However, these pieces require a level of musicianship that most undergraduate singers have not had the time or the experience to acquire. The piano part is also fairly difficult, and it requires a collaborative pianist who can simultaneously have a flawless sense of rhythm, but also voice the other effects that Larsen

[81] Ibid., 13.

requires in the piano part. The piano is every bit as much of a storyteller in this piece as the singer.

André Previn

André Previn (1929 - 2019) was born in Berlin and began studying piano at a very young age. His family was of Russian Jewish descent, so they fled to the United States in 1939 to escape the rise of the Nazi regime. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1943. His career has been rich and varied, consisting of work as a conductor, classical composer, arranger and composer of movie music, classical pianist, and jazz pianist. He studied composition with Castelnuovo-Tedesco and conducting with Monteux. He won four Academy Awards for arrangements of movie music and several Grammy awards. He died on February 28, 2019.

Three Dickinson Songs **published by G. Schirmer, Inc. Distributed by Hall Leonard, 2000.**
1. As Imperceptibly as Grief
Range: E4 – A6
Tessitura: medium
Written for: Renée Fleming
Voice type: soprano
Instrumentation: voice and piano
Degree of difficulty: Advanced
Text Source: J1540

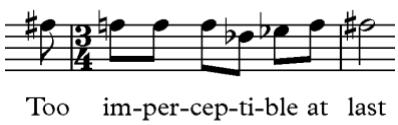
Previn's *Three Dickinson Songs* were written for Renée Flemming, just as Ricky Ian Gordon's songs were. The first song in the cycle is, "As Imperceptibly as Grief," which uses the first two and the last two stanzas of poem number 1540.

> As Imperceptibly as Grief
> The summer lapsed away –
> Too imperceptible at last
> To seem like Perfidy – [82]

[82] Miller, 437-438.

This poem is a beautiful example of Dickinson's use of slant rhyming. For example, she contrasts "away" with "Perfidy." The words do not rhyme, but both end with "y," so they seem to invite the comparison. We see the similar slant rhyming later on in the poem where she couples the words "distilled" and "herself," both having an "l" sound that leads to a consonant. Using this slant rhyming as a way to separate the poem into four stanzas of four lines each, Previn separates the poem into four verses.

The biggest challenge for the singer in this song is Previn's use of chromatic intervals. For example, playing off of the word "imperceptible," he uses half step intervals to illustrate the almost imperceptible change that Dickinson describes.



Example 18: André Previn, "As imperceptibly as grief," from *Three Dickinson Songs*, mm. 7–9.[83]

This song requires a singer who can float high notes and bring out the text appropriately, but also pay enough attention to detail so the chromatic nature of the setting doesn't get lost. A singer with a wide vibrato might have a hard time bringing out the small differences between the notes, and there would be a temptation to lose the vibrato entirely. This would be a better song for a graduate student or a professional than an undergraduate singer.

2. Will There Really Be a Morning
Range: D4 – A ♭ 6
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J101

[83] André Previn, "As imperceptively as grief," *Three Dickinson Songs* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1999), 1.

Previn's setting of "Will There Really Be a Morning" contrasts the first song very well. There is really nothing about Previn's setting of the poem that is at all like Ricky Ian Gordon's. It is marked, "Very Fast ♩= ca. 136." The main characteristics of this song are its speed and how Previn contrasts duple and triple meter. The right hand of the piano consists mostly of fast, eighth note triplets, and the left hand is mostly in duple meter. The meter shifts between 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4. Regardless, this song would not be nearly as vocally challenging for most sopranos as the first song. There are none of the challenging chromatic melodies that are in the first song, and the high notes are marked forte.

3. Good Morning Midnight
Range: D4 – A6
Tessitura: high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: J425

The final song of the set is "Good Morning Midnight." The poem compares "sunshine" to a lover or a state of being that has rejected her and "midnight" to the person to whom the speaker is returning for comfort. Below is the first stanza of Dickinson's original poetry on the right contrasted with Previn's use of the poetry in his setting on the left.

Good Morning – Midnight –	Good morning midnight,
I'm coming Home –	I'm coming home.
Day – got tired of Me –	Day got tired of me.
How could I – of Him? [84]	How could I of him? [85]

As we can see, Previn's setting completely ignores Dickinson's use of the dash. He also takes away most of her capitalization choices. That being said, it is a lovely piece and not overly

[84] Christanne Miller, ed., *Emily Dickinson's Poems: As She Preserved Them* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 203-204.

