

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: LITTLE WOMEN, LONG SHADOWS:
AN ART SONG RENAISSANCE INSPIRED BY EMILY
DICKINSON AND AMY LOWELL TEXTS,
REIMAGINED THROUGH A TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY DIGITAL LENS

Shari Eve Feldman, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2023

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Art songs are an expression of our innate humanity. They capture the hearts and minds of audiences from all walks of life. It is with thoughtful employment of twenty-first century technology used to deliver timeless texts and music that artists today can reach a broader viewership than ever before. This project explores strategies of audience engagement and technological integration in performance, delivered through the literary legacies of nineteenth century American female poets: Emily Dickinson and Amy Lowell. Though social outliers in their own lifetimes, today these women are considered trailblazers of their craft. This dissertation consists of two live lecture recitals of monodramas by Judith Shatin and Steven Lebetkin, and a webinar series of video performances available on YouTube with works by Robert Baksa, Aaron Copland, John Duke, Juliana Hall, Jake Heggie, Jennifer Higdon, Edie Hill, Lori Laitman, Libby Larsen, Emily Lau, Andre Previn, and Richard Pearson Thomas.

Beyond the bounds of academia, classical art song is perceived as a niche interest. Many of the barriers preventing a more wide-spread commercial interest in classical art song performance were brought into high relief during the COVID-19 pandemic, when performance practices pivoted to largely remote “live-streaming” rather than in-person

audiences. This project confronts barriers of access to and engagement with classical art song by repackaging performances in a format idiomatic to digital consumption.

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LOWELL TEXTS, REIMAGINED THROUGH A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
DIGITAL LENS

by

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PREFACE

The universe loves to contradict even those most entrenched, vehement convictions. Here are three early declarations:

“I hate classical music.” My words, immortalized on VHS from the *d’var torah* at my Bat Mitzvah, age 13.

“I hate poetry.” My response to the unfortunate teacher desperately trying to boost enrollment in AP English Lit. I flipped my entire senior year high school schedule to dodge that class, age 18.

“Anything worth saying, can be said in two words or fewer.” Underpinnings of the *Terse Verse*, a philosophy born from frustration when forced to craft long papers seemingly for the sake of writing long papers, age 21.

Naturally, I would one day write a *doctoral dissertation* about *poetry* set to *classical music*. At least I can at last, claim copyright to the *Terse Verse*.

DEDICATION

“Luck is not chance, it's toil; fortune's expensive smile is earned” – Emily Dickinson

To מיין משפחה, we earned this.

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I am so grateful to those who injected light, hope, levity, and much-needed inspiration, direction, and encouragement through the tortuous path of this project. To the multitude of collaborative artists: Leili Asanbekova, Rhys Burgess, Syneva Colle, Alfonso Hernandez, Ying-Shan Su, and Abby Wuehler. Thank you for bringing joy to each moment of creative expression. And while I have not room to name every person who facilitated, I wish to acknowledge these powerful role models:

To **Martha Randall**, thank you for cheering me on, retirement be damned. Your no-nonsense approach always reminds me to stay focused, keep my ideas tangible, and just mind the monkeys in *my* circus.

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To **Carmen Balthrop**, thank you for planting the seed for what became this webinar series, even if you aren't here to see it.

To **Elizabeth Massey**, thank you for helping me articulate all I needed to say.

And to sassy women everywhere, I love telling your stories. This project is a beginning.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Project Origins

This dissertation project, repeatedly shaped and reshaped by the twenty-first century landscape, takes the final form of three performance events plus this written document. My repertoire has been organized into two live lecture recitals—the first presented in February 2021 and the second in October 2022—and the third performance, packaged as a “webinar series,” comprising 60 minutes of music divided into four segments, released in weekly increments in March 2023 on my YouTube channel: @sharieveable. These segments, which mirror the general structure of traditional voice recital sets, were recorded in March and May 2022, and were edited through February 2023. Each video segment is prefaced by a brief “mini lecture” in place of written program notes that provides context about the material to those watching online. I also include links to the poetry texts on each YouTube video webpage. This unique format grew out of necessity and in reaction to Prince George’s County’s COVID-19 distancing and masking procedures, which changed frequently from 2020 to 2022, when my recitals were planned and recorded.

These challenges forced me to look creatively at current performance practice, venues, and forms of audience engagement which in turn provoked questions about this project’s purpose, goals, and methodology. With such a radical shift in presentation, I decided to treat this document with equal heresy: rather than provide program notes about each art song’s musical content and composer anecdotes, I instead use Chapter 3: A Deconstructed Recital to unpack cinematographic and artistic choices made for the video

series portion of this project. A summary of the musical ideas presented in each video segment is available in Appendix E: Webinar Series Program Notes.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected not just the form but also content of this project, for the 2020–2021 academic year was profoundly impacted by a forced separation from colleagues, teachers, mentors, communal workspaces, and the thousands of on-campus resources afforded to Big Ten research university students. Consequently, my dissertation research process began with a survey of the music literature in my personal collection, one that strongly reflects my passion for telling women’s authentic stories in their own words. Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), a giant among poets and a popular text author choice for composers of art song, quickly surfaced as a possible subject for my research because the many art songs settings of Dickinson’s texts gave me hope that not only did a new angle of scholarship exist but that I could find it, even if isolated in my socially distanced bubble.

A chance email encounter with composer and University of Virginia Professor Emerita Dr. Judith Shatin and her monodrama for soprano and piano, titled *Patterns*, introduced me to the poetry of Amy Lowell (1874–1925). *Patterns* is a setting of Lowell’s poem by the same name, originally published in 1916. Lowell’s personality and literary aesthetic presented an intriguing combination of parallels and contrasts to Dickinson’s, which piqued my interest in telling their respective stories. A second serendipitous introduction via social media connected me with Steven Lebetkin’s musical composition, *Glorious Nothings*, a monodrama for soprano and piano, with libretto adapted from Emily Dickinson’s envelope poems. As a monodrama, *Glorious Nothings* provided a direct parallel to Shatin’s *Patterns*. With two nineteenth century,

Massachusetts-born women poets serving as parameters for the scope of my project, I went in search of more art song settings of Lowell and Dickinson texts that would complement these two monodramas. One main goal of this dissertation is to honor the works and stories told by Emily Dickinson and Amy Lowell.

Though this was my sole goal initially, my project morphed under the influence of not just COVID-19 but the *other* pandemic disrupting our modern society: systemic racism. The 2020 Black Lives Matter Movement brought into high relief the deficits faced by different groups within the musical community. Consequently, I expanded my project's goals to address barriers of audience access to classical music performance and visibility of marginalized communities therein; I used this project as an opportunity to explore alternative means of music delivery. For this reason, another goal of this project is to repackage song performance in a way that engages effectively with twenty-first century audiences. The pursuit of this goal led me to a project format idiomatic to the omnipresent contemporary performance venue: the internet.

I drew inspiration for this project from the many singers, scholars, students, teachers, and mentors who promote women artists in today's still largely male-dominated classical music landscape. Passion projects that motivate me to celebrate the voices of these women poets include Libby Larsen's *The Birth Project* (2015), Patrice Michaels's song cycle *The Long View* (2017), Noël Archambeault's *The Chicana Art Song Project* (2019), Jennifer Piazza-Pick's dissertation "See It to Be It: Art Songs by American Women Composers" (2020), Laura Nevitt's ensemble, *Lilith* (2022), a treble-voice chamber group dedicated to pushing boundaries of societal expectations of traditional gender roles in music, and Jocelyn Hagen's *Here I Am* (2023), a multimedia symphony

scored for choir, soprano soloist, chamber orchestra, and illuminated portraits.¹ It is a privilege to contribute to a body of creative scholarship alongside these powerful women role models that have long served as my source of inspiration.

Increases in thoughtful, mission-driven programming by organizations such as the Boulanger Initiative, Source Song Festival, Darkwater Womxn in Music Festival, Whistling Hens, and Music by Women Festival have contributed to an uptick in female representation among prominent twenty-first century compositions and recording projects.² Similarly, the recent establishment of music publishers with equity missions, such as the Hildegard Publishing Company are spearheading feminist agendas in true grassroots fashion. These modestly scaled ventures benefit from social media forums and digital community gathering spaces that characterize much of the twenty-first century professional landscape.

This dissertation expands the conversation about and representation of women in music to include not just composers but also poets. As Jane Austen's character Anne Elliot of *Persuasion* said, "Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story [...] the pen has been in their hands."³ Let this project too, celebrate women's invaluable intellectual and creative contributions to music literature in the form of art song text setting.

The Little Women Inspiring Large Works

Carol Kimball, author of popular vocal literature reference books *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (2005) and *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* (2013),

¹ For a complete listing of these recent projects and publications, please see Bibliography.

² For additional information about these projects, see Annotated Bibliography.

³ Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. Linda Bree (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1998), 243.

defines the genre of art song as “a hybrid” form “fashioned of two sister arts.”⁴ Poetry and music are indeed sister art forms whose relationship is evident even in their parallel terminology including descriptions like “meter,” “rhythm,” “accent,” and “phrasing.” The real magic of this hybrid is that when performed, we hear not the separate components, but one unified performance, representing the symbiosis of two art forms: poetry and music. Because art song is a transformational medium that frequently grows *from* poetry, in the scholarship of art song, it is logical to begin a process of inquiry with poetry.

A brief search in the LiederNet Archive, the world’s largest reference archive of texts and translations of vocal music literature, boasting nearly 200,000 texts set in vocal works, shows that Emily Dickinson is among the most frequently set poets in art song literature, ranking among the top 20 of the 17,337 text authors in the database. A single text author in the LiederNet Archive has an average of six texts set and an average of nine musical settings of their work.⁵ Table 1 (next page) shows Dickinson’s record is substantially higher than the average LiederNet Archive text author.⁶ Amy Lowell’s data are also included in this table for comparison to Dickinson’s. There are sixteen times as many text settings of Dickinson’s work as Lowell’s, indicating that there is a significant difference in the attraction to and use of each poet’s work according to this database. While Lowell and Dickinson might differ greatly in levels of popularity, both women far exceed the average number of poems used in song for any single composer in the database. This evidence points to the fact that these poets are commonly used for the art

⁴ Carol Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 15.

⁵ These values vary slightly because popular texts may have many more settings by different composers.

⁶ Table excludes entries that lacked single identifiable authorship: “Anonymous/Unidentified,” “Volkslieder (Folksongs),” and “Bible or other Sacred Texts” ranked first through third in LiederNet Archive, respectively.

song genre and therefore are fitting subjects for a project of this scope.

Name of Poet/Text Author	Texts Used	Text Settings
Pietro Domenico Bonaventura Trapassi (1698–1782)	612	697
Heinrich Heine (1797–1856)	654	7066
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)	652	3031
Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926)	559	713
Guido Gezelle (1830–1899)	496	1548
August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798–1874)	455	1162
Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)	445	1033
Emanuel von Geibel (1815–1884)	445	2138
Hermann Hesse (1877–1962)	444	2258
Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941)	435	275
Christian Morgenstern (1871–1914)	392	867
Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585)	342	639
Joseph Karl von Eichendorff (1788–1857)	340	1642
Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)	434	866
Amy Lowell (1874–1925)	41	52
LiederNet Average	6	9

Table 1. LiederNet Archive text author data

While it is important to emphasize that the LiederNet Archive’s poetry database is not comprehensive, it is a well-known, widely respected, and frequently referenced resource among singers that provides a snapshot of the contrast in frequency of either Dickinson or Lowell text setting by song composers. Another example of Dickinson’s prolificacy in art song comes from Carlton Lowenberg, in his 1992 publication *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere*, where he cites that Dickinson’s writing (poetry, prose, and correspondence) has been set approximately 1,615 times. This statistic does not account for art songs published in the last 30 years so the number of songs involving Dickinson text setting—or instrumental works inspired by Dickinson poetry—is far greater.⁷

⁷ Carlton Lowenberg, *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere: Emily Dickinson & Music* (Berkeley, CA: Fallen Leaf Press, 1992), xiii.

Both renowned figures of English-language poetry, Amy Lowell and Emily Dickinson make an intriguing pair for their contrasting writing styles, personal histories, and associated lore. Despite living sight unseen in her hometown of Amherst, Massachusetts, Dickinson is a widely recognized name in the world of American poetry, while Amy Lowell is considerably less prominent outside learned literary circles. Though they share attributes of geography and social class, their personalities present immense contrasts. Lowell is described by contemporary literary critic, Louis Untermeyer, as the “pugnacious dictator” who conquered the European *Imagists* while Dickinson withdrew so drastically from public life that in her later years and posthumously, she was treated largely as a mythical figure.⁸ Dickinson’s supposed seclusion is now recognized in twenty-first century scholarship as an outdated and incorrect conclusion derived from a paternally-dominant public sphere. Evidence of her engagement through written correspondence with publishers and participation in local community affairs negates her “mythical” status as being a misogynistic misinterpretation of her literary talents and contributions.

