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Song Cycles for Soprano by Richard Pearson Thomas

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SONG CYCLES FOR SOPRANO BY RICHARD PEARSON THOMAS

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ABSTRACT

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In his eight song cycles for soprano, American composer Richard Pearson Thomas offers soprano recitalists, their teachers and audiences a diverse palette of fresh, accessible repertoire. Mr. Thomas writes very idiomatically for both the voice and the piano, due in large part to the fact that he is an accomplished pianist who often collaborates with singers. Three of his cycles also include stringed-instruments: violin, viola and cello. Thomas' songs range from dark and dramatic to light and whimsical in nature; they also vary in musical complexity and technical difficulty. While some of the songs are appropriate for younger students, others, especially the chamber music cycles, are better suited for advanced performers.

This dissertation explores the following cycles: *A Little Nonsense, At last, to be identified!*, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay, Three Kisses, Race for the Sky, A Wicked Girl, Spring Rain* and *Twilight*. These cycles include settings of poetry by Edward Lear, Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sara Teasdale, Sylvia Plath, Hilary North, Alicia Vasquez and Christina Rossetti. It includes a biography of the composer, a thorough musical analysis of each cycle, a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, transcriptions of two interviews with the composer and one interview with Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, a soprano who commissioned and premiered *Race for*

the Sky, a complete list of works to date and a brief guide for performers, teachers and coaches in selecting repertoire from these cycles.

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Because of the overwhelming number of sopranos in the United States, the need for new repertoire for sopranos, particularly American repertoire, is acute. In his eight song cycles for soprano, American composer Richard Pearson Thomas offers soprano recitalists, their teachers and audiences a diverse palette of fresh, accessible repertoire. The author of this dissertation hopes that by providing a thorough examination of these song cycles for the soprano, more performers and teachers will include these selections in their recital repertoire.

Delimitations

This dissertation contains an analysis of eight song cycles for soprano by Thomas: *A Little Nonsense, At last, to be Identified!, Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, *Three Kisses, Race for the Sky, A Wicked Girl, Spring Rain* and *Twilight*. There are four cycles for soprano that were not included, for the following reasons. *Portraits of Imagined Love* was not included because the pieces in this cycle cannot be considered art songs in the traditional sense, as they were borrowed from some of Thomas' earlier musical theatre works. *Tunes for Tots* and *O Night Divine!* were omitted because they consist of arrangements of existing melodies. *Young Love* was omitted because it is intended for adolescent singers. Thomas' individual pieces for soprano were not included

because the purpose of this dissertation was to examine his song cycles. Because this dissertation focused on works for the soprano voice, Thomas' song cycles written for other voice types were omitted. Finally, Thomas' operas, musicals and collaborative works with students were omitted because this dissertation focused solely upon the composer's art song repertoire.

Significance of the Problem

Though most singers are not yet familiar with Thomas' works, his compositions have been gaining national recognition recently. Thomas' *Race for the Sky* was featured in performance at the national convention of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) in New Orleans in 2004. In addition, Judith Carman has recently reviewed four of his song cycles in the *Journal of Singing*.[1,2,3,4] There are nineteen commercially available recordings that include selections from Thomas' works.[5] In addition, there are recordings of student recitals that include songs by Thomas. However, from the soprano cycles, only the following have been recorded: *The Owl and the Pussycat* (*A Little Nonsense*), *The Road to Avrillé* (*Songs to Poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay*), three selections from *At last, to be identified!*: *Doubt me! My Dim Companion!*, *Wild Nights---Wild Nights!* and *I never saw a Moor* and the cycle *Race for the Sky*.[6]

Thomas' cycles can be challenging and fulfilling for the artists performing them and rewarding for audiences who will be touched by their sincere beauty. Thomas writes idiomatically for both the voice and the piano, due in large part to the fact that he is an accomplished pianist who has extensive experience collaborating with singers. Three of

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1Judith Carman, "Music Reviews: 'At last to be identified!'" *Journal of Singing* 60, no. 3 (January/February 2004): 316.
2Judith Carman, "Music Reviews: 'Drum Taps'," *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 5 (May/June 2008): 653-654.
3Judith Carman, "Music Reviews: 'Race for the Sky'," *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 3 (January/February 2008): 387-389.
4Judith Carman, "Music Reviews: 'Spring Rain'," *Journal of Singing* 65, no. 4 (March/April 2009): 502-503.
5See *Bibliography*, Commercial Recordings, 206-208.
6See *Bibliography*, Commercial Recordings and Student Recital Recordings, 206-208, 210.

the cycles include a stringed-instrument in addition to voice and piano. Thomas' cycles range from dark and dramatic to light and whimsical in nature; they also vary in musical complexity and technical difficulty. While some of them are appropriate for younger students (e.g. selections from *At last, to be identified!* and *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*), others are better suited for advanced musicians (e.g. *Three Kisses*).

Incidence of the Problem

I first became acquainted with the music of Richard Pearson Thomas when my teacher, Dr. Melissa Malde, suggested I sing his cycle *Race for the Sky* for my first doctoral recital. This cycle commemorates the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.[7] Thomas' compositional style and text-setting immediately intrigued me, and I found the cycle to be very rewarding not only for myself, but also for my pianist, violinist and audience. For my second doctoral recital, I sang two pieces from the song cycle *At last, to be identified!: I never saw a Moor* and *Wild Nights---Wild Nights!*, as well as his individual work, *Ballad of the Boy Who Went to Sea*. *I never saw a Moor* particularly resonated with me: it expressed the depth of my faith in a way that I tried, but so often failed to describe adequately. Before my teacher introduced me to these pieces for these recitals, I had never heard of Thomas. The artistic merit of his songs as well as his relative obscurity made choosing his compositions as the subject of this dissertation an easy decision.

Review of Source Material

Although Richard Pearson Thomas is still relatively unknown, it should be noted that a dissertation on Thomas' song cycle for baritone, *Drum Taps*, was written by

7Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, phone interview by author, Bradenton, FL, December 19, 2009, *Appendix B.*

William Clay Smith at Southern Louisiana University. Hope Hudson (Teachers' College/Columbia University) and others have included the composer in surveys of American art song literature. In addition, Ms. Hudson will be writing a dissertation on two works that she commissioned, *Spring Rain* and *My Beloved is Mine*, with an emphasis on the pedagogical value of these works. Furthermore, Sarah Snydaker, a student from the University of Iowa, included Thomas' songs in a compilation of American art songs.[8]

The primary sources for this dissertation were 1) consultation with the composer, Richard Pearson Thomas, 2) the eight cycles (*A Little Nonsense*, *At last, to be identified!*, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, *Three Kisses*, *Race for the Sky*, *A Wicked Girl*, *Spring Rain* and *Twilight*) and 3) an interview with soprano Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, who commissioned and premiered Thomas' *Race for the Sky*. Secondary sources included biographical information on the composer, Judith Carman's reviews of the cycles in the *Journal of Singing*, reviews of performances in the *Journal of Singing*, the *New York Times* and *Fanfare*, and William Clay Smith's dissertation on *Drum Taps*. Databases that were searched include the following: *IIMP*, *BMS Online*, *RILM*, *WorldCat*, *EBSCOhost*, *ProQuest Research Library*, *Doctoral Dissertations in Musicology-Online*, *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, and *Worldwide Internet Music Resources*. Because Thomas is such a contemporary composer, he is not mentioned in standard reference texts.

Methodology of the Study

Information obtained in interviews with Richard Pearson Thomas was included in the biographical chapter, as well as in the discussion of the cycles. Each of the cycles was

8Richard Pearson Thomas, phone interview by author, Sterling, KS, August 19, 2011, *Appendix A*, 235-236.

analyzed in sequential chapters, in chronological order according to their date of composition, a time span of nearly 20 years (1988-2007). The vocal line, in terms of range, tessitura, tonality and technical difficulty was the focus of my analysis. However, the overarching forms and underlying harmonies were discussed. In addition, I discussed how each song related to the other songs in its cycle to form a cohesive unit. Analysis was based on published versions of these cycles (with the exception of the cycle, *Three Kisses,* which has not been published) and followed the Jan LaRue method (see below).[9] The body of the dissertation ends with a chapter in which I compared and contrasted all of the cycles and drew conclusions about the development of Thomas' compositional style. The appendices include a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, my interviews with the composer and soprano Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, a complete list of works to date and a brief guide to repertoire selection from these cycles.

The LaRue method is an analysis technique that allows for a comprehensive understanding of pieces of music which can then be objectively described in a way that can be grasped by both musicians and non-musicians. In his method, LaRue divides the process of music analysis into five basic components: *rhythm*, *harmony*, *sound*, *melody* and *growth*. Of these five, the *growth* component is the most important because it is the end-goal of the analysis of the other four components. In all of the above areas, one is looking for the balance of consistency and inconsistency that defines a piece of music and ultimately the style of the composer.

As part of the process, LaRue recommends that observations be divided into three "dimensions:" small, middle and large. On the small level, one considers the characteristics of specific notes or measures, etc. On the large level, one considers the

9Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970).

characteristics of an entire piece or group of pieces. Naturally, the middle level falls between the two extremes. Thus, if one is considering the "small dimension" of rhythm, one would look at the smallest rhythmic values in a piece. Examples of these could include a particularly difficult rhythmic passage, words that are aurally portrayed through the rhythm or rhythmic motives. On the large or middle level, the examiner considers overarching components such as the time signature and the tempo. More specifically, in regard to the middle level, the tempo for a large passage in a piece might be examined to determine its overall effectiveness or perhaps the presence (or absence) of several meter changes in a piece might be noted. Then, on the large rhythmic level, whole pieces or cycles might be examined with regard to the consistency or inconsistency of certain meters or for the purpose of comparing and contrasting different tempi. In looking at the harmonic element, individual chords would be important in the small dimension, while tonal centers and overall harmonic schemes would be observations on the large level. In the sound element, the examiner considers factors like texture, timbre and dynamics at the various levels. Texture analysis would consist of observations regarding the sparseness or density in which the composer has written individual passages, pieces or cycles. Timbre analysis would include an examination of stylistic markings given to the performers via symbols or text. Dynamic analysis would consider the loudness or softness of any given passage, piece or cycle. The analysis of the melodic element includes not only examination of individual melodic lines and their contours, but also the tessitura and ranges of the various instruments and/or voices. LaRue argues that recording observations in this manner allows one to codify findings in a way that will be beneficial in the overall analysis of the composer's style. In all of these findings, as

mentioned above, the purpose is to find out how each of these elements—rhythm, harmony, sound and melody—impact the *movement* and *structure* of the piece, which according to LaRue, combine to define the element of musical growth.[10]

When referencing pitches in this dissertation, C4 represents middle C. C3 indicates the C below middle C (progressing downwards), and C5 represents the C above middle C (progressing upwards). (Fig. 1.1) It should also be noted that whenever a capital letter denoting a key appears by itself, it represents a major key or chord. Similarly, whenever a lower case letter appears by itself, it denotes a minor key or chord.

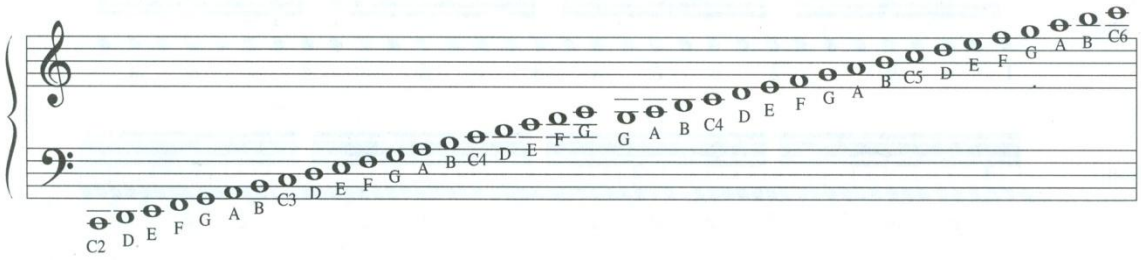


Figure 1.1

Furthermore, when whole poetic texts are given for the pieces, words in brackets denote words that Thomas repeated or added in his setting, and words in parentheses denote words that Thomas did not set. Stanzas, punctuation marks and capitalization of words will follow the form of the poem regardless of how Thomas set the text. In cases where a poem or poems are not in public domain, permission was sought and granted for the printing of the poems in this dissertation.

10LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY AND COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Biography[11]

Composer Richard Pearson Thomas was born in 1957 in Great Falls, Montana, where he lived until he finished high school. He does not come from a large family: there are just his parents and one sister. Though his parents were not particularly musical, they always enjoyed listening to music. The closest musical relatives Thomas can recall were his great-grandfather and his aunt who was a cocktail pianist. Around the age of seven, Thomas started taking piano lessons. He credits this first piano teacher with teaching him the discipline of practice, along with the essentials of music theory. It was not long before he was composing his own pieces of music, mostly for the piano. Thomas also started listening to popular and classical recordings. Two of his favorite classical composers at the time were Mahler and Beethoven.

In high school, Thomas accompanied school musicals, developing skills that would serve him well later. When it came time to choose a college, Thomas decided to attend the University of Montana in Missoula. He spent two years there, studying both composition and piano performance. It was here that he met the most important mentor of his life and career, Dr. J. George Hummel, his piano teacher who encouraged him to

11Note: The information included here was mainly acquired during my first phone interview with the composer on October 16, 2009. The conversation can be read in more detail in *Appendix A*.

listen to and to learn all of the classics. At the end of two years, Dr. Hummel retired and Thomas' composition mentor felt that Thomas should go to Eastman to finish his studies. In his third year of college, Thomas entered the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York as a composition major. Thomas had no intention of giving up his piano studies, however, so he also enrolled in private piano lessons at Eastman. Though he officially graduated as a composition major, he had acquired the equivalent of a double-major in composition and piano performance when he graduated in 1979. An important mentor for Thomas during his time at Eastman was Dr. Robert Spillman (his collaborative piano teacher), who helped Thomas discover the beauty of classical vocal music.