[85] André Previn, *Three Dickinson Songs: For Soprano and Piano* (Milwaukee: G. Schirmer, Inc. Distributed by Hal Leonard, 2000) preface.

challenging for most lyric sopranos. Out of the three songs, this is the one that most sounds like one of Previn's arias, with its shifting meter and changing tempi. He employs sextuplet and quintuplet figures in the piano part that are employed at some of the more obvious tempo changes. These rhythmic devices are similar to his sextuplet figures in his aria, "I Want Magic" from *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Juliana Hall

Originally a pianist, Hall (b. 1958) was encouraged to focus on composition during her graduate studies at the Yale School of Music when she was 26 years old. She sent an early song cycle, *In Reverence,* based on Emily Dickinson's poetry, to Dominick Argento. After completing her master's degree in 1987, she moved to Minneapolis to study with him for 18 months.[86] It was there that she completed her first commission, which was a song cycle called *Night Dances*, written for Dawn Upshaw.[87] Two of the songs in this six-song cycle are based on Dickinson's poetry.

In 1989 she received a Guggenheim Fellowship, which provided her with the time to write *Syllables of Velvet, Sentences of Plush*. For this set, she uses the text from some of Dickinson's letters to Eudocia C. Flynt, T. W. Higginson, Emily Fowler (Ford), Samuel Bowles, Eugenia Hall, and Susan Gilbert (Dickinson), her sister-in-law. She also set Dickinson's poetry on her 2016 set entitled *Upon This Summer's Day*. By her own count, she has composed over 300 art songs so far and has said, "Because music is an art that so directly and so powerfully goes to both the head and the heart, it is the perfect 'carrier' for words whose message I wish to share

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[86] Caitlyn Custer, 2018, "Beauty, Truth, and Insight Through Song: An Interview with Juliana Hall," *In Tune: ECS Publishing Group Blog and News.* http://www.canticledistributing.com/wp/interview-juliana-hall/, accessed September 4, 2018.

[87] Juliana Hall, personal website, https://www.julianahall.com/about-juliana-hall/, accessed September 4, 2018.

with an audience, and the small scale of art song performance—usually just a single singer with a single pianist—makes that sharing a very direct and personal communication." [88]

Hall uses what she calls "extended tonality" in her art songs. She says, "the music is often shifting between fleeting tonal areas, layering several different tonal areas one upon another as the text is depicted. As the music moves through and about various tonal areas, it seldom stays in 'a key' the way music of the past does; rather, it follows the guidance of the text to find its own harmonic world reflective of that text." [89]

1. To Eudocia C. Flynt
Range: C4 – G5
Tessitura: medium
Voice type: Soprano
Instrumentation: Voice and Piano
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: J334[90]

The opening song of the set creates an ethereal, relaxed atmosphere. Dickinson's words to her friend express a desire to write something beautiful for her friend to read. She doesn't want to just write a normal letter, she wants to write "Syllables of Velvet – Sentences of Plush." She imagines her friend to be a hummingbird who, as the hummingbird sips nectar from a flower, can sip from Dickinson herself in the act of reading her letter. It is a beautiful sentiment that seems uniquely suited to the art of setting poetry to music, as Hall is literally giving the audience something beautiful in a similar way that Dickinson gave the words to her friend. The very choice of text lends the song a feeling of ease and intimacy between the composer, the performers, and the audience.

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[88] Custer.
[89] Jenna Simeonov, 2017, "Talking with Composers: Juliana Hall," Schmopera website. https://www.schmopera.com/talking-with-composers-juliana-hall/, accessed September 4, 2018.
[90] Miller, 202.

Hall marks the tempo "Gently (♩ = 60)." Most of the song is marked *piano* for the singer with occasional crescendos and decrescendos. The loudest dynamic is *mf* at the mention of the "Humming Bird." It is tuneful with no overt dissonances. All of this helps create the feeling of an easy, relaxed ambiance. At the end of the song, the piano fades to a *pianissimo* dynamic, making the music trail off. Thus, Hall creates an intimacy between the audience and the performers to set the tone for the rest of the set. The meter shifts back and forth between 3/4 and 4/4 to suit the text and to reinforce the ethereal feeling of the piece.

The greatest obstacle for the singer is to respect that feeling of intimacy. This is not a piece to showcase the voice. The goal is to create an atmosphere for the listener. This is a delicate undertaking and requires a certain degree of maturity. However, the song is not overly challenging from a vocal perspective, so a younger singer with the right personality could perform this song very effectively.

2. To T. W. Higginson
Range: B4 – E5
Tessitura: Medium with a few isolated low notes
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate
Text Source: Letter 260.[91]

Higginson was a writer whose work Dickinson admired, and she valued his opinion. This aspect of their relationship is clear in Hall's setting. While in the previous song, the singer comes in on the strong first beat of the measure, in this song, the singer often either enters on the pickup to a measure or on a weak beat. This shows a feeling of hesitancy. Dickinson valued Higginson's opinion and was asking him for help. She was making herself vulnerable for something that was important to her: she wanted to know if her writing was good or if she was deluding herself. The only measure in which Hall makes a sentence start on a strong beat is, "Should you think it

[91] Emily Dickinson Archive, http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/higginson/l260.html (Accessed March 15, 2019).

breathed – and had you the leisure to tell me, I should feel quick gratitude." Having this as the only sentence that begins on the first beat of the measure indicates the speaker's eagerness for the recipient's opinion and the hope that it will be a favorable one.