A century after their passing, we can do little more than speculate about these women’s hopes and dreams while admiring their understated yet steely determination in the face of derision, doubts, and demonization. We cannot know if Dickinson yearned to be publicly acknowledged in print, but we *can* conclude that her notions of syntax and formatting exceeded existing printing technology and by adhering to industry standards, her poetry loses essential meaning and character.⁹ Her creativity stretched beyond the

⁸ Louis Untermeyer. “A Memoir,” *The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell*, Cambridge Edition, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955), xxiii.

⁹ Long-time correspondent and early editor of Dickinson’s work, Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823–1911) found her poetry enigmatic, describing it as “spasmodic,” “uncontrolled,” and “wayward and

capabilities of literary print media. And while we cannot know definitively why Lowell (so impactful in life, and so overlooked in death) faded to the literary fringes, we can confidently point to her undisputable strength of character in life when facing down “catty asides” and mocking commentaries from colleagues about her physical person.¹⁰ She withstood the label of “Hippopoetess” and her body provided an “easy target for a bundle of societally condoned hatreds: sexism, homophobia, misogyny, and a rapidly escalating intolerance of obesity.”¹¹ She was the first woman in the Lowell family to speak publicly at an institution of learning and she largely independently, championed literary modernism.¹² Her legacy also far outstrips the bounds of her social position in the early twentieth century.

Contemporary scholarship acknowledges the importance of positionality in analysis. Poetry by women is layered with the unconscious questioning of purpose and place in poetic traditions.¹³ By focusing my project on these two New England-born women poets, I hope to celebrate their writing and better understand how the passage of time and transference from poetry on the page to music on the stage impacts the listener’s relationship with their words and legacies.

unconventional in the last degree; defiant of form, measure, rhyme, and even grammar.” This quoted is taken from *The Recognition of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Caesar R. Blake and Carlton F. Wells (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 10, and referenced in Jerome McGann’s “Emily Dickinson’s Visible Language,” in *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Judith Farr (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996). 251–252.

¹⁰ Richard Benvenuto, *Amy Lowell* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 140. Benvenuto concludes that “no one thinks of 1914–25 as the age of Lowell. She has almost—not entirely of course—disappeared from discussions of the era she largely dominated and helped to shape.”

¹¹ Melissa Bradshaw, “Remembering Amy Lowell: Embodiment, Obesity, and the Construction of a Persona,” in *Amy Lowell: American Modern*, ed. Adrienne Munich and Melissa Bradshaw (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 171. Witter Bynner, fellow poet, gave Lowell the unflattering nickname of “Hippopoetess,” and the name quickly spread through the American Poetry Society’s New York and Chicago chapter members.

¹² Benvenuto. *Amy Lowell*. 7.

¹³ Jo Gill. *Women’s Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 50.

Repertoire Selection Methodology

The repertoire included in this dissertation is organized into two groups: monodramas and art songs, with a mixture of musical and literary analyses incorporated in each. Because the two monodramas, *Patterns* and *Glorious Nothings*, are substantial independent works, I chose to keep them as isolated performance events rather than try to craft extended programming that complemented either work in recital. To balance these shorter musical programs—each monodrama is approximately 30 minutes long—I included lecture components which provided context and guided the audience’s listening process. For *Patterns*, I analyzed the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements employed by composer Judith Shatin in relation to the poetry’s narrative and main character’s emotional journey. I also introduced the question of why Lowell’s poetry, despite its dramatic capacity and imagery, was largely overlooked in the twentieth century and is only recently gaining popularity among art song composers. Though this question of recognition and canonization cannot be answered conclusively within the scope of one lecture recital, it is part of a larger inquiry addressed throughout my scholarship.

From an analytical perspective, it was a more challenging task to draw conclusions about *Glorious Nothings* because Steven Lebetkin does not use text written directly by Dickinson. Rather, he uses a libretto by Amy Drake which was adapted from Dickinson’s envelope poems. For this reason, my approach to designing a lecture for *Glorious Nothings* stemmed from my own investigation of the creative and collaborative process that brought this work into being. Much of Emily Dickinson’s history is shrouded in unsolvable mystery because of the limited unbiased record of her life. Feminist

scholars take the approach of recognizing one's positionality and incorporating self-reflection of lived experiences in subsequent analyses. My lecture, an introduction to the personal histories of those involved in this creative process, follows this approach. Though I was unable to reach Amy Drake for input on text interpretation and the development of her Emily Dickinson character, composer Steven Lebetkin was generous enough to provide his perspective on how Dickinson's texts factored into his compositional process. His thoughts are included in Chapter 2: Monodramas.

Twenty-four traditional art songs and chamber music settings comprise the second grouping of repertoire for this project.¹⁴ Thirteen songs include text settings by Emily Dickinson and ten have texts by Amy Lowell. Performances of these works were video recorded, grouped into four distinct sets, and packaged as a deconstructed recital that aired in weekly segments on YouTube. Though the segments' premieres were scheduled in weekly intervals, the videos, once released, remain online indefinitely for future audience engagement. To curate meaningful and original collections of art songs with text settings by Emily Dickinson and Amy Lowell through a feminist lens, I first went in search of Dickinson texts that encapsulated a woman's nineteenth century "lived experience," namely those texts (table 2, next page) that referenced the woman's private sphere: kitchen, garden, family, and local community.

¹⁴ "Traditional" in the context of this project is defined as the orchestration of art song as "voice plus piano." There are a few exceptions to this voicing in my repertoire list: "His Feet Are Shod with Gauze" for unaccompanied voice (Lau) and *Love Sweet* for soprano, violin, cello, and piano (Higdon).

Poem Title	Text referencing a “lived experience”	Justification
Bee! I'm expecting you! (1035)	“The Frogs got Home last Week — / Are settled, and at work —” “You'll get my Letter by / The seventeenth”	Implied neighborhood dynamic. Maintaining regular correspondence: letter writing.
Papa above! (61)	“Snug in seraphic Cupboards / To nibble all the day”	Kitchens have mice, rats, crumbs, cupboards, and cats
If I can stop one heart from breaking (919)	“If I can ease one life the aching, / Or cool one pain, / Or help one fainting robin / Unto his nest again”	Caretaking and the sickroom; a woman's jurisdiction.
Will there really be a ‘Morning?’ (101)	“Has it feet like water-lilies? / Has it feathers like a bird? / Is it brought from famous countries / Of which I have never heard?”	Insular messaging: women rarely pursued adventurous and exploratory roles of scholars and sailors.
I'm Nobody! Who are you? (288)	“How dreary — to be — / Somebody! /How public — like a Frog —”	Negative connotation implied by being on public parade.
I never saw a Moor (1052)	“I never saw a moor, / I never saw the sea;”	Insular messaging: women did not travel to expand their horizons.

Table 2. Dickinson texts reflecting nineteenth century woman's “lived experience.”

Multiple composers express attraction to Dickinson's poetry for her ability to stir the imagination, which is frequently connected to her exploration of “subject matter particularly close to Miss Dickinson: nature, death, life, eternity.”¹⁵ These were also nicknamed her “flood subjects”¹⁶ Given this interest, I then sought Dickinson texts that expressed the “awe and wonder of a boundless universe” (table 3, next page).¹⁷

¹⁵ Aaron Copland, program notes for *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*, quoted in Neil Butterworth's *The Music of Aaron Copland*, Gloucester: Toccata Press, 1985. 126.

¹⁶ Lowenberg, *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere*, xxvi.

¹⁷ This is a quotation from the composer Arthur Farwell, a twentieth century composer who was fascinated by Dickinson's poetry. His quotation is found in Richard B. Sewall's forward in Lowenberg's *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere: Emily Dickinson and Music*. Berkeley, California: Fallen Leaf Press, 1992.

Poem Title	Text showing “universality in her ideas” ¹⁸
Mother Nature (790)	“Then, bending from the sky / With infinite affection / And infiniter care, / Her golden finger on her lip, / Wills silence everywhere.”
Why — do they shut Me out of Heaven? (248)	“Wouldn't the Angels try me / Just once more / Just see if I troubled them — / But don't shut the door!”
Heart, we will forget him! (47)	“You may forget the warmth he gave, / I will forget the light.”
Going to heaven! (79)	“And I'd like to look a little more / At such a curious earth! / I am glad they did believe it / Whom I have never found / Since the mighty autumn afternoon / I left them in the ground.”
The Brain – is wider than the Sky – (632)	“The brain is deeper than the sea, / For, hold them, blue to blue, / The one the other will absorb, / As sponges, buckets do.”
His Feet are shod with Gauze (916)	“His Feet are shod with Gauze — / His Helmet, is of Gold”
If I can stop one heart from breaking (919)	“If I can stop one heart from breaking, / I shall not live in vain”
Bind me - I still can sing – (1005)	“Slay - and my soul shall rise”
Will there really be a ‘Morning?’ (101)	“Will there really be a morning? / Is there such a thing as day?”
I never saw a Moor (1052)	“I never spoke with God, / Nor visited in heaven; / Yet certain am I of the spot / As if the chart were given.”

Table 3. Dickinson’s “flood subjects.”

The search for meaningful thematic patterns with Amy Lowell text settings in art song was more complicated because there is a smaller collection of literature from which to pull than there is for Emily Dickinson. After reading numerous biographies as well as records of Lowell’s personal correspondence and her own published scholarship to familiarize myself with her character and personality, I sought texts that reflected her penchant for drama, animated spirit, and commanding presence.¹⁹ In a 1920 *Musical Quarterly* article, Lowell stated that her unique poetic style—*verse libre*, cadenced verse,

¹⁸ This phrasing is taken from commentary by Gloria Coates, in Lowenberg’s *Musicians Wrestle Everywhere*. 21.

¹⁹ My selection process was also influenced by songs that were readily available during the COVID-19 lockdown, which affected library and publishing houses’ staff resources.

and polyphonic prose—was designed “to find a new form for epic poetry. The modern epic [...] should be based rather upon drama than narrative. This came partly from the greater speed and vividness demanded today of all the arts.”²⁰ While my search for Lowell text settings did not exactly parallel the methodology for Dickinson text selection, I still found that Lowell’s bombastic personality and penchant for hyperbole can be identified in many of the texts that are in my final song collection (table 4).

Song Title	Text showing “grandiosity of scope”
Pyrotechnics	“glory of falling stars”
Flame Apples	“Little hot apples of fire / Burst out of the flaming stem / Of my heart”
Vernal Equinox	“overpower me with your tense and urgent love”
The Giver of Stars	“flickering flame of your soul play all about me / That into my limbs may come the keenness of fire”
Autumnal Equinox	“that the stars stand out of the sky / Like golden nails not driven home.”
A Sprig of Rosemary	“But my heart holds the sound of your voice / And the soft brightness which is your soul”
Apology	“It seems a myriad suns are strown / About the town.” “You blazon me with jeweled insignia”
Absence	“Heart’s blood for your drinking; / To fill your mouth with love / And the bitter-sweet taste of a soul.”
A Gift	“You will have the whole of me”
A Fixed Idea	“What torture lurks” / “How crushed I am with having you at rest”

Table 4. Dramatic sentiments expressed by Lowell, set by Hill and Higdon

With repertoire selected, I curated the different sets of the webinar series by grouping thematic and musical ideas. My goal was to pair songs that would speak to connections between different elements comprising the art song form. I posed three main questions to facilitate curation, including “what musical elements provide a deeper or more nuanced understanding of the text,” “what elements of Dickinson’s and Lowell’s personal histories help to humanize them,” and “how do these texts, nearly a century in

²⁰ Amy Lowell, “Some Musical Analogies in Modern Poetry,” *Musical Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (January 1920); 154.

age, remain relatable in the twenty-first century” to address relationships of text and music, audience and music, and audience and text, respectively. These questions then served as skeletal foundations for the verbal program notes that prefaced each video installment.

Finally, when possible, I tried to follow standard voice recital programming practices, which involves ordering songs in a way that flows organically from musical (key and meter), dramatic (meaningful narrative or unifying idea), and practical (physically healthy sound production and with enough variation that it retains audience attention) perspectives.²¹ My personal interests in collaboration with living composers and performing contemporary art song also factored significantly into programming decisions, though the repertoire ultimately included in this project is not exclusively of twenty-first century publication.

²¹ Shirlee Emmons and Stanley Sonntag provide detailed explanatory notes in *The Art of the Song Recital*, when describing methodological practices for building recital programs. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2002), 29-34.

CHAPTER 2: MONODRAMAS

Monodramas represent corporeality in two ways: they encapsulate a complete dramatic arc, making them a self-contained “body” of work and, as the term “mono” implies, they are performed with only one body on the stage. As singer Francesca Placanica emphasizes, it is the act of singing which “brings a fictional character to life” and “exhibits before the spectator’s eyes the unique vocabulary of her performative persona through the subjective unfolding of her body in time and space.”²² Though Placanica is in this excerpt referencing Poulenc’s *La Voix Humaine*, the basic sentiment applies holistically to the monodrama genre. It is the synergistic combination of the character’s voice plus the performer’s voice, embodied by the same person on the stage, that breathes life into a monodrama performance.