At the time that Thomas attended Eastman, it was "in vogue" to experiment with avant-garde compositional techniques. Thomas admitted that these types of compositions were neither his favorite, nor best works. It was this experience with avant-garde compositional techniques that led him to choose an entirely different direction: the world of musical theatre composition. During his time at Eastman, Thomas kept his work in musical theatre mostly to himself. However, at one point, one of his composition professors discovered one of Thomas' musical theatre works. While this had the potential to backfire on Thomas, it turned out that this professor was impressed by the piece and affirmed Thomas' talent in composition. A year after graduating from Eastman, one of Thomas' musical theatre pieces, which he had composed outside of his degree work at Eastman, was presented by the opera department.

Following the success of that show, Thomas received an offer to go to the Banff Center in Canada to compose musical theatre pieces. Thomas spent the years 1980-

1985[12] there composing and playing in what he considered a "safe environment." About this period, Thomas said, "It was also good for me because I was young and, and it was far from the public eye…it wasn't like putting something on in New York City that was going to be torn apart by the critics…."[13]

After his experience in Banff, Thomas returned to New York City, where he made a living playing piano while continuing to compose. It was through his skills as a pianist that his compositions began to make their way into the city's performance venues. Singers would often ask him to play for their recitals. Thomas, in turn, would ask the singers to include one of his pieces on the program. His fame as a collaborative pianist grew so much that he eventually was able to require the singers he accompanied to sing his pieces. In time, Thomas' reputation as a composer was firmly established and singers started commissioning works from him. Thus, with the exception of *At last, to be identified!* and *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, his soprano song cycles are commissioned works.

When asked, Thomas does not claim to have one particular method of composition, stating, "obviously, it's going to be different for different pieces."[14] However, not surprisingly, the piano plays a large role in the process. Thomas describes his process thus: "usually what I do is I'll start at the piano…then I will go back to the piano…I would never compose anything just in front of the computer because there's a certain machine-like quality…."[15] Also, in the composition of art songs, he will usually make revisions to the final draft after he hears the piece sung. Even though something

12Richard Pearson Thomas, phone interview by author, Bradenton, FL, October 16, 2009, *Appendix A*, 236.

13Richard Pearson Thomas, phone interviews by author, Bradenton, FL/Sterling, KS, October 16, 2009/August 19, 2011, *Appendix A*, 218, 236.

14Thomas, *Appendix A*, 227-228.

15Ibid., 227.

might look good on paper, he humbly admits that what he hears in his head does not always work in reality.[16] When composing for specific singers, Thomas likes to tailor his pieces to showcase their strengths.

Over the last few decades, Thomas has composed in several different genres and media. At first, he focused on musical theatre, before making his way into the world of art song and opera composition. Most of his opera composition has come in the form of his collaborations with students in a project called the *Richard Gold Opera Life Project, Young Audiences/New York.* He has also composed works for vocal ensembles. Recently, Thomas has begun to compose more instrumental pieces, which he particularly enjoys doing. While his passion lies with stringed-instruments, Thomas is realistic enough to admit that his compositions for newer instruments, such as saxophones, are more likely to be performed, since their selection of repertoire is less extensive.[17][18] Thomas continues to reside in New York City, where he does most of his composing and performing. However, his works are being heard around the country, and he often finds himself traveling for various performances and appearances.

Compositional Style

While Thomas' specific compositional techniques vary with the subject of each piece, some generalizations can be made here. As was mentioned earlier, Thomas is an accomplished pianist. His skill at the keyboard is quite evident in the parts that he has written for the piano. With the exception of a few pieces in these cycles, the piano carries much of the emotional and technical depth of the pieces. Throughout these cycles, there are a number of piano preludes, interludes and postludes, in addition to the collaboration

16Thomas, *Appendix A*, 223-224, 227-228.
17Ibid., 219.
18Thomas, "Curriculum Vitae," 2011.

with the vocal line. Many passages cover a large portion of the keyboard and a full range of dynamics. Furthermore, there are some passages that require the pianist to span major and minor-10th intervals with one hand. All of these aspects lead to the conclusion, that in many cases, these pieces require a more experienced pianist than singer. Consequently, having a pianist who can play Thomas' pieces should be a significant consideration in assigning this repertoire to students.

In terms of harmony, Thomas claims to compose within the realms of tonality.[19] While this is essentially true, 20th and 21st-century tonality is still vastly different from "classical tonality." Much of this harmony, even within a key, is dissonant. There are extended bi-tonal passages in some pieces. A few of the pieces in these cycles begin in one key and remain in that key. However, more often than not, Thomas' pieces migrate to a variety of different keys, often not closely-related and end in a different key from which they began. He occasionally uses traditional cadences, but this is more often not the case. It is also difficult to find harmonic links between the pieces in most of these cycles. In terms of both harmony and sound, Thomas quite often uses open-5th and open-4th chords. This not only creates a more open texture, it also creates some harmonic ambiguity.

Thomas' melodies employ frequent leaps of perfect-5ths and perfect-4ths. Larger intervals are not uncommon either. This effectively creates a somewhat disjunct (i.e. non-stepwise) motion in the melody. Still, the melodic contour is mostly traditional in the sense that ascending melodic lines usually descend at the ends of phrases. Melodic text-setting is mostly syllabic, but there is usually at least one substantial melisma in each piece. Because the keys are often changing, the melodies are often unpredictable. It is easy to make assumptions about where the melody is headed, only to discover that

19Thomas, *Appendix A*, 219-220, 236-237.

Thomas has a completely different plan. Still, the piano part usually doubles the vocal line, providing support and reassurance in the difficult passages. Furthermore, Thomas is fairly conscientious about composing within an acceptable soprano range. Though there are a few places where Thomas has written the vocal line below C4, in general, the melodic lines stay between C4 and B5. The ranges of most of the pieces might be a little difficult for young singers, but could be sung by most singers at the intermediate level. The pieces would fall well within the capabilities of advanced to professional singers. Finally, the tessitura of the songs generally does not sit too high, so they are not too taxing on the voice. However, some of the pieces have a tessitura that would be considered rather low for soprano. Overall, Thomas' melodies are the aspect that makes these pieces the most accessible to performers and audiences alike.

The rhythms in Thomas' pieces are chosen for the purpose of good text-setting and for the evocation of a general mood. In other words, Thomas does not include difficult rhythmic patterns gratuitously. Instead, he uses time signatures, rhythmic patterns and tempos that allow for the most realistic expression of the text.

Considering the sound element, one can say that the overall density and dynamic level of Thomas' songs vary widely, from passages set *a cappella* and *pianissimo* to thunderous climaxes with crashing chords in the piano, double-stops in the string part and high, loud singing in the vocal line. The most uniform sound element is timbre. All of these pieces are for soprano and piano. However, three of the cycles include a stringed-instrument in addition to the voice and piano. Thomas has admitted his particular affinity

for stringed-instruments, so the appearance of these instruments in these cycles is not surprising.[20]

Finally, as was stated in Chapter I, the growth aspect, according to LaRue, consists of the *movement* of a piece, in addition to its *structure*.[21] The pieces in these cycles are through-composed and modified-strophic, with most of them falling into the 'through-composed' category. In general, Thomas' compositional style is geared towards effective text-setting and telling a story through the music. The piano prelude or beginning moments of the pieces introduce the story and mood. From there, performers and audiences travel through a number of melodies and keys before reaching the climax of the piece and story. The weakest aspect of the "story" analogy falls in the resolution category. Many of the songs in Thomas' cycles do not end with conclusive cadences. It is almost as if he is leaving the listeners to finish these stories by themselves. More likely, however, this leads to the conclusion that most of the pieces are not necessarily meant to be excerpted from the cycle. They are a part of something greater and are more effective as a whole. Thus, what may at first appear to be a composer's idiosyncrasy is actually a strength.

Thomas writes idiomatically for all musicians that will be considered in this document: sopranos, pianists and string players. His compositional objective is to communicate through text and music. Though not all of his music is immediately accessible, his aim is never to be avant-garde or esoteric. He focuses on telling the story and lets the listeners grasp the unique and beautiful quality of his music in the process.

20Thomas, *Appendix A*, 219.
21LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*.

These qualities make his music an enjoyable challenge for performers and audiences alike.

CHAPTER III

A LITTLE NONSENSE

The first song cycle to be considered in this paper is *A Little Nonsense*, Thomas' first soprano song cycle. As the title suggests, this set is light and whimsical, including stories of fairytale characters and make-believe adventures. The cycle consists of three Edward Lear poems: *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, *Calicoe Pie* and *The Owl and the Pussy-cat*[22]. Though it was placed last in the cycle, *The Owl and the Pussycat* was actually composed before the other two. In fact, it is the first art song that Thomas composed. The rest of the cycle evolved when soprano, Phyllis Fay (Farmer) Etzo, asked Thomas to set Lear's *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*. To complete the set, Thomas chose Lear's *Calicoe Pie*.[23]

Though the text is make-believe in nature and childish in tone, these pieces (*The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, in particular), are not child's play. The ever-changing keys, frequent accidentals, unusual harmonic and melodic destinations, wide vocal range and unexpected meter and tempo changes in *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* will keep performers on their toes. Beyond the notes and rhythms, the nature of this silly, fictional story requires it to be sung with sincerity even though it is meant to be ridiculous, much like performing a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. This is a piece for advanced singers who have a flair for dramatic delivery. *Calico Pie* is more accessible on a technical level, but

22 Note: "Calicoe" with an *e* was used in Lear's poem title, but elsewhere, it was spelled without an *e*. Thomas consistently spelled the word without an *e*. Lear spelled "Pussy-cat" as such; Thomas deleted the hyphen in his setting.

23Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222.

still more suited to advanced singers. Beyond the surprising harmonic destinations, the piece is to be sung *sotto voce* and mostly at a dynamic level of *piano* or less. To sing at that dynamic level with good resonance is a challenge. This piece could be used to teach the skill of soft resonant singing, but there are many more substantial pieces which can be used for that purpose.

The Owl and the Pussycat is more difficult than *Calico Pie*, but not as difficult as *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*. The extent of the vocal range in this piece is the biggest obstacle for young singers, spanning a range from A3 to B5. Most young sopranos cannot sing well that low and most young mezzo-sopranos cannot sustain extended phrases above the staff as this song requires. This piece, and certainly the cycle as a whole, is best saved for advanced singers with good acting skills.

The Pobble Who Has No Toes tells the saga of a Pobble, an imaginary character, who tragically loses his prized toes. In the end, despite his loss, there is hope that he will learn to embrace his new state of being and once again, discover the joy of life. Though the text is rather long, Thomas set it very playfully, with a variety of keys and moods so the piece is never boring. The text and rhythm are so closely-intertwined that the words (though rather silly) easily roll off the tongue. The poem/text is as follows:

The Pobble Who Has No Toes

The Pobble who has no toes
Had once as many as we;
When they said "Someday you may lose them all;"
He replied "Fish fiddle-de-dee!"
And his Aunt Jobiska made him drink
Lavender water tinged with pink,
For she said "The World in general knows
There's nothing so good for a Pobble's toes!"

The Pobble who has no toes
Swam across the Bristol Channel;
But before he set out he wrapped his nose
In a piece of scarlet flannel.
For his Aunt Jobiska said "No harm
Can come to his toes if his nose is warm;
And it's perfectly known that a Pobble's toes
Are safe,--[provided he minds his nose,]provided he minds his nose!"

The Pobble swam fast and well,
And when[the]boats or ships came near him,
He tinkledy-(blinkledy)[binkledy]-winkled a bell,
So that all the world could hear him.
And all the Sailors and Admirals cried,
When they saw him nearing the further side-
"He has gone to fish for his Aunt Jobiska's
Runcible Cat with crimson whiskers!"

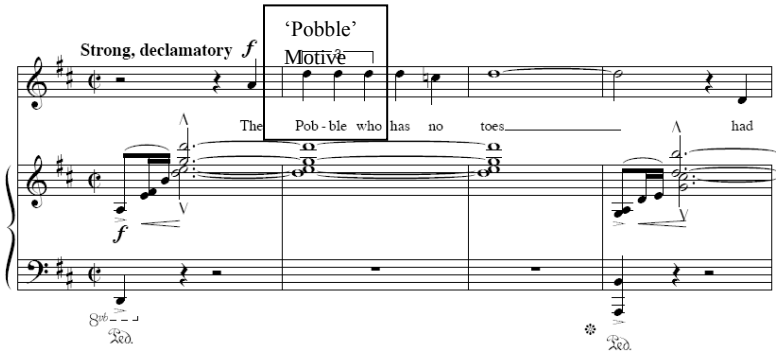
But before he touched the shore,
The shore of the Bristol Channel,
A sea-green porpoise carried away
His wrapper of scarlet flannel.
And when he came to observe his feet,
Formerly garnished with toes so neat,
His face at once became forlorn,
On perceiving that all his toes were gone!

And nobody ever knew,
From that dark day to the present,
Whoso had taken the Pobble's toes,
In a manner so far from pleasant.
Whether the shrimps, or crawfish(grey)[gray],
Or crafty Mermaids stole them away-
Nobody knew: and nobody knows
How the Pobble was robbed of his twice five toes!

The Pobble who has no toes
Was placed in a friendly Bark,
And they rowed him back, and carried him up
To his Aunt Jobiska's Park.
And she made him a feast at his earnest wish

Of eggs and buttercups fried with fish,-
And she said "It's a fact the whole world knows,
That [Pobbles are happier, Pobbles are happier]Pobbles are happier without their toes!"[24,25]

From the downbeat of the first measure, the piano takes charge with an arpeggiated flourish, which seems to say, "Make way for the voice!" The voice duly enters with the words, "The Pobble who has no toes" (mm. 1-4). This statement is marked "strong, declamatory" and is set to a quarter-note triplet over a sustained chord. There are several quarter-note triplets that occur throughout this piece. Not all occurrences will be noted, but as this is a significant rhythmic motive, it will heretofore be referred to as the 'Pobble' motive. A similar arpeggiated flourish from the piano in m. 4 announces another grand statement by the voice: "Had once as many as we" (mm. 4-6). Clearly, the listener has just stumbled upon an intriguing situation. (Ex. 3.1)



Example 3.1: Note the energetic beginning, as well as the 'Pobble' motive; *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, mm. 1-4[26]

The piano interrupts briefly, setting up the next two lines of text: "When they said 'Someday you may lose them all;'/He replied, 'Fish fiddle de-dee!'" (mm.7-12). Thomas set the phrase, "Fish fiddle de-dee!" *a cappella* to emphasize the shocking nature of the

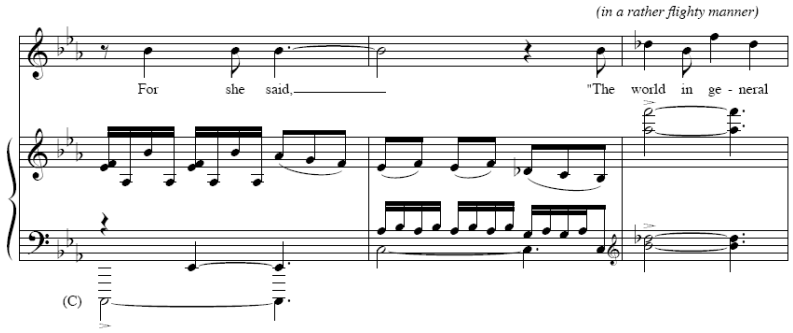
24Edward Lear, "The Pobble Who Has No Toes," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/edward-lear/the-pobble-who-has-no-toes/ (accessed March 7, 2011).