There are more dissonances in the piano's chords in this setting, but none of them are jarring. Rather, they create a feeling of uncertainty in the piece and reflect the speaker's uncertainty. The use of pedal in the piano and quiet dynamics help in this effect. When the singer enters, the piano drops out completely for two measures. This creates a feeling that the singer is exposed and vulnerable. The meter is constantly shifting between 5/4, 6/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/4, and 7/4. This reflects the feeling of unease and the hesitancy that the speaker feels.

3. To Emily Fowler (Ford)
Range: B4 – G5
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: L78[92]

This letter expresses a desire to come and see her friend, but not doing so, because she is afraid that if she does she will never leave. It is a silly way that Dickinson used to tell her friend that she was thinking about her, but couldn't come for an extended visit. She describes leaving the letter, ringing the bell, and then running away home before anyone could answer the door.

Hall marks the tempo as "Bouncy (♩ = 108)," marks each note in the left hand of the piano with a staccato marking, and writes "non legato" over the piano and vocal parts at the beginning. Both hands of the piano part are written in treble clef for all but four measures of the song. This gives the piece a light, quick energy, mimicking Dickinson's prank of leaving a note and running away before someone can answer the door.

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[92] Ibid., http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/ford/l78.html (Accessed March 15, 2019).

Singing this song requires the ability to handle leaps of up to an octave, and also phrases that begin low and rise by stepwise motion to notes in the secondo passaggio. This can be challenging for a young singer, but a good learning opportunity for the undergraduate vocalist. It is a quick song with changing meter, but not so avant-garde as to be prohibitive for a college singer. Rather, it is a wonderful introduction to modern music, in that it feels tuneful and the metrical challenges are not that complicated.

4. To Samuel Bowles the younger
Range: D#4 – G5
Tessitura: medium high
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: L1014[93]

For Dickinson, the joy she found in her life was immense and worth far more than money. In these lines, she expresses sympathy for those who possess material wealth but do not find "Ecstacy" in the everyday world around them. Hall uses duple versus triple meter to create a feeling of otherworldliness throughout the piece. The first two meters of the piano part feature both hands having a triplet rhythm for the first beat and then a half note chord for the second and third beats. Then in the third measure, the right hand has triplets and the left had has a series of quarter notes. Both hands are playing in treble clef at this point, and the voice enters above with a rhythm that imitates the opening piano part's rhythm. The metric contrast disrupts the listener's sense of time, and evokes a dreamlike state. She also shifts back between meters of 3/4, 4/4, and 2/4. The opening lyrics are, "Had I not known – I was not asleep, I should have feared I dreamed, so blissful was their beauty." The lack of low bass notes to serve as a grounding feature and the sense of timelessness enforces this dreamlike feeling that is expressed in the text.

[93] Ibid., http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/sbowlesy/l1014.html (Accessed March 15, 2019).

This piece again requires a tremendous amount of restraint on the part of the performers. It is not overly challenging from a vocal perspective, so an undergraduate could absolutely have success in performing it, but the lesson to learn while performing this piece is one of creating a feeling of peace and beauty for the audience.

5. To Eugenia Hall
Range: C4 – E5
Tessitura: medium
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: L454[94]

This text is a thank you note for a bouquet of flowers. It is short and sweet: so short that it is probably not a song that could be separated from the set. The accompaniment is rather bare, but it is not meant to be sung with a great deal of rubato, as is evidenced by the tempo marking of, "Tenderly (♩ = 50)." The meter is varied to accommodate the text. It is a song that sounds very free, but actually has a rather strict tempo.

6. To Susan Gilbert (Dickinson)
Range: B4 – E5
Tessitura: medium
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: L56[95]

The text is simply a playful way for Dickinson to tell her future sister-in-law that she misses her. Susan is away in Baltimore, and Emily laments that Susan has to wait longer than she and Lavinia do before she can see the moon. Hall marks the tempo as, "Sweetly (♩= 69)." The

[94] Ibid., http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/hall/l454.html (Accessed March 15, 2019).

[95] Ibid., http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl5.htm (Accessed March 15, 2019).

accompaniment is full of octave leaps in both hands, which convey the sense of distance between Emily and the moon and also between Emily and Susan.

This is a wonderful piece for a young soprano, as there is nothing especially taxing in the setting but so many opportunities for expressive color. The text is set with Hall's trademark shifting meter, but it is not overly complex. And the text is so descriptive that there is ample opportunity for singers to showcase their acting abilities. The text is descriptive and not at all ambiguous.