Without the performer wielding both elements—the character in the drama and the actor portraying that drama—the audience’s experience remains largely musical, but not necessarily theatrically engaging.²³ Placanica also asserts that the performer’s role in a musical monodrama is one of heightened demand because “they ultimately sustain physically and psychologically the condition of being the only visible purveyors of the dramatic action.”²⁴ It is the duality of the performer’s role which drove my decision to present the two monodramas in this project as individual recital programs, with no additional musical material in each performance. Rather than supplement a short musical program with additional repertoire, I instead prefaced each monodrama with a lecture, the

²² Francesca Placanica, “The Unsung One: The Performer’s Voice in Twentieth-century Musical Monodrama” *Journal of Musicological Research* 37, no. 2 (2018):129.

²³ This is “theatrical” in the sense of having a structured dramatic arc, not “theatrical” in spectacle with staging, properties, costumes, and sets, though these elements are certainly visually engaging.

²⁴ Placanica, “The Unsung One,” 128.

goal being to center audience education as means of enriching the performance experience. I wanted to introduce the less recognizable musical sounds and ground the audience with historical context of the work and its creators. Performers have the advantage over audiences resulting from weeks, months, and sometimes *years* of score study, which a listener cannot replicate in the single, linear listening experience afforded by traditional concert performances, so my goal was to increase the audience's exposure to recognizable and structurally important musical ideas to serve as anchors during the performance.

The nature of both content and style of each lecture varied because of the different compositional approaches of Judith Shatin and Steven Lebetkin. The first factor of difference was the extent to which understanding the text painting and compositional elements would help a new listener process, in performance, an unknown and lengthy musical work. The second factor was the creative license taken by the composer when interpreting Lowell or Dickinson's original texts. For both monodramas, it was my analysis of these composers' respective choices which guided my performance.²⁵ Art song—and by extension, monodrama—is a transformative medium, whose metamorphosis is informed by the dramatic choices made by the performer in the realization of the work.

Patterns

Judith Shatin's *Patterns* presented an ideal starting point for my project for its storytelling potential, richness of character, advanced harmonic language, and extended

²⁵ Placanica describes the role of the soloist in monodrama performance as "poietic," one who makes something out of nothing. The monodrama by itself is a "written medium" and therefore is limited to the page. It takes the "performative act" of the soloist to lift the work off the page and onto the stage. "The Unsung One," 127.

piano and vocal techniques. Lowell's original poem, also titled "Patterns," was written in 1915 and published the following year in her collection *Men Women, and Ghosts*. The poem is an early example of Lowell's experimentation with "polyphonic prose," a commentary on the way in which the text is presented in prose form on the page.²⁶ The work shows strong influence from the Imagist movement, a creed that captured Lowell's fancy as early as 1912, and one that she would champion through the rest of that decade. "Patterns" uses cadenced verse, which Lowell defines as "built upon 'organic rhythm,' or the rhythm of the speaking voice with its necessity for breathing, rather than upon a strict metrical system."²⁷ This was a rejection of organization solely through a lens of poetic meter and feet and instead accounting for the performer's body and breath. Though Lowell emphasizes in various publications a strict distinction between cadenced verse and polyphonic prose—the former being a device for spoken poetry and the latter a way to display text in print—many of her works that have attributes of one also lend themselves to elements of the other.

The narrative of "Patterns" depicts a wealthy, nineteenth century lady walking alone through her garden. As she walks, she muses over parallels between her restricted, ornate garments and her social position within a patriarchal society. As the narrative unfolds, she learns that her betrothed—the Lord Hartwell—has been killed in battle, fighting for someone else's cause. As the woman becomes increasingly agitated by gender role restrictions compounded by this recent loss, she retreats into her imagination, which has a beautifully shaded, shadowy, and cool, tropical oasis: a stark contrast to the

²⁶ Louis Untermeyer, "A Memoir" xxiv.

²⁷ Melissa Bradshaw and Adrienne Munch, editors, *Selected Poems of Amy Lowell* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 45. Lowell included this in her preface to *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds*, (1914).

highly manicured, hot, sunny garden of her reality. Like many of her contemporaries, Lowell was deeply affected by the staggering violence of World War I.²⁸ Much of Lowell's poetry written during WWI references bombs, bloodshed, loss, and death. "Patterns," with its descent into despair, helplessness, and melancholy, reflect pervasive sentiments of a world at war.

In addition to references to current events, Lowell also depicts images of the female figure bathing and often hiding in nature. The text of "Patterns" is bracketed by images of rigidity and stiff structures, such as corsets and brocades, while the middle section of text celebrates the natural sensuality and softness of the feminine form hidden beneath. Words including *stiff*, *rigid*, *brocade*, *patterned* are mentioned 20 times and *water*, *fluidity*, *sensuality*, *shade* appear 31 times.²⁹ There is also a connection between nature and goodness, with the pinnacle of good being the lone lime tree in the garden, which casts welcome shade from the blinding sun.

Just over a century after the poem's original publication, soprano Amy Johnson commissioned Dr. Judith Shatin to set Lowell's "Patterns" to music. The resulting work premiered in September 2019 by Johnson, along with pianist Kathleen Kelly. Shatin's compositions are layered with meaning, "theatrical, even visceral."³⁰ *Patterns* is no exception. It features angular melody, atmospheric harmony, rhythmic patterns, and text setting contours that mirror the drama in Lowell's original narrative. Shatin's piano writing enhances Lowell's words, providing atmosphere and an added layer of

²⁸ Amy Lowell. *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*. (Macmillan Company, 1917, Reprint, New York City, NY: Octagon Books, 1971) v. Lowell begins her work with an unapologetic acknowledgement in the Preface of being "affected by the war. It has overwhelmed us like a tidal wave."

²⁹ For a complete text, please see Appendix A.

³⁰ Fanfare magazine, quoted from Shatin's website (<https://www.judithshatin.com/about/>) Accessed March 19, 2023.

expressivity that extends the poem’s dramatic capacity. Shatin “plays with patterns in the poem” by amplifying the “internal rhymes (daffodils / bright blue squills)” and creating a power arc to align musical sound with character drama.³¹

Lowell took inspiration from Debussy’s piano writing that also has a “close kinship of music and poetry,” a relationship Shatin expands by incorporating four main musical elements in her work, used to enhance both the visual nature of the scene and the poem’s narrative. Shatin’s musical gestures and resulting soundscapes are most clearly understood with accompanying score analysis however, reading and analyzing a score during performance is not a standard practice for contemporary audiences, nor do all audience members have that skill. Given this limitation, I used a combination of musical score projections in concert with speaking sections of the poetry rhythmically over the piano accompaniment during the lecture to help my audience better understand the text setting.

The first soundscape discussed is that of a garden, realized in two forms: a *real garden* where the protagonist walks sedately along a pre-existing gravel path and an *imaginary garden*, which is wild, sensual, and full of mysterious shadows. The real garden provides a soundscape with recognizable phrase shapes, cadences, and traditional harmonic language while by contrast, the imaginary garden is a playground, characterized by a wash of pedaled thirty-second note figures roughly outlining a partial whole tone scale. In the imaginary garden, the protagonist is free to run, skip, and slide—anything but walk—down the gravel path. Examples of the contrasting soundscapes of the *real* and *imaginary* gardens are provided below (fig. 1 and fig. 2 respectively).

³¹ Judith Shatin. “Program Notes,” *Patterns*. Wendigo Music, 2018.

Figure 1. Real garden soundscape in *Patterns*

Paired phrases in the right hand, starting on A in mm. 1–2 and on A and D in mm. 3–4 respectively create a balanced melodic pattern with a cadential feel intimated by the dominant-tonic intervallic relationship.
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 1–4, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

Amy Lowell Judith Shatin

Insouciant ♩ = 64

3 **Urgent**

Figure 2. Imaginary garden soundscape in *Patterns*

Repeated descending thirty-second note figures in the piano creates a dream-like soundscape
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 176–178, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

176

pink and sil - ver _____ as I run a -

The second component characterizing the landscape is the sound of nature, created through onomatopoeia and text painting. Elements of nature are manifested as daffodils and squills blowing (fig 3), flowers fluttering (fig. 4), and water dripping (fig 5). These musical elements, while fleeting in their portrayal, provide the ambient soundtrack of nature. (Figures on next page.)

Figure 3. Onomatopoeia of blowing wind created with rising thirty-second note figures.
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 12, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

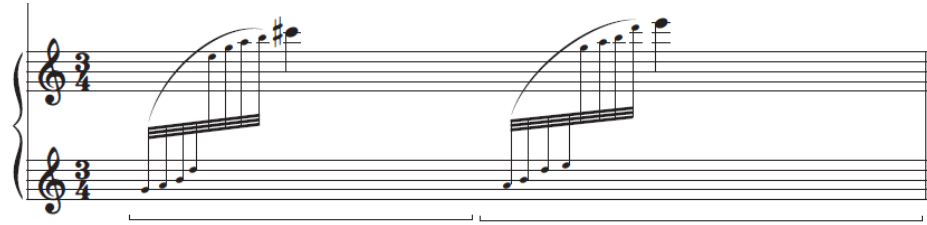


Figure 4. Delicacy of flowers fluttering created with grace notes in the piano.
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 95–97, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

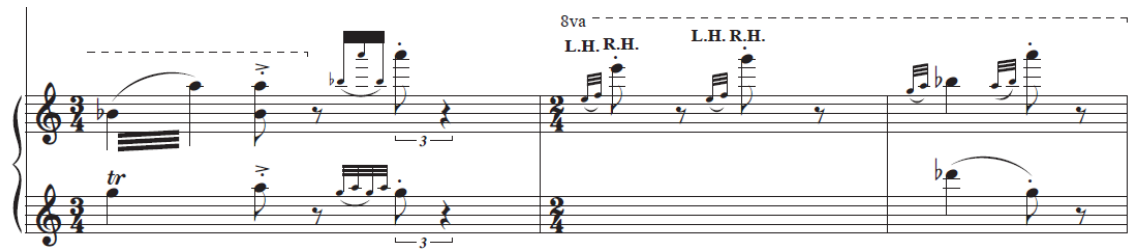


Figure 5. Water droplets striking tropical foliage mimicked by staccato sixteenth notes at disparate intervals.
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 125–128, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.



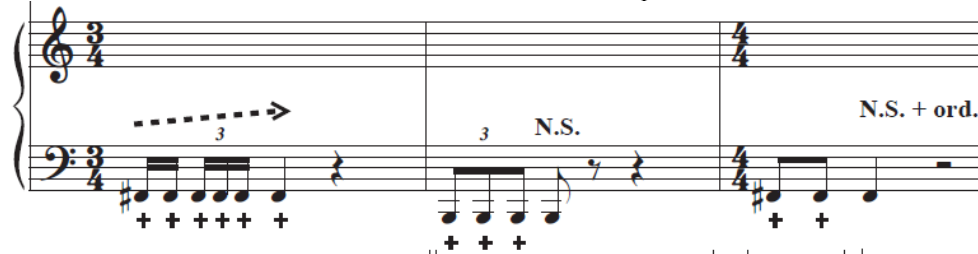
The third component is a descending pedaled piano figure, which symbolizes the metaphorical weight of society’s power and the protagonist’s helplessness in the face of it (fig. 6, next page). The oppressive dissonant quality of these clusters communicates the oppressiveness of a woman’s position within a patriarchal society.

Figure 6. Piano part in *Patterns* as society’s patriarchal power
 Dissonant chord clusters are built by stacking pitches, top downward, imparting the sense of being weighed down.
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 99–100, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.



Finally, the fourth component enhancing the soundscape of *Patterns* is the extended piano techniques—scraping, plucking, or dampening the piano strings inside the body of the piano—which appears at the protagonist’s most fragmented mental and emotional state. The absence of pitched musical language is the equivalent of the woman leaving behind both real and imaginary gardens as they both function as a “grounding” landscape. Fig. 7 exemplifies the distorted lens through which the protagonist views the world in the moment after learning her fiancée has been killed in battle. Though she may question the confines of the real garden—metaphor for her role in society—it at least provided a solid path which marked her purpose, without which, she is ungrounded.

Figure 7. Distorted pitches presented with rhythmic variation indicate disorientation.
 Source: *Patterns*, mm. 238–240, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.



Shatin also creates rhythmic relationships between her compositional choices and Lowell’s poetry through her text setting, which can be categorized as *rigid*, text punctuated by the music’s meter and notated bar lines, or *flexible*, text set within triplets and tied figures which obscure the beat. The rigid or “on-beat” entrances and melodies (fig. 8, next page) signify moments governed by society’s rules and restrictions while the

flexible patterns (fig. 9) obscure the meter, representing the physical, emotional, and sensual freedom found in nature.