25Richard Pearson Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear* (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 1988/2001), 1-18.

26Ibid., 1.

protagonist's nonchalance and to allow the singer the freedom to deliver the line creatively. Furthermore, having ignored the warnings regarding his precious toes, the unaccompanied line indicates that the Pobble is now tragically independent.

A second character, Aunt Jobiska, is introduced in the following section (mm. 12-21). This section is easily distinguishable from the first via changes in key, meter, texture and tempo. Of particular interest is the change to 7/8 time. Jobiska, who acts as the mother figure in this story, tries to make sure that the Pobble will not lose his toes by making him drink her special concoction: "Lavender water tinged with pink" (mm. 18-21). In describing the concoction, Aunt Jobiska says the following: "'The World in general knows/There's nothing so good for a Pobble's toes!'" (mm.23-29). Of course, the irony in these words of wisdom is that throughout the piece, Aunt Jobiska is painted as an unreliable authority. The voice alternates between the notes D^b and B^b on the word "good" in the above phrase, highlighting the instability of her character, as well as painting a picture of her pinching the Pobble's cheek or tweaking his nose. Furthermore, there are character cues throughout the piece indicating that Thomas wanted the singer to portray the Aunt Jobiska character "in a rather flighty manner." Finally, her character is consistently associated with the uneven quality of 7/8 time. (Ex. 3.2)



Example 3.2: Note how the meter corresponds with the Aunt Jobiska character; *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, mm. 22-24[27]

After a brief interlude, the voice re-enters on the pickup to m. 35, for the beginning of the second verse. This verse begins much like the first, with the phrase, "The Pobble who has no toes" (mm. 34-37) and the 'Pobble' motive in the voice. However, by now the story is underway, so the rhythm in the piano is no longer grand and stoic. In mm. 46-62, the listener is once again enlightened with the wisdom of Aunt Jobiska: "'No harm/Can come to his toes if his nose is warm,'/'And it's perfectly known that a Pobble's toes/Are safe,--provided he minds his nose!'" In mm. 59-60, Thomas wrote another musical hint to Aunt Jobiska's mental fragility via a melismatic trill on the word "minds."

As the Pobble sets off on his adventure in the next verse, the music changes completely. The piano leads the way with a faster tempo ("faster, very excited"), several meter changes, a change in key and a sudden shift from *fortissimo* to *piano*. There is a humorous bit of word painting as the sound of the Pobble's warning bell is mimicked in the voice on the text "tinkled-binkledy-winkled" (m. 72) at a dynamic level of *piano*, high in the soprano's range. This delicate treatment of the bell is at odds with the

27Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 3.

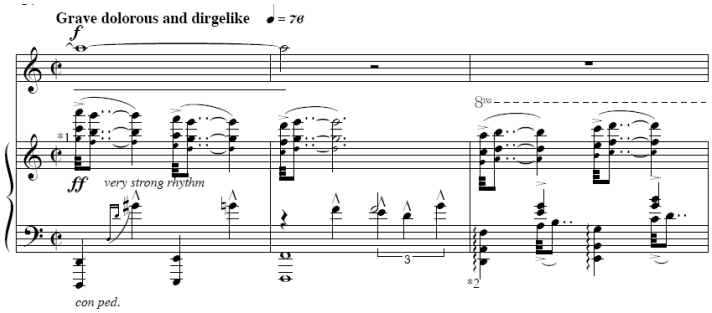
following text, “So that all the world could hear him” (mm. 74-76), which further highlights the absurdity of the story.

As the jolly seamen, "with 'admiralesque’ bluster,” inform the listeners of the Pobble’s reason for swimming across the channel, a new section marked “jig” (mm. 78-114) begins: “‘He has gone to fish for his Aunt Jobiska’s/Runcible Cat with crimson whiskers!’” (mm. 89-101). When referencing Aunt Jobiska, Thomas once again inserted a melisma. Apparently, the seamen were acquainted with her feather-brained ways.

In m.115, near the end of a rather extended piano interlude, Thomas indicated the following to the performers, “Much slower, ominous,” setting up the tragedy to follow. The voice re-enters on the pick-up to m. 117 and continues through m. 128 relating the tragic news that the Pobble’s toes have disappeared. The despair and loss that the Pobble experiences when he makes this discovery is particularly highlighted when the voice sings a *forte* “gone!” (mm.127-128), *a cappella* on a G5.

In m. 129, at the beginning of the fifth verse, the piano makes a flourishing statement similar to the opening, announcing a declaration (with the ‘Pobble’ motive) from the narrator that the perpetrator of this great crime remains anonymous. Then, the piano texture becomes significantly sparser in mm. 136-149, as the narrator speculates on the identity of the culprit in an extremely low tessitura (C4-C$^{\#}$4). However, with the narrator’s climactic phrase, “Nobody knew; and nobody knows/How the Pobble was robbed of his twice five toes!” (mm.143-151), the voice leaps up to a dramatic high A on “toes.” As the voice sustains the A5, a “dirge” begins in the piano (mm. 150-157). However, this piano interlude is not a time of quiet mourning, but rather an angry tirade

against life's unfairness. The piano angrily asserts itself with "very strong rhythm," pitches that cover an extensive range and loud dynamics. (Ex. 3.3)



Example 3.3: Note the loud, defiant piano part that begins as the voice sustains a climactic high A; *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, mm. 150-152[28]

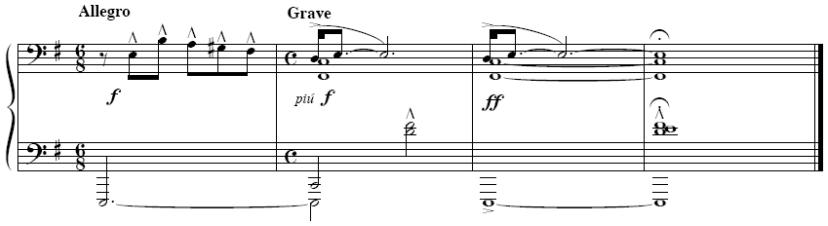
At the beginning of the sixth and final stanza, the piece comes full-circle with the 'Pobble' motive and the words "The Pobble who has no toes" (mm. 157-159). The dirge continues, but at a slightly faster tempo as the narrator describes how the Pobble was transported back to his Aunt Jobiska. Upon his arrival, his aunt attempts to console him with comfort food: "eggs and buttercups fried with fish" (mm. 173-174). A gradual diminuendo, relaxation of the rhythm through the augmentation of the dirge motive and the lightening of the texture throughout this section, leads to the conclusion that the original horror and anger at the situation has somewhat abated. The section ends with a short fermata, thus preparing listeners for the moral of the story.

Shortly thereafter, Aunt Jobiska offers her final words of wisdom in her usual quirky 7/8 meter. Not surprisingly, given her unstable nature, she has changed her philosophy and is now convinced that, "'It's a fact the whole world knows,/That Pobbles are happier without their toes!'" (mm.180-194). In this final declaration from Aunt

28Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 14.

Jobiska, Thomas repeated the phrase, "Pobbles are happier" twice, which fits Aunt Jobiska's character perfectly.

The piano postlude is somewhat schizophrenic. The somber dirge music is contrasted with Aunt Jobiska's joyous 7/8. Given Jobiska's instability, it is not clear whether the loss of the Pobble's toes will lead to happiness, as she suggests, or whether it is, in fact, tragic. Thomas left the final determination of the moral of the story to the discretion of performers and audiences. This is enhanced by the lack of a conclusive resolution at the end of the piece. While there is a distinctive melodic motive from earlier in the piece that Thomas repeats throughout the postlude, the last chord is not conclusive at all. In theory, the chord is an extended D-major chord in an e-minor tonality, but in reality, it sounds more like a dissonant tone cluster. (Ex. 3.4)



Example 3.4: Note the dissonant, inconclusive ending; *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, mm. 200-203[29]

There are three climactic moments in this piece. The first occurs when the Pobble discovers that he has lost his toes. The voice sustains an anguished *a cappella* "gone!" (m. 127), before being joined by the piano in m. 128. Besides the G5 in the voice and the textual clues that suggest this is an important moment in the life of the Pobble, the barrage of triplets in the voice which drive the tempo, the rising tessitura and the increasing dynamics brilliantly lead up to this vocal climax. The second occurs when the incredulous narrator comments on the fact that the thieving culprit was not identified

29Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 18.

back then and has not been identified at any time since. Once again, the tessitura rises, the dynamics increase and suddenly the voice sings "toes!" (m. 149) *a cappella* on a high A, before being joined once again by the piano (mm. 150-151). The third and final significant moment occurs near the end of the piece during the singer's last phrase of text. Aunt Jobiska babbles on about how wonderful it is that her nephew lost his toes after all: "Pobbles are happier without their toes!" (mm.184-194). In her usual way, she manages to out-do herself and keeps repeating how happy he is going to be. Thomas brilliantly highlighted her exuberance by raising the tessitura of the repeated words each time. On her last exclamation, the voice hits and briefly sustains a high B before finally completing the phrase and sustaining the final word "toes!" (mm.192-194) on an $F^{\#}5$.

With regard to the vocal line (i.e. the melody) in this piece, there is not as much doubling from the piano as there is in some of Thomas' other pieces. Whereas in some pieces, virtually the entire melodic line is found doubled in the piano (usually at the octave), only about half of this piece falls into that category. The chords in the piano generally support the notes in the melodic line, but stylistically and rhythmically, the voice is on its own in many sections. Also, there are a number of large leaps throughout the melodic lines in this piece. The only section that features significant step-wise melodic motion is the group of measures leading up to the theft of the Pobble's toes (mm. 120-126). The ascending stepwise motion in this particular section very effectively builds up the ensuing tragedy.

Finally, the melodic line in this piece is somewhat unified, with three of the six stanzas having some melodic similarities. The form of the melody is the following: A, A^1, B, C, D, A^2, with each letter corresponding to a verse. Verses 1, 2 and 6 take place

back at the Pobble's home—a familiar place. In verse 3, the Pobble sets off on his journey. He loses his toes in verse 4, and then, the singer comments on the fact that the toes' disappearance is still a mystery in verse 5. It is not surprising, therefore, that the melodic lines in these three verses are distinct and go through a number of key changes. This parallels the changes that the Pobble experiences on his journey and in losing his toes. By the end, he has come to terms with his predicament, but nevertheless, his life will never be the same. Perhaps this is another reason why Thomas did not conclude the piece in the opening key.

The second piece in this cycle is *Calico Pie*. This poem has four verses. Each begins with the word "Calico" and ends with "Never came back to me!" These repetitions appear to be one of the few things that unify this poem, which is primarily about the rhyme and rhythm of words. Another unifying factor is the various creatures who one by one abandon the narrator. Thomas very appropriately set this nursery rhyme in 9/8 and 6/8, coupled with the tempo instructions, "Andante cantabile, like a lullaby", which combine to give the piece a simple sing-song feel. The poem/text is below:

Calicoe Pie

Calico Pie,
The little Birds fly
Down to the calico tree,
Their wings were blue,
And they sang 'Tilly-loo!'
Till away they flew,
And they never came back to me!
They never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back to me!

Calico Jam,
The little Fish swam
Over the syllabub sea,

He took off his hat
To the Sole and the Sprat,
And the Willeby-wat,
But he never came back to me!
He never came back!
He never came back!
He never came back to me!

Calico Ban,
The little Mice ran,
To be ready in time for tea,
Flippity-flup,
They drank it all up,
And danced in(the)[a]cup,
But they never came back to me!
They never came back!
(They)never came back!
They never came back to me!

Calico Drum,
The Grasshoppers come,
The Butterfly, Beetle, and Bee,
Over the ground,
Around and around,
With a hop and a bound-
But they never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back!
They never came back to me![30,31]

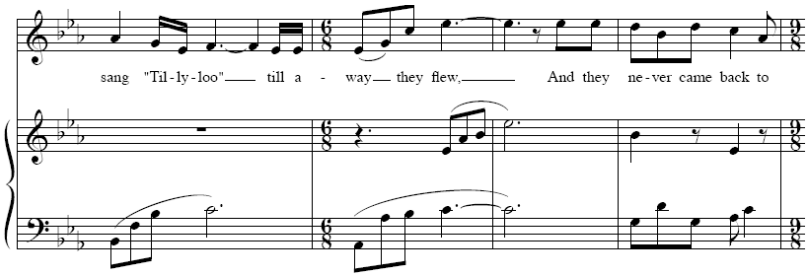
Calico Pie begins in the key of E^b major. To help achieve the soft dynamic level of the piece, Thomas wrote a rather sparse texture for the piano, particularly in the first verse and portions of the fourth verse. Thomas also indicated that the voice should sing *sotto voce*. The best label for the form of this piece is modified-strophic. However, there is substantial variation between verses. The most melodic similarity is found between the

30Edward Lear, "Calicoe Pie," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/edward-lear/calicoe-pie/ (accessed March 7, 2011).

31Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 19-25.

first and second verses. Additionally, the fourth verse ends similarly to the first verse, which effectively brings the piece full-circle at the end.

As the song begins, the right hand of the piano is initially silent. The arpeggiating left hand is the sole supporter of the vocal line. Though the right hand enters in the second half of measure 3, it plays a secondary, embellishing role in the first two verses. The foundation of the harmony is in the left hand, while the beauty of the piece is found in the voice. (Ex. 3.5) There is one instance of word-painting worth noting in this first verse. For the text, "away they flew" (mm. 7-9), Thomas wrote an ascending melodic line, emphasizing the birds flying up and away.



