



JOURNAL OF SINGING

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL
OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF TEACHERS OF SINGING, INC.





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DRAMA IN SONG: HALL, IVES, AND STRAUSS

Three beautiful and elegant editions, recently published, feature two important composers, American composer Charles Ives and late Romantic icon Richard Strauss. The anthologies reviewed here are voice teacher friendly, especially so the new Ives collections. American Juliana Hall, one of our most prolific composers, is now represented by publisher E. C. Schirmer, who brings to the public her two very different monodramas, one for voice and piano, and one for unaccompanied voice. Both offer opportunities for dramatic programming choices for the advanced/professional singer.

Ives, Charles E. (1874–1954). *Twelve Easy Songs for Low Voice and Piano/for High Voice and Piano*. Neely Bruce and James B. Sinclair, editors. 2019 Ives Society Edition/Peer Music Classical. 1) “Autumn”; 2) “The Cage”; 3) “The Circus Band”; 4) “Down East”; 5) “Her Eyes”; 6)

“In the Alley”; 7) “Memories”; 8) “Nature’s Way”; 9) “The Side Show”; 10) “There is a Lane”; 11) “The Things Our Fathers Loved”; 12) “The Waiting Soul.”

The editors of these new anthologies have created a resource especially aimed toward young performers and their teachers. Based on newly completed urtext editions, the anthologies have a number of features that make them particularly helpful for both singers and pianists. In addition to the printed texts, a foreword contains fascinating background information on each song, and the editors also include suggestions for further research, notably Charles Ives, *114 Songs*; Ives, *129 Songs* (both edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock), and Ives, *Forty Early Songs* (edited by John Kirkpatrick and James B. Sinclair).

The editors acknowledge the challenges inherent in performing the songs of the iconic American composer; Ives’s “idiosyncratic notation” has been changed sometimes, without comment, in order to make the songs clearer; droll instructions are given as to the challenges of some songs. (“While the voice part is easy enough, the piano part is quite difficult. Indeed, the last page is virtually impossible. A mad scramble that invites faking, the pianist can be forgiven anything except caution!”—The Circus Band.) Amusing directives regarding performance features, such as the whistling called for in “Memories,” are woven throughout the Foreword. Love for and a deep understanding of the composer and his contribution are present in every song description. Performers are encouraged to present these gems as little scenas, and toward that intention much helpful detail is included

about the atmosphere or geographic setting for each.

One may already have the larger editions of the songs of Charles Ives mentioned earlier in this column, but these anthologies, created as they are for young performers, and with their bounty of information, are an indispensable addition to any vocal music library.

Hall, Juliana (b. 1958). *Godiva: Monodrama for Mezzo Soprano and Piano*. Libretto by Caitlin Vincent. Juliana Hall Music, 2019 (soon to be available through E.C. Schirmer).

Sentiment: Monodrama for Soprano Solo Unaccompanied. Libretto by Caitlin Vincent. I. “Prologue”; II. “Joy”; III. “Sorrow”; IV. “Anger”; V. “Remorse”; VI. “Epilogue.” E.C. Schirmer, 2019.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines monodrama as, “a drama acted or designed to be acted by a single person,” and *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines it further as “a dramatic representation of what passes in an individual mind, as well as to a musical drama for a solo performer.” Peter Maxwell Davies, *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, op. 39, Benjamin Britten’s *Phaedra*, or even Libby Larsen’s *The Last Words of the Wives of King Henry VIII*, all may fall into the category of monodrama, wherein characters or successive states of mind can be dramatically presented and even staged. Hall for the first time has created two works in this genre, setting the texts of singer and librettist Caitlin Vincent, whom the composer describes as “enormously talented, uniquely inventive, and deeply imaginative.”

The composer's instructions for both pieces request strict adherence to the markings in the score, yet encourage "flexibility in timing and tempi as local acoustics dictate." *Sentiment* must be sung from memory; *Godiva* does not include the same injunction.