Figure 8. Rigid text setting

Text setting adheres to the bar line and is accentuated by rhythmic piano chords.

Source: *Patterns*, mm. 45–48, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

45 *Animated* *mf*

My dress is rich - ly fig - ured and the train makes a

Figure 9: Flexible text setting

Text setting on triplets and ties mask the meter, especially at “squills fluttering,” which is further obscured by an ascending sextuplet piano figure underneath.

Source: *Patterns*, mm. 92–97, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

91 *mf*

The daf - fo - dils and squills

flut - - - ter in the breeze as they please.

8va
L.H. R.H. L.H. R.H.

Similar contrasting styles of vocal melodies also inform tone and dramatic arc within the performance. Shatin matches the expressed poetic sentiment with a similar

rhythmic and melodic quality in the vocal line, whether it be one of rigidity or flexibility. When the protagonist describes her “stiffed gown,” her words are set in an angular melody with large leaps, frequent direction changes, and dotted rhythms (fig. 10). By contrast, the very next line she delivers reflects a sense of fluidity and gentle curvature, matching the physical softness and sensuality of skin. Musically, this is reflected with stepwise motion in the vocal line on the word “softness” (fig. 11).

Figure 10. Rigid text setting

Intervallic leaps on the words “underneath” and “stiffened” convey rigidity and stiffness.

Source: *Patterns*, mm. 130–132, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

130

Gentle mp

Un-der - neath my stif-fened gown is the

Figure 11. Flexible text setting

Two phrases starting with “softness” and “bathing” indicates a gentle slope with melodic stepwise motion.

Source: *Patterns*, mm. 134–136, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

134

mp

soft - ness of a wo - - - man bath - ing in a

Finally, Shatin communicates the protagonist’s heightened shock and devastation at the news of her fiancée’s death with silence punctuated by erratic rhythms and a nonlyrical melody. The devastating telegram imparting news of her lover’s death leaves the protagonist unable to speak with either the smooth fluidity of a stepwise melody or

society's angular intervals. Figure 12 shows the dramatic progression from the woman's initial shock to her donning of the social niceties of her "stiff correct brocade."³²

Figure 12. Nonlyrical text setting

Short note values and rests interrupting words (ex: "in-to" instead of "into") indicate fractured and uncontrolled emotions. Similar usage of unpredictable rhythmic patterns.

Source: *Patterns*, mm. 280–293, © 2019 Judith Shatin. Used with permission.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system (mm. 280-283) has a vocal line with lyrics "And I walk in-to the gar-den" and a dynamic marking of *mp*. The piano accompaniment features complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and rests. The second system (mm. 284-288) has a vocal line with lyrics "Up and down the" and a dynamic marking of *mf*, with the instruction "Gradually steely" above the staff. The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic complexity. The third system (mm. 289-293) has a vocal line with lyrics "pat-terned path in my stiff cor-rect bro-cade" and a dynamic marking of *mf*, with the instruction "L.H." above the staff. The piano accompaniment concludes with a final melodic phrase in the right hand.

The relationship between Shatin's musical decisions and Lowell's original poetry is a key factor that guided my artistic choices in performance. It is the role of the performer that creates a synthesis between music and narrative in the twentieth century monodrama.³³ By highlighting Shatin's compositional techniques—her distinction

³² Shatin, *Patterns*, 21.

³³ Placanica, "Performer's Voice in Twentieth-century Musical Monodrama," 135.

between the *real* and *imaginary* gardens using different harmonic languages, her choice to set text deliberately on- or off-beat to represent societal norms or nature respectively, and her world-building efforts through use of text painting and timbral effects—I enhance the audience’s listening experience by bringing both the protagonist and Amy Lowell to life on the stage.

Glorious Nothings

The second work in this project, titled *Glorious Nothings*, demonstrates the transformative journey of one art form morphing into another.³⁴ *Glorious Nothings* is the result of a creative collaboration between composer Steven Lebetkin and librettist Amy Drake. For the libretto, Drake builds upon Emily Dickinson’s envelope writings, also referred to as envelope poems. These fragmentary texts, in their original form, bring a visual element to Dickinson’s words because the scraps of paper on which they were originally written in the last two decades of her life are deconstructed paper envelopes laid flat in unique, geometric shapes. In 2012, these poetic phrases were compiled in a book titled *The Gorgeous Nothings*, edited by Marta Werner and Jen Bervin. The book’s title *Gorgeous Nothings* is an excerpt from Emily Dickinson’s manuscript A 821: “The gorgeous / nothings / which / compose / the / sunset / keep.”³⁵ The captivating nature of this publication is in the visual renderings of the original, unfolded envelopes with their enigmatic scribbles.

³⁴ I refer to this colloquially as the “art song life cycle,” where art songs are *born* as text by a poet, *transformed* into music by a composer, *lifted* off the page and into the performance world by singers and pianists, and finally *heard* by an audience who validates each creative element comprising the art song whole. The scale and limitations of this dissertation do not present a large enough opportunity to fully explore each stage in the cycle, though I consider this a driving force of future creative projects.

³⁵ Maryanne Dever, “Emily Dickinson: The Gorgeous Nothings,” *Archives & Manuscripts* 42, no. 1 (March 20, 2014): 102–104. In this review, the phrase, “nothings” refers to Dickinson’s fragmentary poems.

But it was a much earlier publication of Dickinson's envelope poems—one that far predates *The Gorgeous Nothings* compilation—that first caught Lebetkin's fancy. Lebetkin describes his personal history with these fragments of poetic ideas in a state of charmed reminiscence. He first discovered a dusty book cover with the title *Fragments* written on it while exploring the Rochester New Hampshire Public Library in his early teens. These "little wisps [...] stayed in [his] mind for decades" and presented a unique challenge as they were "too short for songs and the fragmented texts were disjointed."³⁶ Only with decades of subconscious percolating did they gel, with creative input by Amy Drake, into a linear narrative.

Drake's libretto demonstrates significant artistic license in her speculation and interpretation of personality, attitude, and demeanor of Emily Dickinson. Dickinson frequently wrote herself into verse as "a wife, the bride of Christ, a fallen woman, a bereaved husband, someone dead or alive, girl or boy, a bird, a rose, a fly" and consequently, scholars tend to speculate wildly about who she believed *herself* to be.³⁷ This is, frankly, an unknowable concept more than a century after her passing. Wake Forest University Professor Emerita of English Elizabeth Phillips surmises, "perhaps she did not know who she was, and the various personae indicate that she was uncertain of her identity, her maturity, her sexual nature?"³⁸ Rather than view this as a mystery that needs solving, it can be a signal to honor her elusivity by following her lead and "adopting provisional attitudes and myriad voices" to change perspective, role, situation,

³⁶ Lebetkin, interview.

³⁷ Elizabeth Phillips, "The Histrionic Imagination," in *Emily Dickinson: Personae and Performance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 78.

³⁸ Phillips, "The Histrionic Imagination," 78.

genre, language, and style with remarkable speed and adroitness.”³⁹ In this way, Drake and Lebetkin *do* celebrate the quintessential nature of Dickinson, in their willingness to suspend disbelief and interpret Dickinson’s thoughts and desires with such creative license.

To Dickinson, who wrote roughly 1,800 poems during her lifetime, these fragmentary ideas may indeed have been little incomplete and transient “nothings” but when used as the skeleton of Drake and Lebetkin’s collaboration, they weave a thread of continuity through what began as an homage to Dickinson’s literary legacy and continues as a creative interpretation of who Emily Dickinson might have been in her lifetime and in ours. The monodrama *Glorious Nothings* premiered online in spring 2021. This dissertation performance on October 17, 2022, marked its first in-person performance before a live audience. The piece comprises ten songs, eleven spoken monologues, and two piano interludes, all bracketed by a Prologue and an Epilogue that deliver the musical ideas that translate into the “backbone” of the work.⁴⁰

Being a monodrama rather than song sets, *Glorious Nothings* already presents several unique challenges to navigate. First, the dramatic arc of this work does not follow a strictly linear narrative, and therefore risks losing the audience’s attention. Instead of a concrete plot, the audience is treated to a series of vignettes threaded together by common themes of nature, time passing, and love, realized in the form of Dickinson’s fascination with her mysterious and beloved “Master.” I chose to overcome this challenge

³⁹ Phillips, *Emily Dickinson*, 78.

⁴⁰ Steven Lebetkin, Zoom interview with author, March 15, 2023. A list of song titles and complete libretto is available in Appendix B. Lebetkin said that he used the musical material presented in the Prologue to generate structural elements for each song within the monodrama, and that he uses a retrograde quotation of the original melody from the Prologue to provide the listener with a “satisfying” musical closure in the Epilogue.

by using my pre-performance lecture to highlight the creative entities who contributed to this work: Dickinson, Drake, Lebetkin.

Both Lebetkin and Drake share personal perspectives through the program notes printed in the *Glorious Nothings* score, and I added to this additional historical context of the original poetry and observations about my own initial reception of the creative choices made by composer and librettist. According to scholarship on narrative inquiry, storytelling and lived experience are the lenses through which we interpret the world and assign it personal meaning.⁴¹ Providing additional context to guide the listening experience orients the audience to important musical and dramatic elements of the work, creating a more fulfilling listening experience even if unfamiliar with the work. By sharing my lived experience in my pre-performance lecture, I provided additional scaffolding for the audience to layer their own thoughts, feelings, and emotional responses to the work.

Second, the Prologue of *Glorious Nothings* is unusual because in it, Dickinson, the central character of Drake's libretto, breaks the fourth wall to greet the audience directly and deliver the following entreaty:

Good evening. I'm Miss Emily Dickinson. I write poetry about glorious nothings in my room. I may be the most prolific poet of my generation. Yet few know. Envelopes can capture fleeting thoughts [...] Envelope poems and letters under wraps. Left alone to contemplate or complete. Or not. Please accept my invitation to share my notions with you now."⁴²

This unconventional decision to directly address the viewer sets an intimate tone, encourages each viewer to layer their own unique interpretation of the poetic and musical

⁴¹ Jean D. Clandinin. *Engaging in Narrative Inquiry*. (Walnut Creek CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 13.

⁴² Amy Drake, Libretto, in Steven Lebetkin, *Glorious Nothings* (Subito Press, 2020), 5.

experience to come, and validates any creative analytical conclusions drawn from the performance. This is a stark contrast to the prior monodrama, *Patterns*, which opens a window into the world inhabited solely by Amy Lowell's tragic protagonist but does not invite the audience to step into that world. Drake's treatment of Dickinson's text creates a portal through which an audience can step into the immersive world of Dickinson's envelope poems.

Finally, *Glorious Nothings* presents several musical elements that anchor the audience's listening experience, including a song structure mimicking the fragmentary nature of Dickinson's envelope poems, a homophonic piano texture setting the story in a distinct time and place, and elements of film score music honoring Lebetkin's own musical education and lived experiences. Lebetkin uses asymmetrical structure, shifting musical time signatures, and unbalanced antecedent-consequent phrase relationships to mirror the fragmentary nature of the original text by presenting crystalline and abruptly brief songs. Figures 13 and 14 (next page) show five-measure excerpts that change meter with nearly every bar line. With these uneven metric shifts, Lebetkin emphasizes Dickinson's concept of "esoteric time." Both examples leave the listener unmoored and unable to predict where the musical phrase is going.

Figure 13. Musical meter switches between 5/8, 6/8, and 7/8.
 Source: *Glorious Nothings*, “Look Back on Time,” mm. 1–5, © 2020 Steven Lebetkin. Used with permission.

The musical score for "Look Back on Time" features a voice line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 35. The music begins in 5/8 time, switches to 6/8, and then to 7/8. The voice part is marked *mp* and the piano part is marked *p*. The lyrics are: "Look back on time with kind-ly eyes He doubt-less did". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with eighth-note chords. There are asterisks under the piano part at measures 1, 3, 4, and 5.

Figure 14. Musical meter switches between 3/8, 3/4, 4/8, and 4/4.
 Source: *Glorious Nothings*, “When the Cricket Came,” mm. 25–29, © 2020 Steven Lebetkin. Used with permission.

The musical score for "When the Cricket Came" shows a voice line and a piano accompaniment starting at measure 25. The tempo is marked as *molto rall.*. The music begins in 3/4 time, switches to 3/8, then 4/8, and finally 4/4. The voice part is marked *ppp* and the piano part is marked *ppp*. The lyrics are: "e - so - te - ric time". The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with sixteenth and eighth notes. There are asterisks under the piano part at measures 25 and 27.