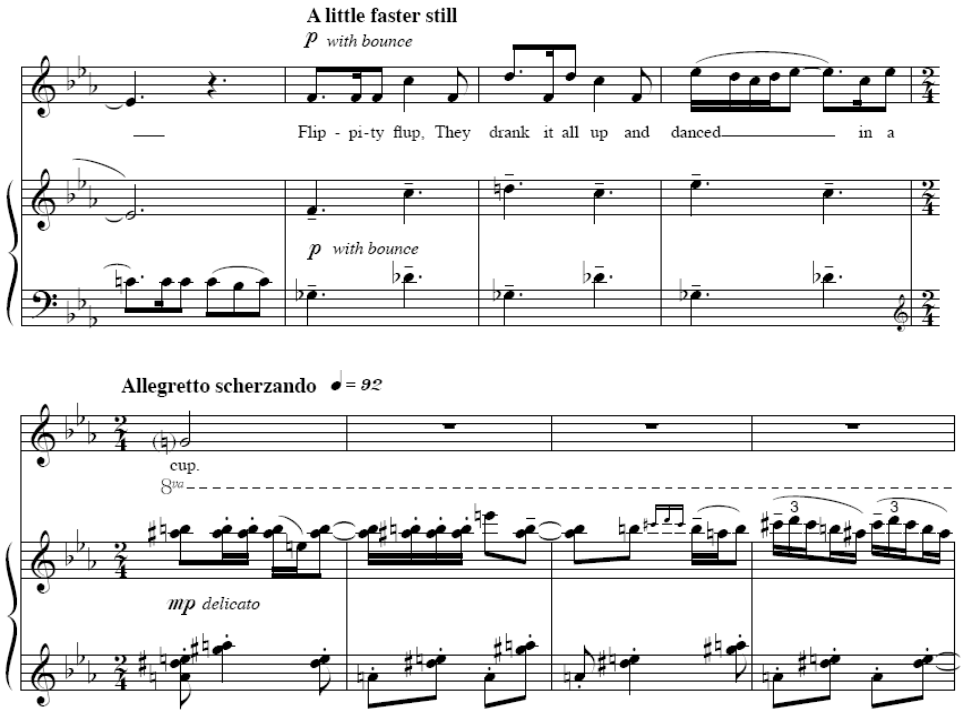
Example 3.5: Note the sparse texture, as well as the aural picture created by the ascending line; *Calico Pie,* mm. 7-10[32]

The first two measures of the second verse are very similar to the first verse, but there the similarity ends. While the voice and left hand of the piano remain in E^b major, the tonal center of the right hand is difficult to determine. Several of the notes in the right hand conflict with the vocal melody, creating a dissonant sound and muddy texture. Perhaps this sound is meant to represent the sticky thickness of the "calico jam" (m. 18). There is also a textual contrast from the birds in the sky of verse one and the fish in the water of verse two. This is depicted near the beginning of the second verse, as the voice

32Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 19.

sings, “over the syllabub sea” (mm. 20-21). On the word “over,” the voice leaps up to an $E^{b}5$. From there the line descends, giving the listener a nice aural picture.

Though the vocal line is quite independent from the piano in verses one and two, the piano doubles the voice for a significant portion of the third verse. The first two measures of this verse (mm. 34-35) also feature an alto line in the right hand of the piano, and m. 37 features a tenor line in the left hand. Two measures later, for the nonsense word “Flippity-flup” (m. 39), Thomas wrote an ascending perfect fifth with a dotted rhythm in the voice. The word by itself is quite unique, but the way in which Thomas set it emphasizes the word even more: the dotted rhythm sounds like a trumpet call signaling the beginning of a special event. Thomas put a playful little melisma on the word “danced” (m. 41), and then the anticipated event arrives in the form of a jolly piano interlude (mm. 42-49), which serves as the mice’s dance. (Ex. 3.6) The textual refrain that commences at the end of the dance interlude begins *a capella* (mm. 50-52). Even when the piano joins, the texture continues to be sparse in the same vein as verse one.



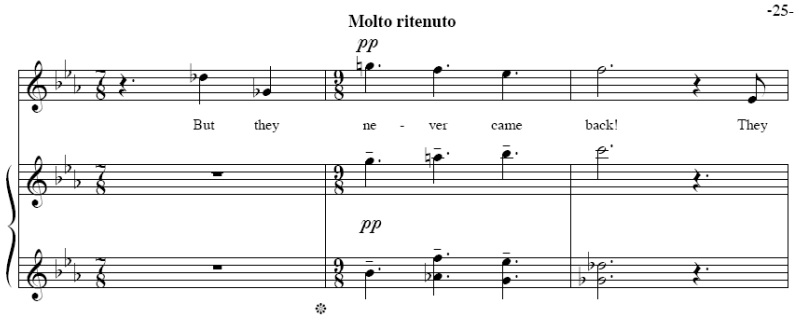
Example 3.6: Note the melisma on "danced," as well as the 'dance' in the piano interlude; *Calico Pie*, mm. 38-45[33]

For the fourth and final verse, the tessitura in the voice is higher, which distinguishes it somewhat from the first three verses. Additionally, the opening vocal melody is stated in the alto line of the right hand of the piano, and the vocal line is instead an embellishing descant part. The rhythm in this verse is mostly dotted, which ties in to the "drum" theme, as well as the precise march of the various insects.

The climax of this piece occurs in the fourth verse in mm. 68-70 on the words, "But they never came back!" immediately before the final textual refrain. While the dynamics are still *pianissimo*, the climax is effective because the tessitura is higher than in the other three verses. Additionally, while the voice and the left hand of the piano descend stepwise, the right hand ascends stepwise. Since the two parts start on the same

33Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 22.

pitch, this divergence emphasizes the distance between the singer and all of the animals and insects that have deserted her. (Ex. 3.7)



Example 3.7: Note the soft, but effective climax; *Calico Pie*, mm. 68-70[34]

After this moment, the piece ends much like the first verse, with the exception of the final extended note in the vocal line. Also, while the voice sustains the final B^b4, both hands of the piano echo previous melodic themes (via grace notes in the right hand). The delicate softness of the grace notes might represent the insects flying away into the distance until they can no longer be seen or heard. Though the ending sonority is a tone cluster consisting of the notes E2-A^b5-C6-B^b6, instead of a true chord, the dissonance is negligible due to the wide spacing between the notes, the extremely soft dynamics and the mostly high tessitura. Eventually all of the sound fades away into "niente."

This piece looks more dissonant than it sounds, and despite the monotony of the repeated text, it is quite engaging. The pleasant melody and accompanying harmony make it a refreshingly gentle piece set between two very exuberant pieces.

The third and final piece in this cycle is *The Owl and the Pussycat*, a lively musical setting of this familiar children's poem. The poem/text is below:

34Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 25.

The Owl and the Pussy-cat

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
'O lovely Pussy! O Pussy my love,[oh lovely Pussy, oh Pussy, my love,]
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are.'

Pussy said to the Owl, 'You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?'
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig[Piggy-wig]stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
(With)a ring at the end of his nose.

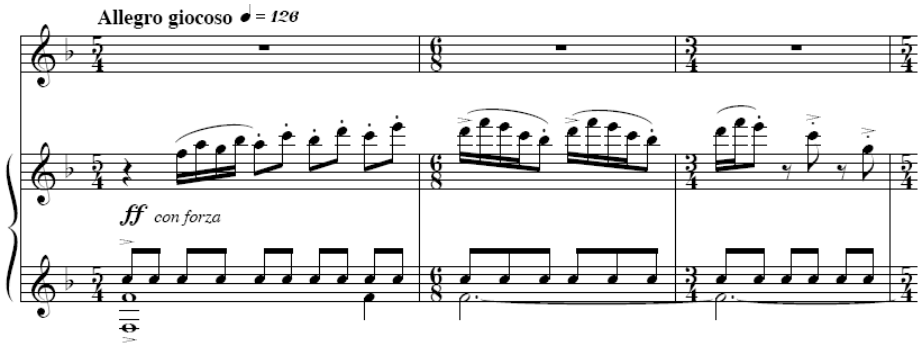
'Dear pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?' Said the Piggy, 'I will.'
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince,[mince]and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced(by)[to]the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced(by)[to]the light of the moon.[35,36]

Unlike, the other two pieces, *The Owl and the Pussycat* begins with a *bona fide* piano introduction (mm. 1-6). This introduction, marked "Allegro giocoso" is in the key

35Edward Lear, "The Owl and the Pussy-cat," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/edward_lear_2004_9.pdf, "PoemHunter.com-The World's Poetry Archive" (accessed March 7, 2011).

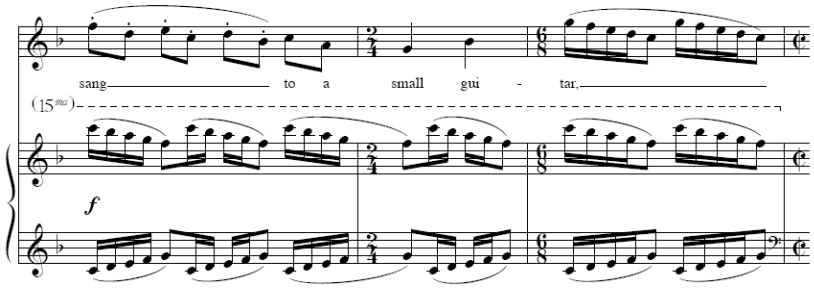
36Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 26-35.

of F major and sets up the happy nursery rhyme very appropriately. The meter also changes every measure, which adds significant playful variety to this familiar children's rhyme. (Ex. 3.8)



Example 3.8: Note the changing meters in the boisterous prelude; *The Owl and the Pussycat,* mm. 1-3[37]

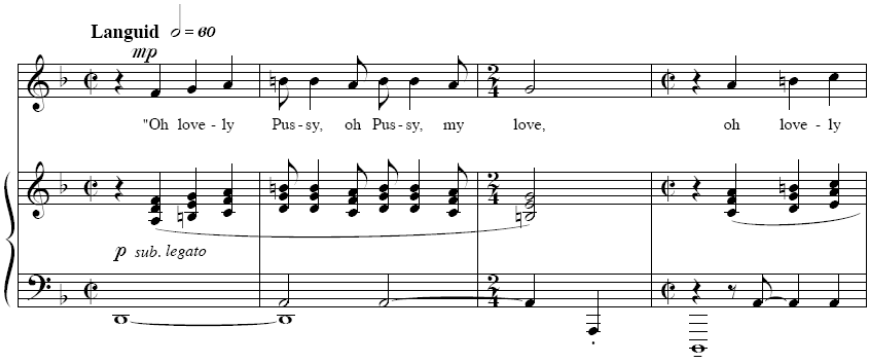
In mm. 16-22, the text reads, "The Owl looked up to the stars above and sang to a small guitar." On the word "sang," Thomas inserted a brief *vocalise* in the vocal part: descending, arpeggiated, staccato thirds—a classic example of word-painting. At the same time, in the piano part (mm. 20-22), the two hands play ascending and descending five-note patterns in opposite directions. This might be an aural picture of someone badly tuning an old guitar or a reference to children's piano exercises. (Ex. 3.9)



Example 3.9: Note the opposite scalar patterns in the piano part; *The Owl and the Pussycat,* mm. 20-22[38]

37Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 26.
38Ibid., 28.

In mm. 23-38, the tempo marking changes to "Languid." Here, Thomas wrote the piano part in such a way that it depicts the strumming of the Owl's guitar as he serenades the Pussycat: the left-hand is the anchor, while the right-hand plays parallel chords above. The Owl's song to the Pussycat is also where the first key change occurs, a transition from the original tonic (F major) to the Lydian mode. This retrogression to modes seems very appropriate for an old-fashioned serenade such as this one. (Ex. 3.10)



Example 3.10: Note the key change and the gentle serenade; *The Owl and the Pussycat*, mm. 23-26[39]

A few measures later, in mm. 38-51, the Pussycat responds with a marriage proposal. This proposal is set over various keys, perhaps mirroring the changes that the Owl and the Pussycat are about to make. In m. 49, there is a rocking rhythm in the left hand that depicts the waves of the sea upon which the Owl and the Pussycat sail away. Their journey nears an end when they come, "to the land where the Bong-tree grows" (mm. 57-62). Thomas extended "grows" in the music by having B^b4 and C4 alternate in a way that effectively evokes the sense of their boat gently floating forwards and backwards with the ebbing tide. While mooring their boat just off the shore, they discover a pig, who has a ring "at the end of his nose" (mm. 68-78). There is a little trill on "nose" (mm. 75-78) that playfully references the Pig and his cute snout. The travelers proceed to

39Thomas, *A Little Nonsense: Songs to Poems of Edward Lear*, 28.

ask the Pig if they can have the ring, and suddenly, the pianist becomes part of the story, as the Pig, no less! The pianist responds (as instructed in the music) to the request for the ring by speaking, "I will!" (m. 89).

Though their marriage and the ensuing dinner are exciting moments for the lovers and are duly reflected in the way in which Thomas wrote those sections of the piece, the big climax does not occur until just before the end when the Owl and the Pussycat dance on the beach (mm. 111-117). As in *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, the singer's very last note is an $F^{\#}5$, but the voice shoots up to a high B in the climactic penultimate phrase, so the soprano gets to exult with the Pussycat and the Owl on a high note. A rambunctious piano postlude quotes phrases from the introduction to the piece and continues in the key of B major. The piano concludes on an open-5^{th} chord (B-$F^{\#}$). Though the third is missing from the chord, it is still the closest any of the pieces in this cycle have come to a conclusive ending.

The keys in this piece are not closely-related. However, some justification can be found if one considers that the characters in this poem are going to unfamiliar places, and they never return home. Therefore, these strange keys correspond well to the strange lands to which the Owl and the Pussycat are sailing, in addition to the fact that they never return to the key of F major or to their homeland.

The piano does not double the voice in this piece. However, the melodic motion is mostly stepwise and fairly predictable. The accompaniment, which consists of a lot of repeated scalar patterns, is significantly easier than the accompanimental collage found in *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*.