Godiva is a fantastic take on the legend of Lady Godiva, who famously rode naked through the streets of thirteenth century Coventry. The librettist, using the voice of the brave protagonist, tells a different side of the story, centered on a historical tidbit not commonly known. The composer was inspired to write *Godiva* for British mezzo soprano Kitty Whately, who performed the premiere at the Beverly Chamber Music Festival, in Yorkshire, England. It has since been performed at Wigmore Hall, the 2019 Oxford Lieder Festival, and at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall (the last by mezzo soprano Loralee Songer). Kitty Whately asked Juliana Hall to write a song for a strong female character, and the story from Lady Godiva's point of view is a strong one of social justice and feminism.

Is it worse to be forgotten than to
be misremembered?
I am tired of the stories.
How they linger on my hair,
my sex, my skin.

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I am Godiva.
Not a victim or a fool.
Or a vessel for men's desire.
Just a woman who made a choice.

The result is an effective and affecting tale, spun with Hall's hallmark interesting and varied piano accompaniment, but with perhaps a greater inclusion of lyricism and tonality than is heard in some of the composer's more recent works. The gallop and clip-clop of the horse's gait is heard throughout, preceding the narrative that is a nod and a challenge to men, the usual chroniclers of history. The heroine expresses her frustration with history's description of the event, and then "tells the tale" of the famous ride.

Hall's sensitivity to tessitura for different voice types is born out in both *Godiva* and *Sentiment*. In an interview from "Calliope's Call" (<https://calliope-calling-qa-with-composer-juliana-hall-part-one->), Hall says, "I never begin a new piece without deciding exactly what voice type will sing it. Texts always tell me what voice types are correct, when I begin looking for a text for a new piece. Some texts are light and transparent, while others are thick and heavy, or some have deep, rich colors and images while other texts may have a sense of playfulness or whimsy . . . so I always seem to hear a piece with a very specific sound in my mind." The demands for the mezzo soprano in *Godiva* lie in the *Zwischenfach* category, with lines frequently prepared for and soaring above the staff, only descending into the lower register when Godiva's husband speaks briefly.

Sentiment is lighter fare, although it does run the gamut of deeply felt emotions presented in a kaleidoscope fashion, switching *attacca* from one section to the next, without pauses. The composer set out to write a more

standard piano-vocal score, but early on decided that the dramatic unfolding of the singer's emotional state would be better served by the voice alone. As in any piece where the voice is unaccompanied, either as an interlude in a song accompanied by orchestra or piano, or as an a cappella piece, the singer must employ a strong sense of the unseen harmonic structure. Although there is not a storyline *per se*, a singer who commands a wide range of dynamics and vocal color, with a strong commitment to dramatic arc in the song, will find Juliana Hall's *Sentiment* a theatrically satisfying and musically exciting piece to perform.

Strauss, Richard (1864–1949). *Fünf Lieder für Gesang und Klavier—for voice and piano, op. 39*. Robert Forsberg Musikverlag, 2019 (Hal Leonard). 1) "Leises Lied"; 2) "Jung-hexenlied"; 3) "Der Arbeitmann"; 4) "Befreit"; 5) "Lied an meinen Sohn."

57 Lieder, hohe Stimme/for high voice. Op. 10; selections from op. 17; op. 19; selections from op. 21; selections from op. 26; Op. 27; Op. 29; selections from op. 32; selections from op. 36; selections from op. 37; selections from op. 39; sections from op. 41; selections from op. 47; selections from op. 48; selections from op. 49; selections from op. 68; selections from op. 69; *Vier letzte Lieder für Sopran und Orchester*.

51 Lieder für mittlere/tiefe Stimme/for medium/low voice. Op. 10; selections from op. 15; selections from op. 17; Op. 19; selections from op. 21; Op. 27; Op. 29; selections from op. 32; selections from op. 36;