Lebetkin also uses unadorned homophonic piano textures for “The Long Arms of the Wind” (fig. 15, next page) to recall musical traditions of Dickinson’s community, which was centered around the Congregationalist Church service and Shaker hymnody. By doing this, Lebetkin anchors the narrative in time and place, recalling the worship services of nineteenth century New England church community.

Figure 15. Homophonic piano texture

Chordal figures in the piano are reminiscent of traditional hymnody and chorale textures.

Source: *Glorious Nothings*, “The Long Arms of the Wind,” mm. 6–8, © 2020 Steven Lebetkin. Used with permission.

6
Voice
spry arms of the wind, I have an err-and imm i-nent to an ad-join-ing zone. I *mp*

Pno.

Finally, the following excerpt (fig 16, next page) exemplifies a film score tradition that represents Lebetkin’s musical lineage.⁴³ Just as librettist Drake uses the Dickinson character to invite the audience into her kitchen, composer Lebetkin draws the audience into an immersive soundscape influenced by his own musical history. One example of this is found in the second of two Piano Interludes. In it Lebetkin introduces a simple melody which invokes imagery of a quaint New England Amherst, but to this image is added orchestral colors that far outstrips the quaint New England “Homestead.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Steve Lebetkin’s compositional training was influenced by known film score composers Karol Rathaus, Gabriel Fontrier, Sol Berkowitz, and Leo Kraft.

⁴⁴ “Homestead” was the nickname used to refer to the Dickinson family house in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Figure 16. Simple folk melody embellished with orchestral colors.
Piano introduces simple folk melody (C-D-G-E) in mm. 9 which is then embellished.
Source: *Glorious Nothings*, “Piano Interlude, No. 2,” mm. 9–18, © 2020 Steven Lebetkin. Used with permission.



The layered nature of *Glorious Nothings* infuses this work with compelling performance appeal. Dickinson’s stylized texts provide a scaffolding on which the drama rests, Drake’s interpretation takes creative license with a literary figure known so well to so many, and Lebetkin’s immersive sonic landscape recalls a film score tradition and underlying sounds of Americana favored by his pedagogical predecessors. Overall *Glorious Nothings* represents the richness of Emily Dickinson’s “work and psyche.”⁴⁵ It matters that Dickinson and Lowell inhabit the body of the performer during the performance of these two monodramas. It is through moments of solo (staged) performance such as a monodrama that allows us to “interpret the interior world of an individual’s subjective state more than any other performing art.”⁴⁶ The inner world of two long-deceased poets is, outside of this performance arena, unreachable.

⁴⁵ Steven Lebetkin, “Composer’s Notes,” *Glorious Nothings* (Subito Press, 2020), 1.

⁴⁶ Placanica, “Performer’s Voice in Twentieth-century Musical Monodrama,” 123.

CHAPTER 3: A DECONSTRUCTED RECITAL

Accessibility: A Digital Reboot

A significant portion of my project is dedicated to showcasing the flexibility of art song performance with twenty-first century technological elements. My project demonstrates how the internet can enhance the listener experience and also help to reach and fully incorporate young adult (Gen Z) audiences as patrons of classical art music. The largest performance venue today, though intangible, is the internet, especially social media platforms. It is this “virtual space with no boundaries” where we find a combined arena “for reality and fantasy, playing and imagination, closeness and alienation.”⁴⁷ This is where audiences are, so this is where performances—in addition to live concert spaces—should be.

The increased autonomy of internet usage by viewers allows for additional independent exploration based on personalized interests.⁴⁸ Putting my performances on YouTube allows new audiences to discover my work organically, through algorithmic search engines designed to sort and spread data to specific interest groups rather than requiring attention and presence at a predetermined time and place (“please come to my recital!”). I am also extending my reach as a performing artist by generating a product that viewers can return to at will. Audiences can pause, rewind, replay, and share my videos across their own networks as many times as desired. Overall, using a “webinar

⁴⁷ Haim Weinbergin Philippa Derrington, “What’s the WiFi code in here??: Connecting with Adolescents in Music Therapy,” in *Handbook of Music, Adolescents, and Wellbeing*, ed. by Katrina McFerran, Philippa Derrington, Suvi Saarikallio. (Oxford University Press, 2019), 172.

⁴⁸ Susan A. O’Neill. “Entangled Musical Lives: Affordances of Spaces in Young People’s Music Engagement for Connectedness and Wellbeing” in *Musisc, Adolescents, and Wellbeing*, ed. McFerran, Derrington, Saarikallio, 175.

series” showcases many ways in which technology can enhance an existing performance medium through cinematographic and digital affordances.

I also hope to demonstrate how a musician can generate material with limited resources and minimal guidance through the complex process of integrating music performance with live streaming technology (music licensing). This is a complex and seemingly daunting task, with many permutations of convoluted vocabulary like “non-interactive,” “non-dramatic,” and “synchronization license,” but there are resources to help, such as the Music Publisher Association. This is one among many articles that helps unravel the tangles of music performance licensing, for future readers of this document.⁴⁹ I hope that my dissertation’s explanations of artistic and logistical choices and collection of cited resources can serve a future teaching artist population in executing other performance projects of this nature.

Creativity Through COVID-19

This project is about engaging with musical performance in a wholly new way, finding creative solutions to the problems presented by COVID-19 distancing and community isolation. While there is no substitute for performance with an in-person audience, I hope this project offers adaptations to the traditional recital model to make it accessible to and enjoyable for remote audiences in addition to in-person audiences. This is a means of embracing an alternative and additional performance platform, which differs from simply live-streaming a traditionally structured 60-minute recital on a media platform because it considers the weaknesses of video streaming (long-term screen

⁴⁹ Music Publisher Association, “Streaming Live Music: What You Need To Know,” *Choral Journal*, 62, no. 9 (June/July 2022): 6–7.

exposure being unhealthy and phone screens providing too small a visual to see clearly) and uses technological strengths (public familiarity with these platforms and embedded search algorithms) to address these challenges.

One major advantage to delivering art song performance via the internet is that it is packaged in a form that contemporary audiences already understand, no learning curve required. In-person classical music concerts tend to follow a strict set of rules, which amounts to the socially accepted “proper etiquette.” This includes restrictive behaviors such as no clapping between movements, limited seating after a performance has started, and maintaining a sustained, reverent silence in the hall. Many music institutions will require their music major population to complete some element of “Recital Attendance” as part of their education; a sign that they need to learn how to experience live music. New audiences may be repelled from concert attendance by the potential risk of committing the dreaded social faux pas of clapping out of turn, just one example of the perils of ignorant concert attendance. Audiences do not relish discomfort, so it is unlikely that new concert attendees will want to subject themselves to a recital experience that has unfamiliar and unintuitive rules of engagement. But contemporary audiences are already familiar and comfortable with digital media, which has a different set of rules of engagement. I hope this document participates in the conversation of how to create classical music for the digital age.

I split my third group of art song repertoire into four sections, each video recorded and watched in weekly segments. The aggregate length of the four sections is the length of a standard recital program. Overall, the meta-program resulted in twenty-four songs comprising of four sets, curated thematically, and grouped by poet (table 5, next page).

Set & Poet	Set Title	Composers Featured	Curation Theme
Set 1: ED	<i>Have you heard of art song?</i>	A. Copland	Voice and piano partnership
Set 2: ED & AL	<i>Microcosm and macrocosm</i>	J. Duke, J. Hall, L. Laitman, J. Heggie, E. Hill	Comparison of poetic styles
Set 3: ED	<i>The Amherst Myth</i>	E. Lau, L. Larsen, A. Previn, R. Baksa, R. P. Thomas	Dickinson texts set by many composers
Set 4: AL	<i>Lowell aloud</i>	J. Higdon	Chamber music voicing provides textual clarity.

Table 5. Webinar sets presented as a “Deconstructed Recital.”

Each set amounts to 15–20 minutes of material, which allows for shorter windows of screen time in a contemporary world where people both spend lengthy intervals staring at digitized media and have about a 15-minute attention span. The four sets, comprised of at least four and no more than six songs each, are prefaced by a brief spoken introduction, which functions in place of the written program notes a concertgoer would find in the program or playbill at an in-person performance. Large blocks of texts are not easily or readily digested by a generation of audience members born into the scrolling age of smartphones; however, Short Video Forms, 15–60 seconds long, have proven to be a hugely popular format for their ability to capture the multifaceted and conversational expressions of creativity and culture.⁵⁰

My goal in making short preface videos is to emulate this popular “short” format while still providing depth of analysis about the repertoire programmed.⁵¹ Educational components provide context and relatability to any art form and a guided listening experience makes them more enjoyable. A secondary goal accomplished through the implementation of these mini-lectures is to *humanize* classical music by putting my

⁵⁰ D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye, Jing Zeng, and Patrik Wikström, *TikTok: Creativity and Culture in Short Video* (Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2022), 4.

⁵¹ Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström, *TikTok*, 19.

face—blemishes and all—in the frame. Breaking the fourth wall of stagecraft and speaking directly into the camera affords the opportunity to infuse an otherwise detached performance with personality, expression, and humor.

This reinterpretation of program notes also had the serendipitous benefit of sharpening my own understanding of the songs performed. Having one to three minutes to relate only the most important elements of the songs presented forced me to prioritize only what was essential in enhancing the audience’s listening experience. A guided listening experience accelerates the familiarization process with the art songs. Curating my script forced me to take the perspective of the audience, who only hears music at a concert one time through; a very different experience from the artist, who processes music repeatedly in the practice room. Writing these verbal program notes was much like my experience curating pre-performance lectures for the monodramas in this project but on a smaller, more digestible scale for online viewing.

I also considered the ways in which visual elements enhance the audience experience by using camera angles strategically. A shifting camera angle engages the viewer and communicates important dramatic and musical elements. Set 1 “Have you heard of art song?” incorporates up to six cameras, the placement of which was an artistic choice designed to enhance visually the storytelling elements in each song, connect timbral effects with the instruments creating those sounds, and build an intimate and personalized performance experience where a new audience is not stymied by unfamiliar rules of engagement. Changing camera angles indicates a change in instrumentation (fig. 17, next page) and highlights dramatic moments in a song’s narrative, which communicates either continuity or separation of ideas (figs. 18–20, next page).



Figure 17. Aerial view
 Showing keys when piano depicts elements of nature
 highlights collaborative nature of musicians in art song.
Source: “Nature, the Gentlest Mother”



Figure 18. Head-on view
 Forward-facing stance reflects the confrontational tone
 of the speaker when she questions the heavenly chorus.
Source: “Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?”



Figure 19. Close-up view
 Close-up lens creates intimacy; using one camera angle
 throughout this song spotlights emotive quality in music.
Source: “Heart, We Will Forget Him”



Figure 20. Side view
 Text references about Christianity are delivered through
 side angle, reflecting disconnect and confusion felt by
 the speaker regarding religious doctrine.
Source: “Going to Heaven!”

I also use more subtle camera angle choices between cyclical movements to indicate continuity of narrative in *The Giver of Stars* (2002) by Edie Hill, which was part of Set 2, “Poetry Personified.” The camera angle at one song’s end matches the camera angle at the next song’s beginning, which symbolizes the blink of an eye, as if the viewer were sitting in the hall. Lowell’s poetry set in *The Giver of Stars* was taken from multiple

publications.⁵² Connecting the viewer's perspective with camera angles is a strategy to unify these otherwise disparate texts into the cohesive narrative envisioned by composer Edie Hill.

Finally, shifting camera angles in Set 4, "Lowell Aloud," helps the audience connect textual references to musical ideas composed by Jennifer Higdon and executed by the ensemble in performance. Higdon's *Love Sweet* (2013) chamber music cycle is more texturally complex than the art songs in the three sets prior because there are double the number of musicians involved: soprano, violin, cello, and piano rather than just soprano and piano. Consequently, there are more timbres to sift through and audiences unfamiliar with classical art music will benefit from having additional visual cues drawing their attention to the specific instrument featured at key musical moments. Below are three examples (fig. 21–23, next page) showing musical gestures conceived by Higdon (score excerpt) with the instrument featured in performance (screen grab). Having the added benefit of pairing sound with visual will make an otherwise complicated performance experience more accessible to new audiences.

⁵² "Pyrotechnics," "Flame Apples," "Vernal Equinox," "Autumnal Equinox," and "A Sprig of Rosemary" were originally published in *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919). "The Giver of Stars" was first published in *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914).

Figure 21. Visual indication of instrumentation: violin trill
 The trill in the violin line (left) reflects the emotional discontentment expressed in the text. The trill is visual emphasized by the camera angle (right) on violinist Abby Wuehler.
 Source: *Love Sweet*, “Absence,” mm. 11–16, © Jennifer Higdon. Used with permission.

The figure consists of two parts. On the left is a musical score for the first system of 'Absence' (mm. 11-16). The top staff is for the voice (Soprano), with lyrics 'cup is emp-ty to - night, cold and dry are its sides.' The violin part (VI) features a trill in the first measure. The piano accompaniment (Vc) is in the second and third staves. On the right is a photograph of violinist Abby Wuehler performing the piece in a concert setting.