The extensive vocal range might be problematic for younger singers. The most vexing parts of this piece are the many little vocal melismas. Some of them make sense in context, but others seem rather superfluous, and they interrupt the line. It is easy to see that this was Thomas' first art song because the range and the style do not work well together. The low range requires a fuller singer with a good grasp of chest voice, while the melismas seem to be for lighter, more agile singers.

The overall harmonic landscape of the three pieces in this cycle is as follows. *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* begins in D Mixolydian (before quickly moving into G Lydian), *Calico Pie* begins in E^{b} major, and *The Owl and the Pussycat* begins in F major. Each piece begins a half or a whole-step higher than the previous piece. The first piece does not end in its original tonality, D Mixolydian. However, it *does* end on an extended D-major harmony (in the key of e minor). There is also a good transition into *Calico Pie* because the $F^{\#}$ in the D-major chord leads nicely to G, the first note for the voice in *Calico Pie*, and the root of the D-major chord leads to the E^{b}-major tonality of *Calico Pie*. *Calico Pie*, in turn, ends in its original key of E^{b} major, but not on the tonic. Instead, it ends on a tone cluster with the notes, B^{b}, A^{b} and C. The C in the tone cluster acts as the common tone in the transition into *The Owl and the Pussycat* which begins with an open-fifth chord: F-C.

With regard to the *forms* of the pieces, the first piece is a combination of the modified-strophic and through-composed forms, the second is in modified-strophic form, and the third is through-composed. The *growth* of the cycle can be seen in the way that the different pieces begin, end and fit together harmonically as discussed above.

Moreover, the longer, more complex stories surround the simple piece, *Calico Pie*. This creates a nicely-tailored recital package.

The *melodies* in these three pieces are not very predictable, with *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* being particularly difficult in this regard. With regard to the extent of the vocal range, *Calico Pie* has a reasonable range, but both *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* and *The Owl and the Pussycat* have extensive ranges (B3-B5 and A3-B5, respectively). The same differentiation can be made regarding the overall *rhythmic qualities* of these pieces. Though generally-speaking, the rhythm is not very difficult, the rhythms and meters in the first and third pieces are much more varied than those in *Calico Pie*.

With regard to the *sound, Calico Pie* has a fairly sparse texture and soft dynamic quality. The texture is much denser in *The Owl and the Pussycat*, and the dynamic level is *forte* with softer sections sandwiched in-between. *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* has both dense and sparse sections, along with a wide variety of dynamics.

Thus, in *A Little Nonsense,* one finds a dynamic cycle that is compositionally-varied and musically-challenging, yet accessible to audiences of all ages. For the right singer, this could be an engaging finale to a recital.

CHAPTER IV

AT LAST, TO BE IDENTIFIED!

The second song cycle that Thomas wrote is a group of six settings of poems by Emily Dickinson titled, *At last, to be identified!* The title of the cycle comes from the title of the sixth and final piece of the cycle. *At last, to be identified!* was finished in 1992, approximately four years after the completion of the first cycle, *A Little Nonsense*. Unlike most of the other cycles being discussed, this cycle was not the result of a commission.[40] Thus, one could say that this is his most universal soprano cycle. Indeed, the fourth song, *I never saw a Moor*, is his most popular piece.[41] The order of the poems used in this cycle is as follows: *Doubt me! My Dim Companion!*, *What if I say I shall not wait!*, *Wild Nights---Wild Nights!*, *I never saw a Moor*, *There's a certain Slant of light* and *At last, to be identified!*.

This cycle defies simple description. The poems run the gamut of human emotion, and the music is naturally also quite varied. Some of the settings are simple and can be sung by amateurs, while others are best left to professionals. The main challenges in performing this cycle are the unpredictable harmonic contexts, the unexpected melodic destinations, the low tessitura, the extreme dynamics and the need for mature expression.

The first song in this cycle, *Doubt me! My Dim Companion!* is marked, "Stately, hymnlike." While the text of this poem does not resemble the texts of most hymns, the

40Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222-223.
41Ibid., 222, 235.

stoic chords that staunchly support the voice in this piece are not unlike many traditional hymns. The poem/text, which Thomas set in a through-composed manner, is below:

Doubt me! My Dim Companion!

Doubt me! My Dim Companion!
Why, God, would be content
With but a fraction of the Life—
Poured thee, without a stint—
The whole of me—forever—
What more the Woman can,
Say quick, that I may dower thee
With last Delight I own!

It cannot be my Spirit—
For that was thine, before—
I ceded all of Dust I knew—
What Opulence the more
Had I—a (freckled)[humble]Maiden,
Whose farthest of Degree,
Was—that she might—
Some distant Heaven,
Dwell timidly, with thee!

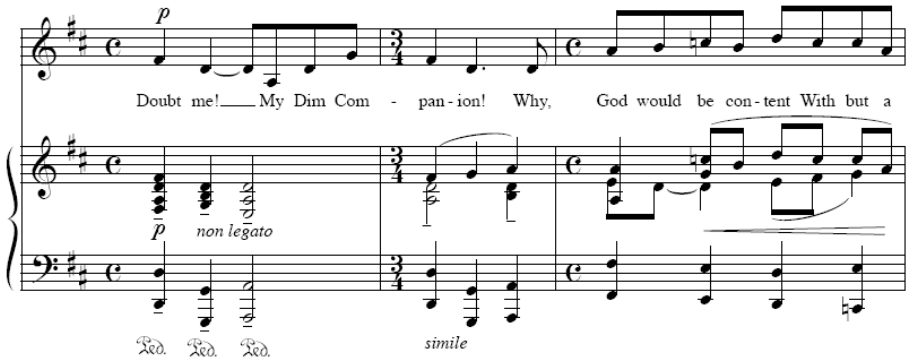
(Sift her, from Brow to Barefoot!
Strain till your last Surmise—
Drop, like a Tapestry, away,
Before the Fire's Eyes—
Winnow her finest fondness—
But hallow just the snow
Intact, in Everlasting flake—
Oh, Caviler, for you!) [42,43]

While several other keys share the majority of the piece, it begins and ends in D major. Both the voice and the piano softly enter together in m. 1, where the voice immediately states the title. Beneath this opening declaration, the piano has rich decisive chords, which reinforce the solemn nature of the piece.

42Emily Dickinson, "Doubt Me! My Dim Companion!" poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/emily-dickinson/doubt-me-my-dim-companion/ (accessed May 10, 2011).

43Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 1-3.

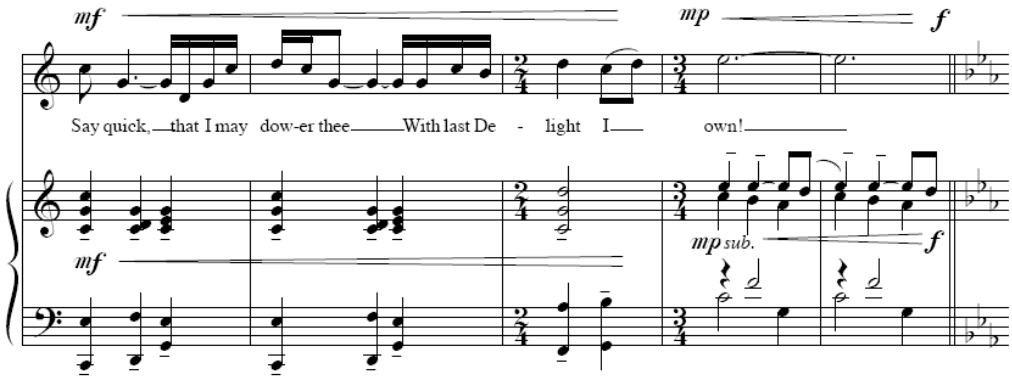
Though the woman confidently proclaims her faithfulness at the end of the piece, at first, she is a little rattled that her lover has questioned her loyalty. As she processes the magnitude of the situation, she draws back at first, which is portrayed through the quiet beginning. (Ex. 4.1) The poem is written in brief, halting phrases, revealing her flustered state. However, Thomas did not highlight the broken quality of her speech in his setting.[44] For the most part, his phrases flow evenly together.



Example 4.1: Note the quiet beginning, along with the flowing phrases; *Doubt me! My Dim Companion!*, mm. 1-3[45]

In mm. 12-13, the voice utters the words, "Say quick, that I may dower thee…." The way in which Thomas set these words rhythmically, appropriately illustrates her impatience. Beneath these words and the rest of that phrase, the left hand of the piano has some rather large intervals to span. The first two beats in mm. 12 and 13 have major-10^{ths}, followed by minor-10^{ths} in the left hand. Between the two hands of the piano, a large range of the piano is covered, which adds fullness. However, such large intervals, which are not exclusive to just these two measures in this piece, are difficult to play. (Ex.4.2)

44Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 1-3.
45Ibid., 1.

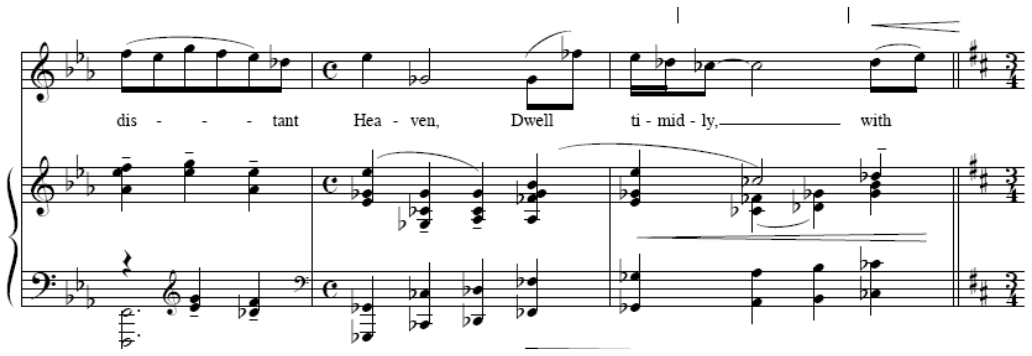


Example 4.2: Note the rhythmic word-painting above for the words, "Say quick," as well as the large intervals in the left hand; *Doubt Me! My Dim Companion!*, mm. 12-16[46]

With a rising tessitura and crescendo, giving way to a *subito mezzo-piano*, the above phrase leads to the first climax in mm. 15-16 with the text, "With last Delight I own!" (mm.13-16). The E5 on "own!" is the highest note of piece thus far, and it has its own quick crescendo from *mezzo-piano* to *forte*.

In m. 17, there is a definitive tonal shift to E^b major, and the second verse begins in m. 18. This verse does not stay in E^b for long, however. Instead, it wanders tonally. Then, in m. 27, the piece begins building towards the second and final climax. The dynamics rise, as does the vocal tessitura. In m. 30, there is a vocal melisma on the word "distant," a touch of word-painting that sets it off from the predominantly syllabic structure of the vocal line. In m. 32, Thomas effectively uses rhythm to paint the word "timidly," which enters 'timidly' with two brief sixteenth-notes, before establishing itself with a longer-note value. (Ex. 4.3)

46Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 2.



Example 4.3: Note the preparation for the climax in the measures above, as well as the melisma on "distant" (m. 30), and the rhythmic word-painting on "timidly" (m. 32); *Doubt Me! My Dim Companion!*, mm. 30-32[47]

Finally, the anticipated climax arrives in m. 33 with a return to the home key of D major on the last word of text, "thee!." Thomas stretched this word out over two and a half measures via a melisma, which is extended for another eight measures, as the singer first sings "Ah" and then hums until the end of the piece. Thomas did not set the third stanza. The choice seems to be a wise one, since the end of the second stanza is climactic, and the third stanza is somewhat less accessible to modern sensibilities.

The overall *growth* of this piece can be traced from the reaction of the woman who has just been stunned by her lover's questioning of her loyalty, to her re-declaration of her undying allegiance to him and finally to the quiet, reflective ending. Considering what is at stake here for the woman and her lover, the ending is anti-climactic. It would have been much more moving had the piece ended during the height of her proclamation of undying love. However, by ending the piece where he did and by setting the text in a stately manner, Thomas chose to portray a calm, assured woman.

The most difficult aspects of this piece are the unexpected melodic destinations and the low tessitura. Fortunately, the piano doubles and supports the vocal line throughout the piece. With regard to the tessitura, the entire first verse stays low, not even

47Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 3.

extending to an E5 until the last note. More specifically, the singer is expected to sing an A3 (m. 1) and two B3s (m. 5) which would be difficult for most sopranos.

Like the opening piece, the second piece of the cycle, *What if I say I shall not wait!*, is through-composed and begins with a challenging statement. Here the similarity between the two pieces ends, however, as calm affirmation gives way to desperation after the death of a loved one. Thomas indicated the tempo and mood of the piece right at the beginning and highlighted the frustrated state of the woman with the word "Agitated." The poem/text is below:

What if I say I shall not wait!

What if I say I shall not wait!
What if I burst the fleshly Gate—
And pass escaped—to thee!

What if I file this Mortal—off—
See where it hurt me—That's enough—
And wade in Liberty!

They cannot take me—any more!
Dungeons can call—and Guns implore
Unmeaning—now—to me—

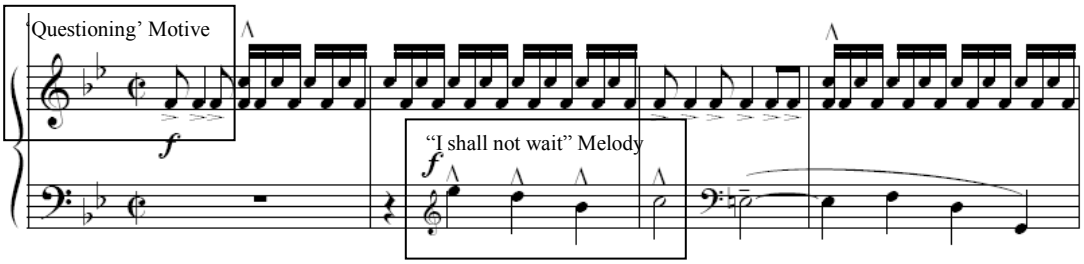
As laughter—was—an hour ago—
Or Laces—or a Travelling Show—
Or who died—yesterday![48,49]

This piece can be divided into two parts: a bitter, angry rant (mm. 1-30) and a disturbing relinquishment of life (mm. 31-97). It begins with a brief, but intense piano prelude in the key of F major, which introduces an important rhythmic motive. The rhythmic motive is associated with the text, "What if I," so it will be labeled the

48Emily Dickinson, "What if I say I shall not wait!" poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/emily-dickinson/what-if-i-say-i-shall-not-wait/ (accessed May 10, 2011).