7. To Susan Gilbert (Dickinson)
Range: G3 (can be replaced by C4) – F5
Tessitura: medium
Degree of difficulty: Intermediate to Advanced
Text Source: L105[96]

Hall writes a mini recitative section at the beginning of the song, as Emily pleads that Susan write to her with the words, "Write! Comrade, write!" Then she settles into a 6/8 meter for the rest of the song, with only one measure of 9/8 (m. 12). This is the most metrically stable song in the set, but also the most challenging to sing (although not overly challenging for an undergraduate voice student). Hall marks it, "Spirited (♩= 112)" for the introduction, and then "Warmly" with a dotted quarter note having the value of 48 for the remainder of the song.

The 6/8 meter evokes the sound of waves. Dickinson says, "Knowest thou the shore/ Where no breakers roar - / Where the storm is oer?" She wants to direct Susan over the sea to a land of "Eternity," away from all problems. The text is dreamy and fanciful, so Hall's setting evokes the excitement of that fantasy in the excited exclamations of the voice over the rolling sea in the piano. The lone G3 in the vocal line in m. 9 has an optional C4 written in for singers who cannot sing that low comfortably, in which case C4 would be the lowest note of the song.

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[96] Ibid., http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb73.htm (Accessed March 15, 2019).

There are leaps of up to an octave, and several instances where the singer must descend from an E5 to an F4 through a fast sextuplet figure that has some chromatic steps. These aspects are what makes the song a bit of a challenge, but it is not too great of an obstacle for an undergraduate, and the fact that these lines descend makes them easier. It is an uplifting song to end the cycle.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Every composer approaches their chosen text in different ways and has their own interpretation of a poem. My intention in writing this paper was two-fold. I wanted to highlight some of the newer art song composers, and I also wanted to explore how – or if – the evolution of Emily Dickinson scholarship had an effect on the ways in which composers set her poetry. Does the proliferation of more faithful publications of her poems and letters affect the way in which classical composers set her words?

The answer I came up with through this study is: sometimes. Jake Heggie, Libby Larsen, Juliana Hall, and Lori Laitman set Dickinson's poetry very faithfully, printing her poetry in the beginning of their editions with Dickinson's intended punctuation and capitalization, and setting her words with attention to minute details of punctuation in the poetry. Osvaldo Golijov, on the other hand, took two of Emily Dickinson's poems and put them together to create something completely new. His piece is less about her intentions with her poetry as it is about how her poetry affected him as he was dealing with his own personal loss. And Ricky Ian Gordon and Andre Prévin, in still another direction, tend to set her poetry in ways that are more concerned with the overall feeling and meaning of each line of her poetry rather than in the details that Laitman, Larsen, Hall, and Heggie bring out.

This is not to say that one method of setting poetry is better than another. A composer is called upon to convey emotion and thought through the union of poetry and music together when composing an art song. A composer is not necessarily required to study the biography of the poet or the publication history of the poet's work. A professional singer or an aspiring professional singer is likewise under no requirement to research these issues in minute detail.

Often understanding such histories is an exercise in listening. It is an attempt to understand another person more deeply, and by extension, to understand humanity more deeply as well. Emily Dickinson refused to publish the vast majority of her poems after seeing how

editors changed the way she chose to express herself. Her voice, with its pauses and various idiosyncrasies, was deeply important to her. It is an act of respect to her as an artist, and as a person, to adhere to her wishes with regards to the way her poems are printed.

The act of altering poetry for musical reasons has gone on for as long as the art song has existed as an art form, and it is not an act of disrespect. It is a method of breathing new life into poetry, and of expressing the composer's interpretation of the original work. This is necessary for art to endure and evolve. Therefore, neither method of text setting is necessarily better than the other.

We see this same balancing act of preserving the poet's intentions versus preserving her body of work for posterity in Dickinsonian scholarship itself. Emily instructed her sister to destroy her work after her death, but Lavinia refused. Emily's works were deemed too important to destroy, and therefore preservation took precedence over the poet's wishes. Her poetry was deemed ineligible for print media due to her odd punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, so her friends and family edited it so her meanings and words could be preserved and made available to all. Thus, ignoring a dash or two or taking away the capitalization of a letter are small things compared to the goal of sharing the poet's meaning in a new way with an audience.

And yet, to be careless with another person's words – to alter them without taking into account how the original artist would have felt about that act, or whether or not they would have approved – this is a delicate thing. It is one we constantly wrestle with as musicians. Indeed as Dickinson said, "Musicians wrestle everywhere."[1] It behooves composers, singers, and teachers of singing to at least acquaint themselves with the issue of how we approach Dickinson's poetry. A certain degree of respect should be the artist's goal in approaching another artist's work.

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[1] Miller, 109.

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