Figure 22. Visual indication of instrumentation: coordinated release
 Instruments have coordinated release at the end of “Apology” (left), video angle showing unified dynamic of chamber performance (right).
 Source: *Love Sweet*, “Apology,” mm. 45–47, © 2013 Jennifer Higdon. Used with permission.

The figure consists of two parts. On the left is a musical score for the end of the 'Apology' section (mm. 45-47). It shows the voice part (Soprano) and piano accompaniment (Vc) with dynamic markings like *p* and *mf*. On the right is a photograph of a chamber performance featuring a violinist, a pianist, and a cellist performing together on a stage.

Figure 23. Visual indication of instrumentation: cello entrance
 Cellist Syneva Colle featured in “A Fixed Idea” (right) when the cello enters at mm. 21 (left)
 Source: *Love Sweet*, “A Fixed Idea,” mm. 21, © 2013 Jennifer Higdon. Used with permission.

The figure consists of two parts. On the left is a musical score for the beginning of 'A Fixed Idea' (mm. 21). The top staff is for the voice (Soprano) with lyrics 'Dull re-mem-brance taught re-mem-bers on un - eas-ing-by...'. The cello part (Vc) enters in the second measure. The piano accompaniment (Vc) is in the third and fourth staves. On the right is a photograph of cellist Syneva Colle performing the piece.

Fixed-direction, wall-mounted cameras installed for live-streaming concerts in traditional performance venues are not designed to convey either visual or auditory detail, to the level that an unfamiliar audience can see the mechanical workings of the instruments making sound or differentiate where on the stage a sound originates. These live-stream cameras are mounted well above normal sightlines at the back of a concert hall and while their placement is advantageous to prevent accidental foot traffic blocking the video feed, they cannot show visual details or create an immersive experience. Musicians dedicate many years to learning their craft and so are at risk of taking for granted familiarity with instrumental and vocal timbres. It is important to consciously think of audience members who are non-music professionals and therefore do not regularly encounter and perhaps do not understand performance elements that we consider unsurprising. By showing a clear, high-definition, up-close image of each instrument as they are highlighted in the music, I empower new audiences to make multi-sensory connections during performance.

Additionally, by integrating multiple camera angles, I create a more intimate and personal performance experience, which fosters greater audience engagement through an immersive experience of sitting in different seats in the hall. Dickinson's poetry is appealing to so many composers because the "missing" elements of her life allow each of us to superimpose our own wild speculation onto her story. We give her work meaning because we find within it a personal connection. I mirror this personalization by using a mixture of close-up facial expressions dispersed within wide shots of the stage. I also refrain from showing the venue's "house," which prevents the viewership from seeing how small or large, empty or full, the performance space is. I leave it to each viewer's

imagination to determine whether they want to be in a grand concert hall or in a private *salon*. I also use various camera angles to create a sense of the three-dimensional, immersive performance experience one gets when physically in a concert hall. This “surround sight” is the visual equivalent to surround sound.

Finally, my performance attire was curated thoughtfully to emphasize the contemporary egalitarian nature of song and chamber music performance in the twenty-first century. Classical music among younger audiences can have an unjustly assigned element of class distinction and elitism, hold-overs from a rich performance history, rooted in colonialist ideology. For this reason, all webinar performances were recorded without the traditional female attire of a floor-length gown. Instead, I wore a brightly colored, geometric patterned blouse to emphasize contrast against the solid black background of a concert grand piano. Black leggings, purchased at Target and recycled jewelry were purposefully included to impart an edgy, sleek, and contemporary style, achievable across a range of budgets.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Lessons Learned

I embarked upon this project with the intent to celebrate the literary legacies of Emily Dickinson and Amy Lowell. This project demonstrates that these two poets overcame the artificial patriarchal parameters and emerged as literary giants. Their legacies contribute to a wealth of art song literature that continues to captivate audiences with its relatability, personality, and dynamism.

Every performance brings with it a wealth of lessons learned, both about the repertoire presented and about the performers themselves. This dissertation is no exception. The process of creating and executing this project has reinforced the following notions:

- 1) **Art song is a transformative medium that begins as a poetic idea and ends in performance.** There must be an author of text to write the words; a composer of notes to create the music; performers to breathe life into those musical gestures; and an audience to feel the artistic expression.
- 2) **Writing style influences later usage, even across different art forms.** The subject matter and literary forms employed by Dickinson and Lowell informed the music that was subsequently created. Their original voices are audible across time and genre.
- 3) **The performer's role is poetic and essential.** The form cannot exist without a performer to lift it off the page.
- 4) **Technology expands the reach of an art form.** When used thoughtfully and deliberately, technology becomes a tool reaching new communities previously

excluded, silenced, or misrepresented.

- 5) **Narrative inquiry and self-reflexivity are feminist strategies.** A feminist lens validates the individual's lived experience and artistic interpretation, which is a powerful method for classical art song performance and appreciation in the twenty-first century.
- 6) **Art song performance is about inclusivity.** There exists in each of us a commonality at the most basic human level, which enables us to connect authentically with a performance, regardless of race, gender, or age.

This document's goal is to create a resource for future performers of art song by modeling, with potential for expansion, performances enhanced by educational components and thoughtful integration of new and emerging technologies. Classical art song performance does not need repair nor does it need to cater to bigger, better, and faster entertainment trends. Adding new technologies to the existing medium is about meeting an audience in their current world, mixing a foreign musical experience with familiar elements of entertainment, so that each viewer is empowered to make personal connections with these new sounds and experiences. Art song consumption is highly personal because we interpret each layer of the art form—the text, the music, and the performers' artistic choices—based on our own lived histories. For this reason, art song is unique among genres and should be protected for future artists and audiences to enjoy.

What Next?

This project carries potential for expansion on multiple fronts, including new text sources, venues, and community partnerships and it is its scalability which encourages new growth of art song in the twenty-first century. There is no shortage of source

material by Dickinson and Lowell so although my research has thus far only included art songs, song cycles, and monodramas, I could also incorporate multi-movement works in future performances. Examples of these larger-scale compositions are *Lilacs...A poem by Amy Lowell* (2012) composed by Thomas Oboe Lee and *The Jewels in Our Fingers* (2017) with text by Emily Dickinson, composed by Ashi Day. This project could also expand to include text settings of other poets' work such as Maya Angelou, Sara Teasdale, Sylvia Plath, Marilyn Chin, and Audre Lorde, all of whom have compelling stories to share, unique lived experiences to spotlight, and creative contributions to celebrate. Additionally, this work validates digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Soundcloud, and Spotify as spaces for art song performance that can complement traditional venues. Creative application of technology can also expand physical concert venue options to include libraries, clubs, hallways, parks, and even stairwells.⁵³ This in turn can increase community engagement in both physical *and* digital spheres.

The most important way in which this project can expand is through the prospect of forging new community connections. Relationships between stakeholders of the art song medium—the poet, the composer, the performer, and the audience—have as many permutations as there are art songs published, and exploring these relationships fosters human expression beyond the bounds of any individual artistic discipline or form. An author can read poetry aloud before an art song performance, student composers can collaborate with performing artists on commissioning projects, local musicians can give

⁵³Ventures such as the Green Stairwell Concert Series (<https://www.greenstairwell.com/>) curate collaborations between contemporary art and music disciplines to provide unique and powerful concert experiences.

pre-concert lectures about the interdisciplinary elements of music, and audiences can engage in talk-back sessions and online chat forums post-performance. Each of these instances exemplify how art song today can thrive in a hybrid world of classical performance reimagined through the digital lens of the twenty-first century. Embracing the best that each creative entity brings to the performance experience has the potential to unite disparate communities and reverse the isolation realized by a pandemic that disrupted the arts on a global scale.

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Biographical resource about Emily Dickinson and catalog listing of her poems that have been set to music across multiple genres. Includes images, letters, and critiques about Dickinson's work, as they relate to music and the transformation from one medium (poetry) to another (music).

Macarthur, Sally. *Towards a Twenty-First-Century Feminist Politics of Music*. Sydney: University of Western Sydney, 2010.

Secondary project source: reference consulted.

McFerran, Katrina, Philippa Derrington, and Suvi Saarikallio, eds. *Handbook of Music, Adolescents, and Wellbeing*. First ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Information about the affordances of technology as means for accessing musical performances.

McGann, Jerome. "Emily Dickinson's Visible Language," in *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Judith Farr. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996. 248–259.

Essay describes the unique visual layout of Dickinson's fascicles and argues that typographical convention should change to accommodate her work, not the other way around.

Merrill, Lisa. "Feminist Humor: Rebellious and Self-Affirming." In *Last Laughs*, edited by Regina Barreca. New York, NY: Gordon and Breach, 1988.

Secondary project source: reference consulted.

Michaels, Patrice. *The Long View: A Portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Nine Songs*. Patrice Michaels Publishing, 2017.

Song cycle characterizing the life and work of late Supreme Court Justice Ginsburg. Inspirational source for "Little Women Long Shadows" dissertation concept.

Morton, Marsha L., and Peter L. Schmunk, eds. *The Arts Entwined: Music and Painting in the Nineteenth Century*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 2000.

A collection of essays exploring the specific detail of interchange between visual and aural arts. It discusses the symbiotic relationship between different art media, specifically music and painting, which can be applied to a wider artistic landscape.

Mortyakova, Julia, director. Music by Women Festival, Mississippi University for Women. March 2–4, 2023. <https://www.muw.edu/musicbywomen>.

Annual conference held in Columbus Mississippi dedicated to showcasing music composed by women. Inspirational source for “Little Women Long Shadows” dissertation concept.

Munich, Adrienne, and Melissa Bradshaw, editors. *Amy Lowell, American Modern*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Biography of Amy Lowell, American poet, patron, and critic, as well as a collection of analytical essays discussing her writing style, literary themes, and leadership in the Imagist poetry movement.

Nevitt, Laura, director. *Lilith Vocal Ensemble*. Accessed March 4, 2023. www.lilithvocalensemble.com

Treble voice ensemble whose strives to push boundaries and champion each voice as important, heard, and respected. Inspirational source for “Little Women Long Shadows” dissertation concept.

O’Neill, Susan A. “Entangled Musical Lives: Affordances of Spaces in Young People’s Music Engagement for Connectedness and Wellbeing” in *Music, Adolescents, and Wellbeing*, ed. by Katrina McFerran, Philippa Derrington, Suvi Saarikallio. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Essay discussing what design features of digital media platforms enable accelerated engagement.

Piazza-Pick, Jennifer Sue. “See It to Be It: Art Songs by American Women Composers.” DMA diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2020. Digital Repository at the University of Maryland.

Inspirational source for “Little Women Long Shadows” dissertation concept.

Placanica, Francesca. “The Unsung One: The Performer’s Voice in Twentieth-Century Musical Monodrama.” *Journal of Musicological Research* 37, no. 2 (2018): 119–40.

Article that discusses the importance of the human voice as a participant that conveys meaning in the monodrama topos/genre.

- Previn, Andre. "Will There Really Be A Morning?" *Three Dickinson Songs*. New York, NY: G. Schirmer, 1999.
Music score; incorporated in webinar series.
- Sewall, Richard B. *The Life of Emily Dickinson*. Volumes 1–2. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1974.
Two-volume biography of Emily Dickinson. Provides background on the Dickinson family in addition to ED.
- Shatin, Judith. *Patterns*. Wendigo Music, 2018.
Monodrama for soprano and piano. Setting of "Patterns" (1915), poem by Amy Lowell. Approximately 25 minutes. Commissioned by Amy Johnson, soprano.
- Sheppard, Alice. "From Kate Sanborn to Feminist Psychology: The Social Context of Women's Humor, 1885–1985." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 10 (1986), 155–170.
Secondary project source: reference consulted.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985.
Secondary project source: reference consulted.
- Sol, Beverly and Ann Dorr. "Cyclical Implications in Aaron Copland's 'Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson.'" *College Music Symposium* 32 (1992): 99–128.
Article cataloging evidence that the twelve songs in Copland's collection create a "double mirror image both musically and textually." (101). Article also served as methodological inspiration for dissertation project.
- Thomas, Richard Pearson. "I Never Saw A Moor." *At last, to be identified!* Fayetteville, AR: Portage Press, 1992.
Music score; incorporated in webinar series.
- Walker, Nancy. "Emily Dickinson and the Self: Humor as Identity." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 2, no. 1 (1983): 57–68.
Dickinson's use of poetic devices to manipulate readers' perceptions of her femininity and stature as either diminutive or grand, masculine, feminine or neuter.
- Weinbergin, Haim, and Phillippa Derrington. "What's the WiFi code in here?": Connecting with Adolescents in Music Therapy," in *Handbook of Music, Adolescents, and Wellbeing*, ed. by Katrina McFerran, Philippa Derrington, Suvi Saarikallio. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
Essay discussing strategies for engaging with adolescents, using music to facilitate.