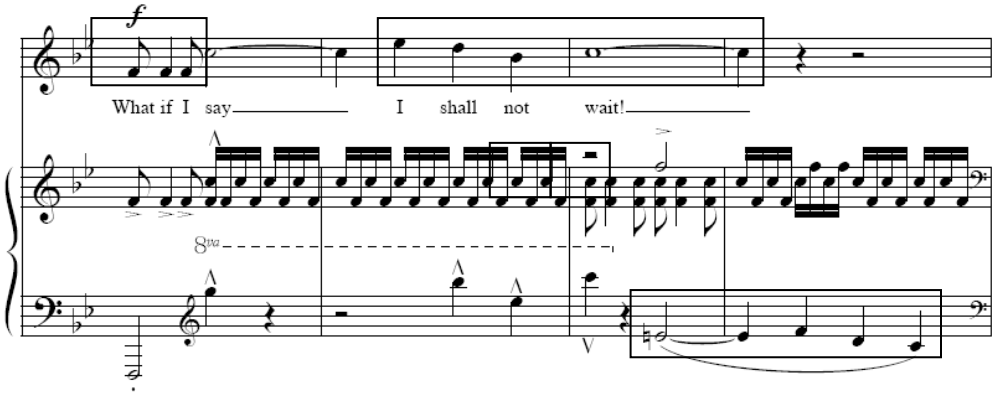
49Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 4-11.

'questioning' motive. After the introduction of the 'questioning' motive, the right hand pulsates between the tonic and dominant notes (F4 and C4), while the left hand of the piano features a melodic line. (Ex. 4.4)



Example 4.4: Note the 'questioning' motive in the first box and the "I shall not wait" melody in the second; *What if I say I shall not wait!*, mm. 1-4[50]

In mm. 5-8, we see how Thomas used the 'questioning' motive. The voice enters loudly, stating the text, "What if I" using the 'questioning' motive. The next part of the phrase, "say I shall not wait," is a restatement of the first part of the melodic line that was in the left hand in the prelude. Then, as the voice sustains, "wait!" (mm.7-8), the right hand repeats the 'what if I' motive twice. Meanwhile, the left hand picks up where the voice left off, nearly completing its melody from the prelude. (Ex. 4.5)

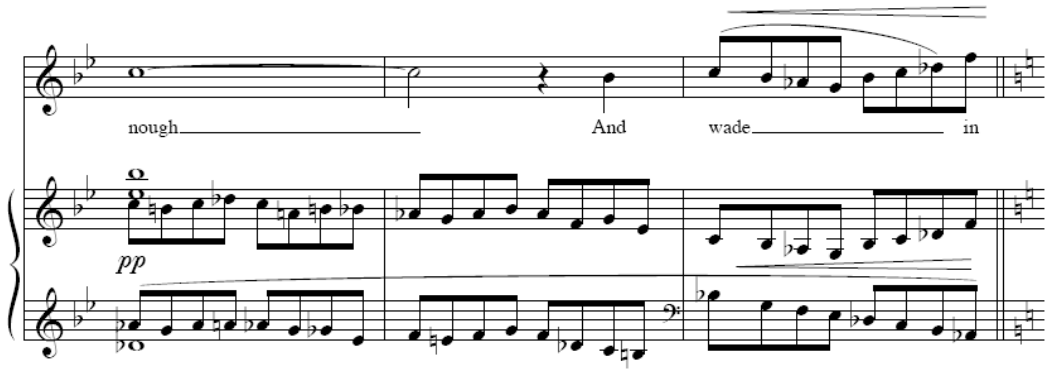


Example 4.5: Note the three occurrences of the 'questioning' motive and the restatement of the left-hand melody from the prelude; *What if I say I shall not wait!*, mm. 5-8[51]

50Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 4.
51Ibid.

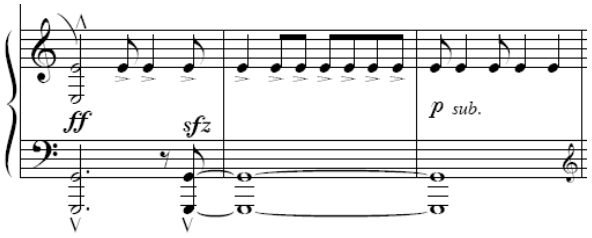
The ‘questioning’ motive is used again for the second vocal entrance at m. 9, when the voice once again demands, “What if I….” The voice pauses briefly in mm. 16-17 before uttering a third bitter rhetorical question, with the same ‘questioning’ rhythmic motive: “What if I file this Mortal—off—/See where it hurt me—That’s enough—” (mm. 18-24). Beneath these words in mm. 18-22, the ‘questioning’ motive ominously sounds, first in the left hand and then in the right.

The climax of the first section occurs when the woman concludes that she has found her answer and should in fact, “file this Mortal off” (mm. 18-20), finally achieving the freedom she has longed for: “And wade in Liberty!” (mm.24-27). Thomas wrote a vocal melisma that first descends, then ascends for the word “wade” (m.25), which is doubled at the octave in the right hand. Meanwhile, the left hand of the piano plays a descending scalar pattern. Together, these patterns create a dense, muddy texture appropriate for “wading” in quick-sand or in a dirty pond, though not necessarily for “wading in [the] freedom” of which the woman dreams. (Ex. 4.6) This particular setting suggests that though this woman thought she could forget her deceased lover, in the end, she finds herself still trapped by so many bittersweet memories. The piano angrily carries these thoughts of resentment through m. 30 to the end of the first section.



Example 4.6: Note the dense texture of "And wade in," particularly with regard to the word "wade"; *What if I say I shall not wait!*, mm. 23-25[52]

In the very next measure, at the beginning of the second section of the piece, there is a sudden shift in mood. The texture thins dramatically, and there is a pedal tone on E4 that highlights the 'questioning' rhythmic motive. Meanwhile, the left hand of the piano sustains octave G's, while the right hand ominously repeats E4. (Ex. 4.7) In m. 34, the voice enters with the words, "They cannot take me anymore!" (mm.34-38). Here, the left hand takes over the repetitive E4. Then, in mm. 40-41, the left and right hands of the piano share the responsibility of continuing the E4 pedal, while the voice sings, "Dungeons can call…."



Example 4.7: Note the dramatic change in texture in this new section of the piece; *What if I say I shall not wait!*, mm.31-33[53]

In the first part of this piece, the woman angrily stated rhetorical questions. In this new section, she seems to have released her outward expressions of anger by ceasing her

52Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 6.
53Ibid.

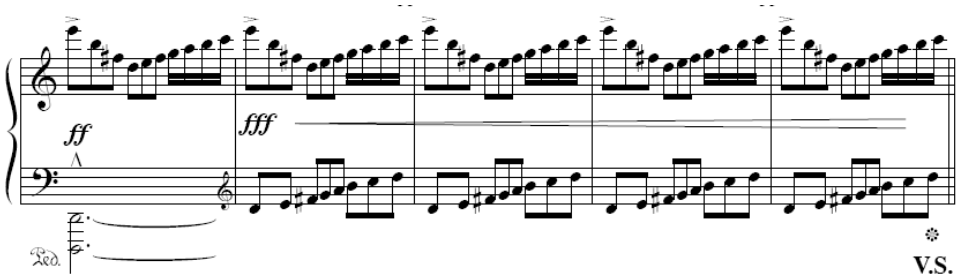
angry questions and claiming "freedom." This is reflected in the sudden thinning of the piano's texture and the more lyrical melodic lines. In a few measures, she will even go so far as to claim that nothing really matters to her anymore. However, there remains a subtle, yet ever-present bitterness just beneath the surface. This is reflected in the persistent 'questioning' motive in the piano part.

In m. 45, the texture changes again and the recurring E4 is replaced by a new repetitive pattern in the piano. The left hand plays a pedal F while the right hand repeats a 6-note pattern based on ascending thirds. Above these patterns the voice re-enters with the text, "Unmeaning now to me…" (mm.48-54). These banal, repeating patterns become the aural picture of the monotonous indifference the woman will face without her beloved.

In the next phrase of text, "As laughter was" (mm. 55-57), the sarcastic nature of the woman on the word "laughter" is highlighted with a seemingly light melismatic rhythmic pattern. The rest of the text, which refers back to the earlier part of the phrase, "Unmeaning now to me…" (mm.48-54), is as follows: "an hour ago/or Laces/or a Traveling Show/Or who died yesterday!" (mm.58-79). Though the climax does not actually occur until the very last part of the phrase, with the words, "Or who died yesterday," Thomas stretched these words out over several measures (mm. 68-79). On "who," the voice soars up to an A5 before descending and then re-ascending, sustaining the final syllable of "yester-day," on an $F^{\#}5$. It is a dramatic vocal ending, but could have been even more incredible if the voice had not peaked on the high A before settling on the $F^{\#}$. Clearly, "who" was word Thomas wanted to highlight, though it does not make the most sense from a poetic or vocal standpoint. The most jarring word in that phrase is

"died," which would have provided an easier vowel for sopranos to sustain on the high A. However, by emphasizing "who," Thomas highlighted the fact that "who" she lost (her lover) was more important.

Meanwhile, the piano has continued to play repetitive patterns, based on thirds, beneath the voice; however, these now come in fragments. These continue through most of the lengthy postlude, until m. 93. Most of the postlude is in the modal key of C Lydian, but in m.93, the harmony makes a last-minute shift to the modal key of D Mixolydian, and the pattern changes to an ascending scale. A few measures later, in the middle of the piano patterns, the piece abruptly moves directly into the third piece: *Wild Nights!---Wild Nights!* (Ex. 4.8) The biggest challenge in performing this piece would be finding a balance between good vocal technique and the expression of the many raw emotions presented in this text.



Example 4.8: Note the last set of patterns in the piano, as well as the initials "V.S." which signal the continuation into the third piece; *What if I say I shall not wait!*, mm.93-97[54]

Wild Nights---Wild Nights! expresses the woman's desperate longing to be with her beloved.[55] From the beginning, Thomas set the tempo and mood of the piece with the words: "Brisk and secretive." This piece flows very naturally due to the deftness with which Thomas set the text. The poem/text is below:

54Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 11.

55Lilia Melani, "Emily Dickinson—Love," http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/wild (accessed June 17, 2011).

Wild Nights!---Wild Nights!

Wild nights—Wild nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile—the Winds—
To a Heart in port—
Done with the Compass—
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden—
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor—Tonight—
In Thee![56,57]

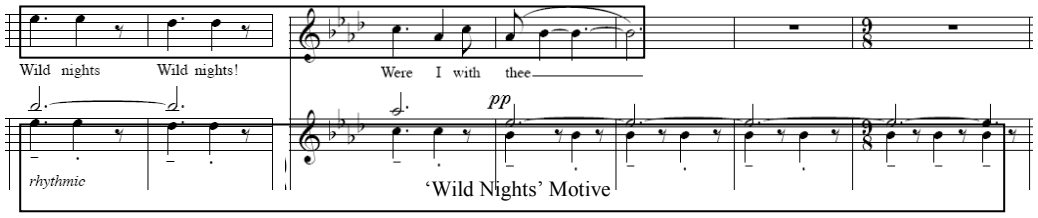
This piece is firmly in the modal key of E^b Mixolydian. The quick 6/8 meter which is reminiscent of the undulating nature of waves is constant. Furthermore, the predominantly linear structure of this piece really opens up the texture and carries the idea of limitless possibility over the next wave. Since the text uses sea imagery, it is only fitting that Thomas would use sea imagery in the music as well. The piece is through-composed and is unified by the use of two recurring melodic motives in the piano part: the 'wild nights' motive (Exs. 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11) and the 'rowing' motive. (Exs. 4.10 and 4.11)

Measures 1-4 consist of a brief piano introduction, with open-5^{th} chords based on the tonic. These opening measures whet the appetites of the listeners with the sense of limitless possibility and impending adventure—themes that pervade this piece. These open-5^{ths} continue beyond the piano introduction and into the entrance of the voice in m. 5.

56Emily Dickinson, *Selected Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (New York: The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, 1997), 45.

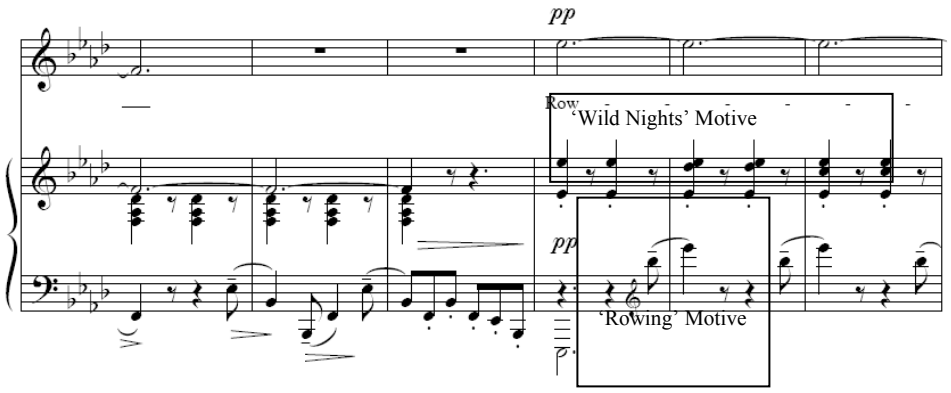
57Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 12-16.

The ‘wild nights’ motive accompanies and is intertwined in the voice’s first phrase of text, “Wild nights—Wild nights!/ Were I with thee” (mm. 5-9). (Ex. 4.9) Shortly after that, Thomas set one of the many utterances of the word “wild” in the piece, as a melisma (mm. 12-13).