Wolff, Cynthia Griffin. “[Im]pertinent Construction of Body and Self: Dickinson’s Use of the Romantic Grotesque,” in *Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Judith Farr. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996. 119–125.

Essay explores Dickinson’s fascination with the “unknown realms of death.” Also argues against associating Dickinson’s poetry with her personal state of self and psyche.

Zapruder, Matthew. *Why Poetry*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2017.

Secondary project source: reference consulted.

APPENDIX A, *PATTERNS*



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Shari Eve Feldman
Soprano

Ying-Shan Su
Piano

February 12, 2021
5:00 PM

Gildenhorn Recital Hall
AT THE CLARICE

**This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree.**

Shari Feldman is a student of Delores Ziegler.

Lecture:

Patterns: what is their hold on us, and can they be broken? A discussion of the relationships between Amy Lowell's narrative *Imagist* poem, first published 1916, and Judith Shatin's setting of the text, just over a century later.

Shatin references poetic elements such as repetition of key words and phrases, thematic recall, and contrasting imagery, and creates "circular" melodies, harmonic soundscapes depicting a contrasting reality and fantasy worlds, and rhythmic figures that obscure or emphasize the meter, to craft a dramatic musical reflection of a woman, held captive by the "patterns" of society.

-Intermission-

Recital:

Patterns (2018)

Judith Shatin (b. 1949)

Text: Patterns

I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled [sic] fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden [patterned] paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whale-bone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the splashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain [basin]
Comes down the garden paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze [along the patterned paths],
A bright and laughing maze [for my heavy-booted lover,]
Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With [In] the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon—
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom,
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the Duke.
“Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell
Died in action Thursday sen’night.”
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
“Any answer, Madam,” said my footman.
“No,” I told him.
“See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer.”
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown.
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern;
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.

He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessings.
And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

Lowell, Amy. "Patterns" *The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell with Introduction*
by Louis Untermeyer. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company, 1955.
Text originally published in collection: Men, Women and Ghosts, 1916.

APPENDIX B, *GLORIOUS NOTHINGS*



SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Shari Eve Feldman
Soprano

Mackenzie Lyn Marr
Piano

October 17, 2022
5:00 PM

Gildenhorn Recital Hall
AT THE CLARICE

**This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree.**

Shari Feldman is a student of Delores Ziegler.

Glorious Nothings (2020)

Steve Lebetkin (living)

Prologue

First Interlude | Long Years Apart

Second Interlude | Look Back on Time

Third Interlude | All the Soul Can Do

Fourth Interlude | A Spider and a Flower

Fifth Interlude | The Long Arms of the Wind

Sixth Interlude | When the Cricket Came

Seventh Interlude | Summer's Soft Assemblies

Eighth Interlude | What Mr. Erskine Said

Ninth Interlude | Piano Interlude No. 1 | One Note from One Bird

Tenth Interlude | Glorious Nothings | Piano Interlude No. 2

Eleventh Interlude

Epilogue

***Glorious Nothings* libretto**

I. Prologue

Good evening. I'm Miss Emily Dickinson. I write poetry about glorious nothings in my room. I may be the most prolific poet of my generation. Yet few know. Envelopes can capture fleeting thoughts, butterflies on herbs in my garden. Beautiful and fragile, elusive, conducive to linger over like a rainbow. Snippets gone in an instant if not for my ready pen...or away they go.

Some thought I was eccentric, draped loosely in my dress, my white dress. Proud to be peculiar.

I confess I'm not religious. I venerate nature in my white dress.

Light dress. Wedding dress. But alas, no wedding for me.

I sit by my window watching white, fluffy clouds drift above trees. Glorious nothings inspire me. Beauty leaves me breathless. Poetry as my legacy.

Envelope poems and letters under wraps. Left alone to contemplate or complete. Or not. Please accept my invitation to share my notions with you now.

First Interlude:

"Thank you—Master, have you the heart in your breast—Sir—is it set like mine—a little to the left...I don't know what you can do for it—but if I had the bread on my cheek—like you—and you—had my petals—and you cared so for me—what would become of you?"

II. Long Years Apart

Long years apart

Can make no breach a second cannot fill

It seems the absence of a witch invalidates her spell

Who says the absence of a witch invalidates her spell?

The embers of a thousand years

Uncovered by her hand

That fondled them when they were fire

Will stir the hearts of man

Second Interlude:

Writing poetry is like music to me. You are privileged to hear me play. I usually make listeners wait in the next room with the door open just a crack. I don't like to make a spectacle of myself, but I do enjoy playing.

III. Look Back on Time

Look back on time with kindly eyes
He doubtless did his best
How softly sinks his trembling sun
In human nature's west

Third Interlude:

The hymns I hear out my window help me find the rhythm in my poems, even if I don't care for the dogma and revivals. I get inspired watching the birds fly by and listening to their songs. I find salvation in nature. I'm not so sure about the soul.

IV. All the Soul Can Do

On that specific pillow
Our projects flit away
The nights' tremendous morrow
And whether sleep will stay
Or usher us a stranger
To situations new
The effort made to compromise is all the soul can do

Fourth Interlude:

Sleep doesn't often stay for me. I find myself up writing by candle light in the middle of the night. During the day, I don't often have the luxury of writing at my desk. When inspiration strikes I grab anything within reach and jot down my thoughts, even a chocolate wrapper.

V. A Spider and a Flower

The fairest home I ever knew
Was founded in an hour By parties that I knew
A spider and a flower
A mansion of lace and floss
Accept my timid happiness
No joy can be in vain
But adds to some sweet dwelling
To capture sun and rain

Fifth Interlude:

Spending time in nature can be so much more inviting than entertaining callers at home. Sometimes, I sit at the top of the stairs and listen. When I feel confined by company I just have to fly. When I take letters or gifts to friends, I knock on the door and run away. I get flustered. Words fail me. I don't know what to say. Or I say too much. I do so much better with a pencil and paper.

VI. The Long Arms of the Wind

If I could crawl between
The spry arms of the wind,
I have an errand imminent
To an adjoining zone
I should not care to stop
My process is not long
The wind could wait without the gate
Or stroll the town among
To ascertain the house
And the soul within at home
And hold the wick of mine to yours
The long arms of the wind

Sixth Interlude:

I wish I could be invisible like the wind. Just go on about my business without being seen. Most people in town gawk at me. I have no desire to explain myself or my white dress.

VII. When the Cricket Came

'Twas later when the summer went
Then when the Cricket came
And yet we knew that gentle clock
'Twas sooner when the cricket went
Then when the winter came
Yet that pathetic pendulum
Keeps esoteric time

Seventh Interlude:

The seasons are as predictable as clock work—except when nature becomes capricious and gives us snow in spring. Or an early frost. Her blossoms delight me. Nature can be mysterious. Like me. That's why I love her so.

VIII. Summer's Soft Assemblies

Without a smile
Without a struggle
A summer's soft assemblies go
To their entrancing end
Unknown
For all the times we met
Estranged, however intimate
What a dissembling friend
Do our nature's soft assemblies go?

Eighth Interlude:

*Some walk along life's path with us for only a short while. More acquaintance than friend. There are few I appreciate as much as you. You saved me in my darkest hour. I hope I did the same for you.
I knew you would understand my reply to idle chatter. Mr. Erskine should have kept his thoughts to himself. It's none of his business. but our own private matter.*

IX. What Mr. Erskine Said

Thank you for knowing I did not spurn it
Because it was true, I did not
Refuse it
I denied what Mr. Erskine said
Not from detecting feeling,
But for myself it was not true
I suppose not of others
It is a joy to be with you because
I love you
If nature makes a distinction
As late as tonight
I do not know
The happy trouble toward you
Like a sigh I have till long

Ninth Interlude:

“Couldn’t Carlo, my dog, and you and I walk in the meadows an hour—and nobody cares but the Bobolink...I used to think when I died—I could see you, Master—so I died as fast as I could.” Write me soon and let me know you are alright.

XI. One Note from One Bird

One note from
One bird
Is better than
A million words
A scabbard holds but one sword
One song

Tenth Interlude:

“What would you do with me if I came “in white?” Have you the little chest to put the Alive—in? I want to see you more—Sir—than all I wish for in this world—and the wish—altered a little—will be my only one—for the skies. Could you come to New England this summer? Would you come to Amherst—Would you like to come, Master?”

XII. Glorious Nothings

Clogged only with music
Like the wheels of birds
Their high appointment in the
Late afternoon from the west and the glorious nothings
Which compose the sunset kept

Eleventh Interlude:

Music. Music was my first word. Poetry lures me away. One of my anonymous poems was mistaken for Emerson. Everyone took me for a strong independent woman, but I had a submissive side. I will never reveal my master’s identity. I am forever his Daisy.

IX. Epilogue

“Master—open your life wide, and take me in forever, I will never be tired—I will never be noisy when you want to be still. I will be glad as your best little girl—no one else will see me, but you—but that is enough—I shall not want any more.”

Libretto by Amy Drake
Glorious Nothings © 2020 Steven Lebetkin

APPENDIX C, WEBINAR SERIES PROGRAM SETS AND LINKS



I. Have you heard of art songs?



From *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1950)

Nature, the Gentlest Mother
Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?
Heart, we will forget him
Going to Heaven!

A. Copland (1900–1990)

Leili Asanbekova, piano

II. From microcosm to macrocosm



From *Six Poems by Emily Dickinson* (1978)
Bee! I'm Expecting You!

J. Duke (1899–1984)

Rhys Burgess, piano

From *In Reverence* (1985)
Papa Above!"

J. Hall (b. 1958)

From *Two Dickinsonwww Songs* (2004)
Wider than the Sky

L. Laitman (b. 1955)

From *The Faces of Love* (1999)
I Shall Not Live In Vain

J. Heggie (b. 1961)

Alfonso Hernandez, piano

The Giver of Stars (2002)
Pyrotechnics
Wu
Vernal Equinox
The Giver of Stars
Autumnal Equinox
A Sprig of Rosemary

E. Hill (living)

Leili Asanbekova, piano

III. The Amherst Myth



From <i>Dickinson Poems</i> (2016–2018) His Feet Are Shod with Gauze	E. Lau (living)
From <i>Chanting to Paradise</i> (1997) Bind me – I still can sing	L. Larsen (b. 1950)
From <i>Three Dickinson Songs</i> (1999) Will There Really Be A Morning?	A. Previn (1929–2019)
From <i>Seven Songs to poems of Emily Dickinson</i> , Op. 38 (1977) I'm nobody	R. Baksa (b. 1938)
From <i>At last, to be identified!</i> (1992) I Never Saw A Moor	R. P. Thomas (living)

Alfonso Hernandez, piano

IV. Lowell aloud



Love Sweet (2013)

Apology
The Giver of Stars
Absence
A Gift
A Fixed Idea

J. Higdon (b. 1962)

Abby Wuehler, violin; Syneva Colle, cello; Rhys Burgess, piano

APPENDIX D, WEBINAR SERIES TEXTS

Dickinson texts are numbered according to Thomas H. Johnson's variorum edition (1955). Numbering represents Johnson's judgment of chronology.

Lowell texts are reproduced from their printing in *The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell*, by Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company. Original collections are listed in parenthesis.

Mother Nature (790)

Nature, the gentlest mother,
Impatient of no child,
The feeblest or the waywardest, —
Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill
By traveller is heard,
Restraining rampant squirrel
Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation,
A summer afternoon, —
Her household, her assembly;
And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles
Incites the timid prayer
Of the minutest cricket,
The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps;
Then, bending from the sky

With infinite affection
And infiniter care,
Her golden finger on her lip,
Wills silence everywhere.

Why — do they shut Me out of Heaven? (248)

Why do they shut Me out of Heaven?
Did I sing too loud?
But I can say a little minor,
Timid as a bird.

Wouldn't the Angels try me
Just once more
Just see if I troubled them —
But don't shut the door!

Oh, if I were the Gentleman
In the white robes
And they were the little hand
that knocked —
Could I forbid?

Heart, we will forget him! (47)

Heart, we will forget him!
You and I, to-night!
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him!

Going to heaven! (79)

Going to heaven!
I don't know when,
Pray do not ask me how, —
Indeed, I'm too astonished
To think of answering you!
Going to heaven! —
How dim it sounds!
And yet it will be done
As sure as flocks go home at night
Unto the shepherd's arm!

Perhaps you 're going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first,
Save just a little place for me
Close to the two I lost!
The smallest "robe" will fit me,
And just a bit of "crown";
For you know we do not mind our dress
When we are going home.

I'm glad I don't believe it,
For it would stop my breath,
And I'd like to look a little more
At such a curious earth!
I am glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty autumn afternoon
I left them in the ground.

Bee! I'm expecting you! (1035)

Bee! I'm expecting you!
Was saying Yesterday
To Somebody you know
That you were due —

The Frogs got Home last Week —
Are settled, and at work —
Birds, mostly back —
The Clover warm and thick —

You'll get my Letter by
The seventeenth; Reply
Or better, be with me —
Yours, Fly.

Papa above! (61)

Papa above!
Regard a Mouse
O'erpowered by the Cat!
Reserve within thy kingdom
A "Mansion" for the Rat!

Snug in seraphic Cupboards
To nibble all the day
While unsuspecting Cycles
Wheel solemnly away!

The Brain – is wider than the Sky – (632)

The brain is wider than the sky,
For, put them side by side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea,
For, hold them, blue to blue,
The one the other will absorb,
As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God,
For, lift them, pound for pound,
And they will differ, if they do,
As syllable from sound.

If I can stop one heart from breaking (919)

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Pyrotechnics (*Pictures of the Floating World*)

Our meeting was like the upward swish of a rocket
In the blue night.
I do not know when it burst;
But now I stand gaping,
In a glory of falling stars.

Flame Apples (*Pictures of the Floating World*)

Little hot apples of fire,
Burst out of the flaming stem
Of my heart,
I do not understand how you quickened and grew,
And you amaze me
While I gather you.

I lay you, one by one,
Upon a table.
And now you seem beautiful and strange to me,
And I stand before you,
Wondering.

Vernal Equinox (*Pictures of the Floating World*)

The scent of hyacinths, like a pale mist, lies between me and my book;
And the South Wind, washing through the room,
Makes the candles quiver.
My nerves sting at a spatter of rain on the shutter,
And I am uneasy with the thrusting of green shoots
Outside, in the night.
Why are you not here to overpower me with your tense and urgent love?

The Giver of Stars (*Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*)

Hold your soul open for my welcoming.
Let the quiet of your spirit bathe me
With its clear and rippled coolness,
That, loose-limbed and weary, I find rest,
Outstretched upon your peace, as on a bed of ivory.

Let the flickering flame of your soul play all about me,
That into my limbs may come the keenness of fire,
The life and joy of tongues of flame,
And, going out from you, tightly strung and in tune,
I may rouse the blear-eyed world,
And pour into it the beauty which you have begotten.

Autumnal Equinox (*Pictures of the Floating World*)

Why do you not sleep, Beloved?

It is so cold that the stars stand out of the sky
Like golden nails not driven home.
The fire crackles pleasantly,
And I sit here listening
For your regular breathing from the room above.

What keeps you awake, Beloved?
Is it the same nightmare that keeps me strained with listening
So that I cannot read?

A Sprig of Rosemary (*Pictures of the Floating World*)

I cannot see your face.
When I think of you,
It is your hands which I see.
Your hands
Sewing,
Holding a book,
Resting for a moment on the sill of a window.
My eyes keep always the sight of your hands,
But my heart holds the sound of your voice,
And the soft brightness which is your soul.

His Feet are shod with Gauze (916)

His Feet are shod with Gauze —
His Helmet, is of Gold,
His Breast, a Single Onyx
With Chrysophrase, inlaid.

His Labor is a Chant —
His Idleness — a Tune —
Oh, for a Bee's experience
Of Clovers, and of Noon!

Bind me - I still can sing – (1005)

Bind me - I still can sing –
Banish - my mandolin
Strikes true within -

Slay - and my soul shall rise
Chanting to Paradise -
Still thine.

Will there really be a ‘Morning?’ (101)

Will there really be a morning?
Is there such a thing as day?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water-lilies?
Has it feathers like a bird?
Is it brought from famous countries
Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!
Oh, some wise man from the skies!
Please to tell a little pilgrim
Where the place called morning lies!

I'm Nobody! Who are you? (288)

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you — Nobody — too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise — you know.

How dreary — to be — Somebody!
How public — like a Frog —
To tell one's name — the livelong June —
To an admiring Bog!

I never saw a Moor (1052)

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

Apology (*Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*)

Be not angry with me that I bear
Your colors everywhere,
All through each crowded street,
And meet
The wonder-light in every eye,
As I go by.

Each plodding wayfarer looks up to gaze,
Blinded by rainbow haze,
The stuff of happiness,
No less,
Which wraps me in its glad-hued folds
Of peacock golds.

Before my feet the dusty, rough-paved way
Flushes beneath its gray.
My steps fall ringed with light,
So bright,
It seems a myriad suns are strown
About the town.

Around me is the sound of steepled bells,
And rich perfumed smells
Hang like a wind-forgotten cloud,
And shroud
Me from close contact with the world.
I dwell impearled.

You blazon me with jewelled insignia.
A flaming nebula

Rims in my life. And yet
You set
The word upon me, unconfessed
To go unguessed.

Absence (Sword Blades and Poppy Seed)

My cup is empty to-night,
Cold and dry are its sides,
Chilled by the wind from the open window.
Empty and void, it sparkles white in the moonlight.
The room is filled with the strange scent
Of wisteria blossoms.
The sway in the moon's radiance
And tap against the wall.
But the cup of my heart is still,
And cold, and empty.

When you come, it brims
Red and trembling with blood,
Heart's blood for your drinking;
To fill your mouth with love
And the bitter-sweet taste of a soul.

A Gift (Sword Blades and Poppy Seed)

See! I give myself to you, Beloved!
My words are little jars
For you to take and put upon a shelf.
Their shapes are quaint and beautiful,
And they have many pleasant colours and lustres
To recommend them.
Also the accent from them fills the room
With sweetness of flowers and crushed grasses.

When I shall have given you the last one,
You will have the whole of me,
But I shall be dead.

A Fixed Idea (*A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass*)

What torture lurks within a single thought
When grown too constant, and however kind,
However welcome still, the weary mind
Aches with its presence. Dull remembrance taught
Remembers on unceasingly; unsought
The old delight is with us but to find
That all recurring joy is pain refined,
Become a habit, and we struggle, caught.
You lie upon my heart as on a nest,
Folded in peace, for you can never know
How crushed I am with having you at rest
Heavy upon my life. I love you so
You bind my freedom from its rightful quest.
In mercy lift your drooping wings and go.

APPENDIX E, WEBINAR SERIES PROGRAM NOTES

Week 1: Have you heard of art songs?

Have you heard of art songs? Art song is a classical music genre, commonly defined as poetry set to music. It's meant to be performed by singers like me, in collaboration with pianists. It differs from other song genres, like pop- or folksongs in that, with art song, the piano is equally important as the voice. It's not "voice plus accompaniment." It's a storytelling process where the singer delivers narrative—the text—while the pianist creates the character, mood, and atmosphere of the piece. Through this webinar series, I will take you through a collection of art songs and chamber music to demonstrate how to find personal meaning in our contemporary context, for classical art song performance. For the purposes of my project, I have chosen text settings by Emily Dickinson and Amy Lowell. Both were nineteenth century, Massachusetts born women from wealthy families who rejected the social conventions of marriage and motherhood. Yet despite these parallels, their poetic styles are polar opposites. Dickinson cocoons herself in minutiae and simplicity while Lowell's writing is as grand in scope as her personality was large in life. It is these two women's literature, lore, and legacies which make them ideal subjects for this project, the purpose of which is to dissolve both real and imagined barriers of exclusivity in western European musical traditions. Dickinson and Lowell, social outliers in their own time, are today trailblazers, timeless and transcendent. They live through their work. And that's the beauty of Art Songs. They are alive! They are born as text by a Poet, transformed into music by the Composer, lifted from page to stage by Performers, and heard by you, the Audience who connects, on the deepest level with each creative soul that brought the Art Song into being. So let's begin with selections from Aaron Copland's cycle *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*. I chose these songs because they demonstrate the quintessential partnership of the voice and the piano, and they—as Copland explains—address subject matter particularly close to Miss Dickinson: nature, death, life, eternity. I think you will agree with me that these are themes we all encounter in our lives, despite it being more than a century since Dickinson's passing. From a musical perspective, you will hear the piano deliver bird songs in "Nature the Gentlest Mother" and a heavenly chorus in "Why Do They Shut Me Out of Heaven?" The piano will also represent the heartbeat of the devastated protagonist in "Heart, We Will Forget Him" and the call of the Congregationalist Church service in "Going to Heaven!" Here are selections from Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*...

Week 2: Poetry Personified

Welcome back! This set is a double feature: one set of Dickinson texts, followed by one of Lowell's. By programming these two sets consecutively, I highlight the differences of Dickinson's and Lowell's respective writing styles. You see, both women tackle vast ideas, like love, life, solitude, and eternity, yet they do so in entirely contrasting ways. Dickinson juxtaposes universal concepts with the "smallness" of her immediate world, filling her poems with bees and flies, mice and cats, sponges and buckets, and birds in their nests. You will hear her miniature world in the first part of this set comprising songs by four different composers: John Duke, Juliana Hall, Lori Laitman, and Jake Heggie;

which I've titled "A Microcosm." By contrast, Lowell takes us on a journey through love and loss, unrest and peace, by embracing a "more is more" approach. She paints vivid pictures of sweeping night vistas and falling stars, bursting flames; winds rattling windowpanes; the keenness of fire; and the brightness of a soul, all depicting the same themes as Dickinson's miniature world. In the second half of this program, we travel from Microcosm to Macrocosm. Lowell's text is set in an epic journey through a six-song cycle by Edie Hill called *The Giver of Stars*. Whether you prefer Lowell's epic scale or Dickinson's quaint imagery, the message remains the same: there is a poetry style to suit all tastes. So let's begin with a microcosm...

Week 3: The Amherst Myth

Why are so many composers drawn to Emily Dickinson's poetry? Is it her exactitude of language? The way she plays with meter and phrasing? Maybe it's her biting wit. Or perhaps the mystery of her self-imposed solitude. Regardless of why, there's no denying that despite being unknown in her own lifetime, Dickinson lives on today in the capacity each of us needs, whether that be one of light-hearted jest or in defiance of God herself. This set of songs represents those Dickinson texts that have touched the hearts of generations of composers, performers, and audiences alike. My design, in building a set from these disparate pieces, was to show a diverse group of composers from different decades, each providing their own interpretation for Emily Dickinson's words. The five songs you are about to hear, in this order, are: *His Feet Are Shod with Gauze* by Emily Lau; *Bind me—I still can sing* by Libby Larsen; *Will There Really Be A Morning?* By Andre Previn; *I'm nobody* by Robert Baksa and finally; *I Never Saw A Moor* by Richard Pearson Thomas.

Week 4: Lowell Aloud

Imagism was a literary movement sparked in reaction to French Symbolism in the late nineteenth century. Amy Lowell, though not its inventor, became one of Imagism's most vocal champions in the early twentieth century. She summarized the Imagist creed as one that uses the exact right word—no more and no less—to create concentrated, sharply focused, phrases covering any subject, no matter how risqué. Though most Imagists of the time valued brevity, Lowell tended to write expansively rather than succinctly, which yielded a body of literature that was saturated and vibrant both when read on the page and when spoken aloud. Such rich texts can be difficult to set in the traditional "voice and piano" art song context because so many adjectives overwhelm the narrative. In the song cycle you are about to hear, titled *Love Sweet*, composer Jennifer Higdon clarifies Lowell's poetry by using different instrumental timbres and textures to peel back the layers of meaning from within the text. This performance includes four different timbres: soprano, violin, cello, and piano. In the first song, titled "Apology," the piano, violin, and cello crescendo together at the phrase "a flaming nebula," which paints a picture of a cosmic explosion. In the second song, "The Giver of Stars," the two string instruments begin the piece in open octave intervals, creating space and depth between them which mirrors the opening line of text: "Hold your soul open for my welcoming." In the third song, titled "Absence," Higdon contrasts ensemble passages with solo vocal phrases,

highlighting the sense of “emptiness” portrayed in the text. Listen for the word “empty.” You'll hear it more than once in an exposed setting. The next song, titled "A Gift," includes a wandering violin melody that represents the heady aroma of springtime as the poetry references "the smell of flowers and crushed grasses" wafting around the room. And finally, in the last song, titled "A Fixed Idea," the piano's heavy bassline represents the poetry's "tortured idea lurking," and peace is found albeit only briefly when the piano falls silent. Overall, the distinct sounds of the violin, cello, piano, and voice create layers of timbral colors to help the listener digest what might otherwise be an overwhelmingly complex aural experience. So now, here is the last set of this series, *Love Sweet*, by Jennifer Higdon...

Close:

I hope the musical and poetic elements discussed have introduced you to the rich body of literature that is classical art song. You see, it doesn't matter what your background is. Poetry—no matter its style, as Dickinson and Lowell have shown us—is the language of people and music—as is evident by the many composers featured in this project—is the language of emotion. Thus, the Art Song genre—comprising both—is an expression of our innate humanity. This work is about visibility, representation, and self-expression—of us all—in the classical performance world, because we all speak the languages of poetry and song.