Example 4.9: Note the ‘wild nights’ motive in the moving notes in the right hand of the piano and in the voice; *Wild Nights---Wild Nights!*, mm.5-11[58]

The ‘wild nights’ motive next occurs beneath a sustained $E^{b}5$ in the voice on the word, “Rowing” (mm. 35-40). This is also where the ‘rowing’ motive first appears in the left hand. (Fig. 4.10)

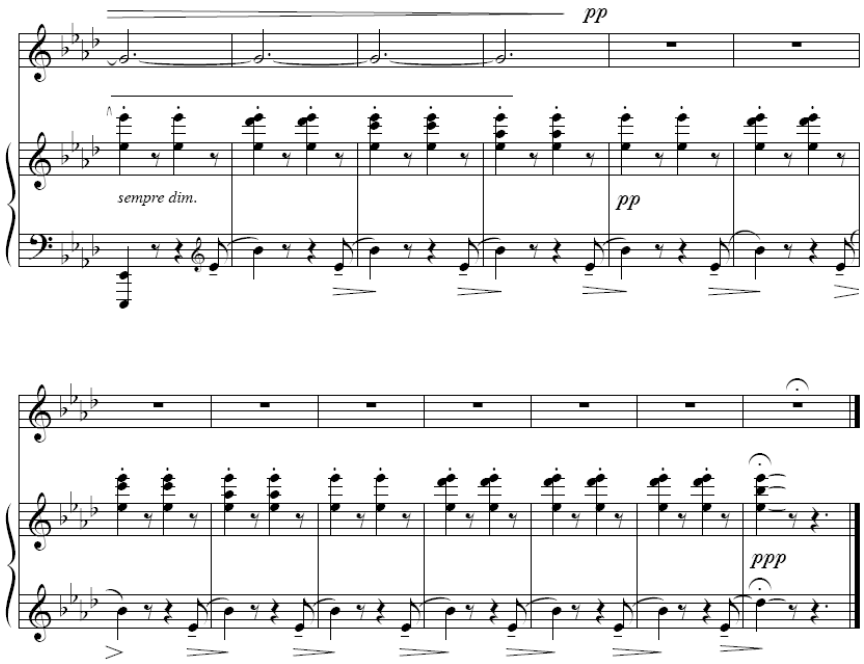


Example 4.10: Note fragments of both of the motives in the piano; *Wild Nights!---Wild Nights!*, mm. 32-37[59]

The climax occurs on the text, “Ah, the Sea!/Might I but moor/Tonight in Thee!” (mm.44-59). While the singer’s desire is hinted at throughout the piece, this is where she finally articulates what she really wants. As the singer sustains “Thee!” (mm. 54-59), the

58Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 12.
59Ibid., 14.

'wild nights' and 'rowing' motives once again appear beneath in the piano part beginning in m. 56. Finally, the postlude in mm. 60-68 evokes the image of rowing away through Thomas' expert use and arrangement of rhythmic patterns, dynamics and the two motives. (Ex. 4.11)



Example 4.11: Note the 'wild nights' and the 'rowing' motives, as well as the open texture and gradual decrescendo; *Wild Nights!---Wild Nights!*, mm. 56-68[60]

In general, the *sound element* in this piece is less dense than in the previous two pieces. It is a welcome contrast to the darker, heavier moods. In addition to writing a sparser piano part, Thomas created this lighter, freer sound by setting a large part of the piano part in the treble clef. In fact, the left hand of the piano spends half of the piece—34 measures—in the treble clef.

This piece is eminently sing-able and suitable for most young sopranos. There are three brief sections in the piece (mm. 23-29, 41-43 and 46-53) where the harmony is a

60Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 15-16.

little odd and unpredictable, but the piano doubles the vocal line in these section, making them significantly less difficult.

The next piece is Thomas' most well-known song: *I never saw a Moor*.[61] It is a short, simple poem that Thomas set in a profoundly inspiring way. The poem/text is below:

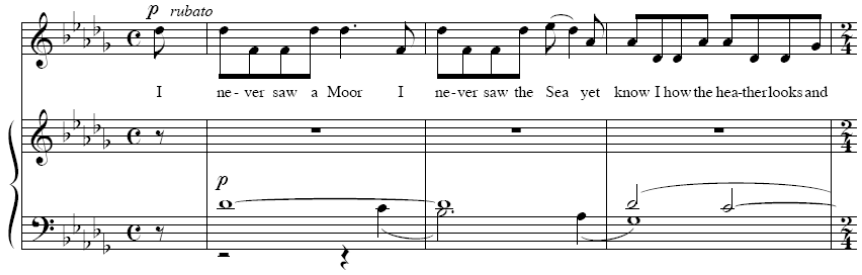
I never saw a Moor

I never saw a Moor—
I never saw the Sea—
Yet know I how the Heather looks
And what a (Billow)[wave must]be.

I never spoke with God
Nor visited in Heaven—
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the (Checks)[chart]were given—
[Ah!][62,63]

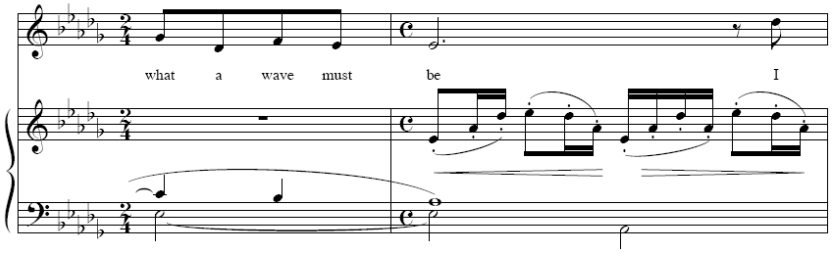
Unlike the other pieces in this cycle, this piece stays in its original key, D^b major, throughout. The very first and most prevalent interval in this piece is the minor-6^{th}. (Ex. 4.12) However, the presence of this interval does not exclude Thomas' abundant use of linear and vertical perfect-5^{ths} and 4^{ths}. Meanwhile, throughout the first few measures (mm. 1-9), while the vocal melody leaps up and down very syllabically, the left hand of the piano steadily descends by steps diatonically from D^b4 to E^b2 (with the exception of F3, which Thomas omitted from the scale). The passing dissonances added by this scale lend a special poignancy to the somewhat angular melody.

61Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222, 235.
62Dickinson, *Selected Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, 179.
63Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 17-20.



Example 4.12: Note the minor-6^{ths} in the vocal line above; *I never saw a Moor*, mm. 1-3[64]

In m. 5, a piano melody appears. This melodic idea will recur many times in the piece, even in the vocal melismas. It is always recognizable, yet never exactly the same. It is ecstatic in character, as if depicting the flights of fanciful imagination that bring joy to the limited life of the woman. (Ex. 4.13) In mm. 10 and 11, ascending arpeggios make their first appearance in the bass line. Meanwhile, the voice, completely overwhelmed with emotion sings, "Ah!" set to a vocal melisma based on the melody from the piano part in m. 5. Thomas' gift of creating beautiful melodies enables this wordless expression truly to move audiences and performers alike.



Example 4.13: Note the melody in the right hand of the piano; *I never saw a Moor*, mm. 4-5[65]

After a brief interlude, the poem is repeated. Though Thomas' setting of this piece is essentially strophic, the second time the text is stated, the piano part is embellished, creating a much fuller and richer *timbre* to support the voice. In mm. 23-33, Thomas also slightly modified the vocal part, particularly emphasizing the words "God," "heaven,"

64Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 17.
65Ibid.

"certain," "I," "spot" and "given," setting them higher than before. The second statement of the poem also concludes with melismas on 'Ah.' This time, though still based on the piano melody as before, it covers a wider range, indicating the heightened wistful ecstasy of the singer. Following this, there is a mini-postlude. This at first appears to be a very traditional conclusion to a traditional strophic piece. However, Thomas threw a surprise in at the end of the postlude by ending on octave A^b's, creating the illusion of a half-cadence instead of the expected authentic cadence on the D^b tonic.

Considering that this piece is the epitome of confident faith, it does not seem to make sense that Thomas would not end it conclusively. However, faith is not *knowing* based on objective fact, it is *knowing* based on beliefs. Faith can never be proven, it can only be fulfilled. Until then, it remains an open-ended question, just like the octave A^bs.

As was mentioned above, the *density* of this piece grows from a very sparse piano accompaniment to a rich and driving undercurrent. The voice part is primarily syllabic except for the melismas on "Ah." The second time through, Thomas varied the melody of this strophic piece just enough on the text "I never spoke with God…as if the chart were given! Ah!" (mm. 22-33) that the voice soars gloriously above the powerful support of the accompaniment, creating a stunning climactic moment. The *timbre* of the voice can also be strategically manipulated, if the singer begins with a simpler sound and then gradually warms up the tone as the piece grows. The *dynamics* also grow from a relatively soft and gentle beginning (*piano*) to a strong declaration of faith by the end (*fortissimo*). However, it is the *melody*, which is based on minor-6^{th} and perfect-5^{th} intervals, that is the most beautifully-unforgettable part of this piece.

Like *Wild Nights—Wild Nights!*, this piece is not very difficult to sing. That aspect, along with the touching, accessible text and the ravishing combination of gorgeous melody with passing dissonance explains why so many people perform this piece. Having said this, however, there is one problematic interval at the end of the vocal line that is worth mentioning. In mm. 31-33, Thomas attempted to enhance the decrescendo and create a dramatic vocal moment by having the voice leap down a major-9th, from an E^{b}5 to a D^{b}4. This sudden leap is awkward both vocally and musically. It is quite possible that because this cycle was not commissioned by a specific soprano, Thomas did not have the luxury of having a soprano sing through the piece during the composition process.[66] What he wrote may not work very well for the majority of sopranos and some may choose to bring the D^{b}4 up the octave to D^{b}5.

The next piece in the cycle, *There's a certain Slant of light*, is so unique that it does not even look like it belongs in the cycle. However, when speaking with the composer, he said that he purposefully composed this piece in this fashion in order to highlight the next and final piece, *At last, to be identified!*. Thomas said, "…I specifically set that in the place I did so that there would be this incredible contrast."[67] The poem/text of *There's a certain Slant of light* is below:

There's a certain Slant of light

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
We can find no scar,

66Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222-224.
67Ibid.

But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are—

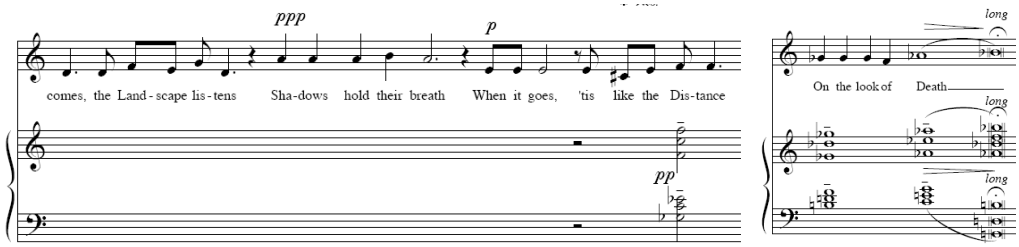
None may teach it—Any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air—

When it comes, the Landscape listens—
Shadows—hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—[68,69]

This piece immediately catches the eye, as there are no bar-lines, time signatures or key signatures. In addition, the piece begins with unaccompanied voice set in a medieval chant-like fashion. The only kind of structure in this piece appears to be in Dickinson's rhyme scheme. Thomas gave a tempo indication (quarter note=66), but he also indicated that the piece should be performed, "Freely, rather slow," which encourages the singer to take liberties as one would in chant.

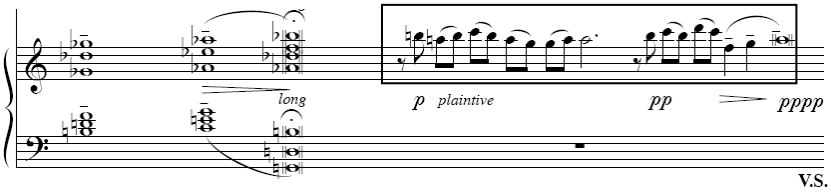
As mentioned above, the piece begins with *a cappella* voice. The piano does not enter until the beginning of the second page on the line of text beginning, "None may teach it—Any—." Beginning with the word, "Any," and continuing through the phrase, "Sent us of the Air—" the piano part consists of dissonant chords or chord combinations. However, just before the voice enters on a D4 for the text, "when it comes" the piano simply plays octave D's very low in the range. Then, for the last few lines of text, though the chords in the piano remain dissonant, the voice is doubled in the piano chords. (Ex. 4.14)

68Dickinson, *Selected Poetry of Emily Dickinson*, 69.
69Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 21-23.



Example 4.14: Note the vocal line which is doubled in the right hand of the piano; *There's a certain Slant of light*, p. 23[70]

Finally, there is a piano postlude which consists of the right-hand of the piano playing around the note A5. (Ex. 4.15) While this entire piece is rather soft, Thomas brought the piece to a very thought-provoking end by indicating *pppp*. From here, the piece flows into the final piece.



Example 4.15: Note the emphasis on the note A(5) in the last two piano phrases; *There's a certain Slant of light*, p. 23[71]

Like *I never saw a Moor*, this piece can be interpreted as a perspective on faith and personal revelation. Unlike the previous piece, however, this appears to be a much less positive perspective. One look at the text, along with the sparse and atonal setting, is more than enough evidence of that. The beginning of the piece is particularly hopeless, as the singer is alone and without purpose or direction in the midst of her pain. However, hope begins to appear, as the singer matures and begins to understand the essence of faith.[72] This is reflected in the fact that the piano (which could represent faith) joins the

70Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 23.
71Ibid.
72Linda Sue Grimes, "Dickinson's Slant of Light: Intuition Through Winter Melancholy," http://www.suite101.com/content/dickinsons-slant-of-light-a38313 (accessed June 17, 2011).

singer on the second page. Furthermore, the atonality begins to take more shape, as the piano doubles the voice on the third page. Finally, at the end, though the singer has stopped singing, the piano continues with a beautifully obscure melody that at last appears to have a tonal center.[73]

The atonality, along with the extremely soft dynamics and obscure text make this piece a bit of a challenge and unsuitable for a beginning singer. However, it is exactly the type of challenge that many more-advanced singers would love to undertake.

The sixth and final piece of this cycle, *At last, to be identified!*, automatically captures attention because it bears the name of the entire cycle. After the cold, bleakness of the fifth piece, the triumphant, celebratory nature of this piece is especially welcome, which, as noted above, was Thomas' intention. The text of the piece is below:

At last, to be identified!

[At last,]
At last, to be identified!
[At last,]
At last, the lamps upon thy side
The rest of Life to see!

[Past,] past Midnight!
Past the [Morning,]Morning star!
Past Sunrise!
Ah, What leagues there (were)[are]
Between our feet, [our feet]and Day!
[At last! At last! At last! At last!
At last! At last! At last! At last! last! last!][74,75]

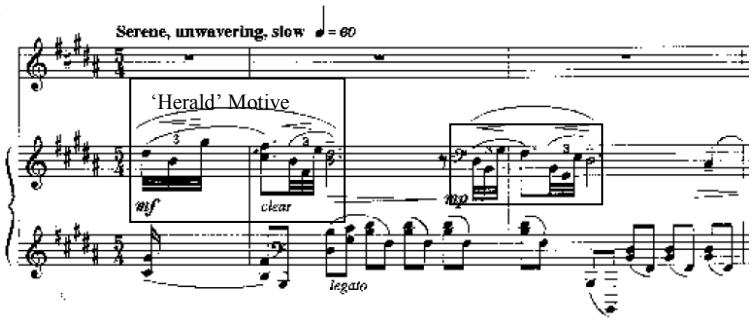
Having strategically placed *At last, to be identified!* after *There's a certain Slant of light*, Thomas virtually guaranteed that this piece would sound large and full.[76]

73Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 21-23.
74Emily Dickinson, "At last, to be identified!" poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/emily-dickinson/at-last-to-be-identified/ (accessed May 10, 2011).
75Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 24-29.
76Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222-224.

However, even if this piece had not been placed after the sparsest piece in the cycle, it would still sound opulent because it is composed in such a fashion.

This piece, which begins and ends in the key of B, begins with a brief piano introduction (mm. 1-5). Though it is unified by its opening and ending key, the song travels through various keys and meters before it finally concludes. The constant meter changes provide interest and variety, but also add to its difficulty.

Right at the beginning of the piece, in the right hand of the piano, a rhythmic motive is established. It will be seen throughout the rest of the piece and will be known as the 'herald' motive because it sounds like something that would be played right before a big proclamation. (Ex. 4.16)

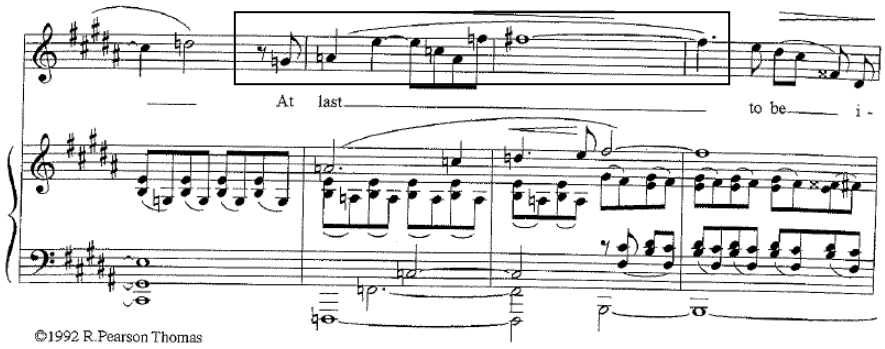


Example 4.16: Note the 'herald' motive in the right hand, which appears twice in these first few measures; *At last, to be identified!*, mm. 1-3[77]

Thomas took several liberties with the text of this poem. For example, he repeated the words, "At last," twice at the beginning of the first two phrases of text. Moreover, Thomas prolonged the word "last" via four separate melismas in mm. 6-8, 9-11, 14-16 and 16-18, delaying the rest of the phrases. This serves to highlight the feeling of anticipated fulfillment behind the exclamation. While the melismas are not the same, they

77Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 24.

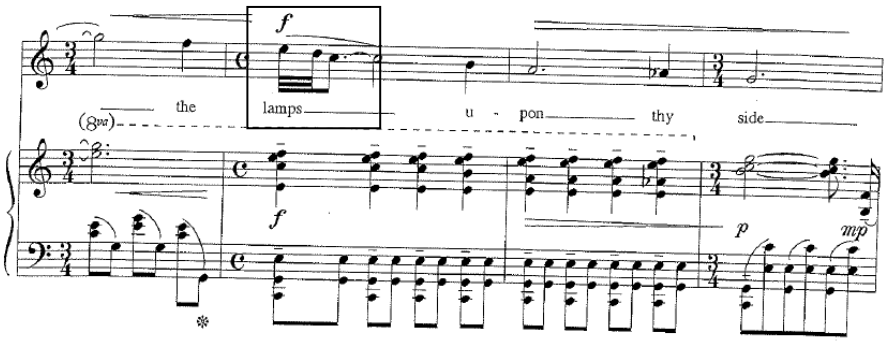
are all ascending lines that resolve up. The first melisma resolves up by a whole-step, while the other three resolve up by a half-step. (Ex. 4.17) Because these melismas are not based on any particular ascending melodic pattern, other than the upward resolution (by half-step or whole-step) at the end of each one, they cannot really be labeled 'motives.' However, Thomas did base a significant portion of the opening melody on these melismas, so they are worthy of mention. Furthermore, Thomas used a similar type of melisma on the first declaration of the word, "Past," in mm. 25-26.



Example 4.17: Note here one of the vocal melismas that resolves up by a half-step; *At last, to be identified!*, mm. 8-11[78]

Beneath the fourth melisma, in the phrase, "At last the lamps upon thy side," (mm. 16-21), the 'herald' motive re-appears (mm. 17-18). Also of note is a descending rhythmic figure in the voice for the word "lamps." (Ex. 4.18) In and of itself, this is not of particular importance, but as it is used again in the piece, it is worth noting here.

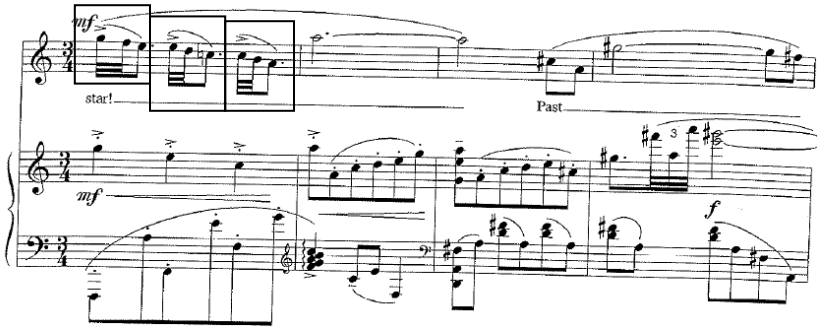
78Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 24.



Example 4.18: Note the rhythmic motive in the voice on the word "lamps"; *What if I say I shall not wait!*, mm. 18-21[79]

A few measures later, in mm. 27-34, the harmony becomes somewhat ambiguous and can be interpreted in different ways. For instance, one interpretation sees these measures as a series of three different pentatonic scales: mm. 27-30 (C-D-E^{b}-G-B^{b}), mm.31-32 ($C^{\#}$-$D^{\#}$-E-A-B) and mm. 33-34 ($C^{\#}$-E-$F^{\#}$-A-B). The text in these measures is, "Midnight! Past the Morning, Morning star!" (mm.27-37). While the only thing that will stand out in listeners' minds is the unique tonal quality of these measures, it can be argued that Thomas was referencing the five points of the "star" in his use of the pentatonic scales. Furthermore, the word "star" is highlighted by a descending pattern that is followed by a leap up to a high A. This evokes the image of a falling star that then, contrary to the laws of science, leaps up to become "the Morning star." (Ex. 4.19) The descending pattern used in these measures is a repetition of a pattern used earlier for the word "lamps" (m. 19). (Ex. 4.18) Though the text in these two passages is different, both of them discuss sources of light: "lamps" and "the Morning star."

79Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 25.

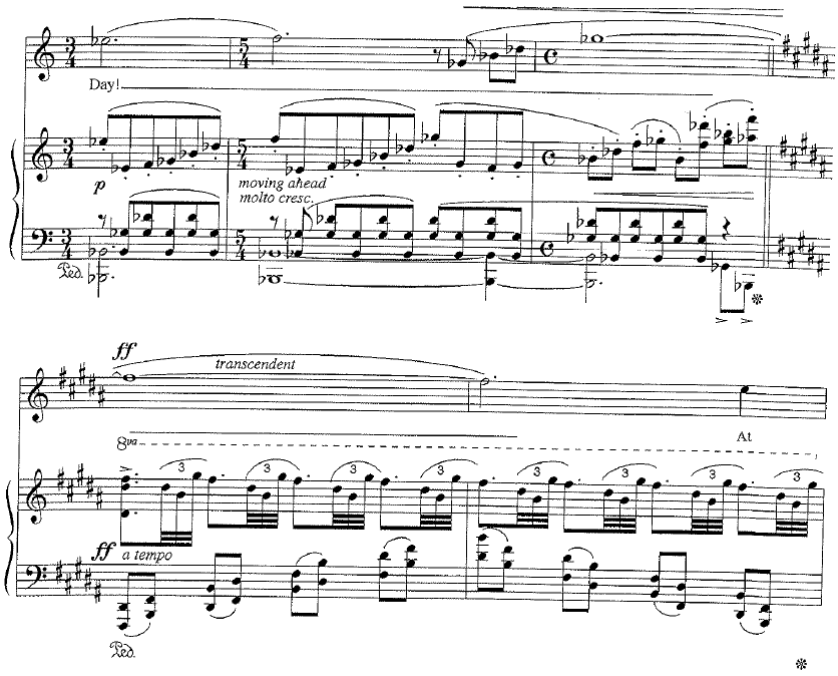


Example 4.19: Note the repeated rhythmic pattern in the vocal line used here for the word "star"; *At last, to be identified!*, mm.35-38[80]

The first climax of the piece occurs at the end of the next line of text: "Past sunrise! Ah!" (mm. 37-41). The 'herald' motive sounds in the right hand beneath the sustained $G^{\#}5$ of "Past" in m. 38, announcing the climax. Then, on the "rise" of "sunrise," Thomas included a line of ascending notes. Finally, on the exclamatory "Ah!" (mm. 40-41), the voice leaps up to a glorious high B^{b}. Though the texture had been dense and becomes dense once again in m. 41, for a brief moment in m. 40, while the voice rejoices with "Ah," the texture becomes magnificently transparent.

Finally, the last line of new text reads, "What leagues there are/Between our feet, our feet and Day!" (mm.41-50). Thomas elongated the word "day" (mm. 46-50) via a melisma, and on the last sustained note of "day" (marked *fortissimo*), he wrote the instructional word "transcendent." In my interview with Thomas, he said that his goal for this piece was to create a sense of "transcendency,"[81] and I think he accomplished his goal here. It really is an overwhelming moment. The transition back to B major, while the singer sustains the $G^{b}5$ (which becomes $F^{\#}5$), is absolutely magnificent. Furthermore, the repeated sounding of the 'herald' motive beneath the voice in these measures is completely triumphant. (Ex. 4.20)

80Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 27.
81Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222-224.



Example 4.20: Note the transition back to B major via the $G^{b}5$ turned $F^{\#}5$, as well as the repetition of the 'herald' motive in the right hand of the piano; *At last, to be identified!*, mm. 46-50[82]

Though this would have created an outstanding conclusion, not only to the piece, but to the entire cycle, the piece does not end there. Instead, from this moment to the end of the vocal part, which consists of several reiterations of the words, "At last," over a steadily descending line, there is a sense of fulfilled excitement. The awaited moment has occurred and now it is over. Suddenly, the singer who has been so focused on this 'one thing,' has nothing more to do, but repeat, "At last!" above several repetitions of the first rhythmic motive in the piano. Thus, despite the subtle beauty of this ending coda, the piece ends somewhat anti-climactically. The only notes in the voice between mm. 55-61 are $C^{\#}4$s and $D^{\#}4$s, which are quite low in the soprano range. Additionally, the high energy of the loud dynamics has decreased with the overall decrescendo. In the brief

82Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: A Song Cycle of Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 28.

piano postlude, the pianist delicately sounds notes from the very bottom of the keyboard as the dynamics decrease to *pppp*.

Of the six pieces in this cycle, this is the most difficult piece, which is exacerbated by the fact that it comes last. Along with the issue of stamina, the singer has to deal with long, sustained vocal phrases, extreme dynamics, large vocal leaps and almost a two-octave range.

Overall, this cycle is an effective setting of Dickinson's poems. The way in which Thomas' melodies and harmonies embody the text is extremely moving. Moreover, the order in which Thomas placed the pieces illustrates an effective plan. The two outside pieces: *Doubt me! My Dim Companion!* and *At last, to be identified!* show the progression of the woman over the course of the cycle. Both are strong declarations, but of very different natures. In the first piece, the woman finds herself having to prove herself to her lover. Her identity is wrapped up in her lover's opinion of her. By the last piece, however, through the loss of her lover and various other trials, she has discovered her true self and her inherent worth. The second piece, *What if I say I shall not wait!* aptly characterizes the depression that can occur in the process of loss and self-discovery. *Wild Nights---Wild Nights!* shows the woman's complete abandon to desire and freedom, which is followed by a strong revelation of faith (*I never saw a Moor*). *There's a certain Slant of light* is a picture of an oppressive doubt that has been and which continues to haunt her. Finally, in the last piece, she declares her final triumph over self-doubt and fear.

As for *harmonic relationships*, the first piece begins and ends in the key of D major. Despite the fact that the singer has to defend her love after his expression of doubt,

there is an overall sense that all will be well in the end. The next piece begins in F major and ends by looking back to the past with the use of modes. At this point, there really is no sense of conclusion. However, the singer has not found conclusion in her life at this point either. E^b Mixolydian and D^b major, are the keys of self-discovery in the next two pieces: *Wild Nights---Wild Nights!* and *I never saw a Moor*. The atonal confusion and haunting doubt is represented in the next piece (*There's a certain Slant of light*). Fortunately, it ends with a little more hope than it began (i.e. it ends with strong references to *a minor*). Finally, the last piece begins and ends in B Major, a bright key of illumination that comes to the protagonist after having wrestled in the depths of doubt and confusion.

There is no simple way to define the *melodic element* of this cycle. As has been seen, the pieces in this cycle are varied, and the unique difficulties of each piece have already been discussed. The storyline (as discussed above) makes sense, but the vastly different levels of vocal technique required for the pieces in this cycle are not easily overcome. To that end, this cycle requires a unique kind of singer willing to take on the challenge. Having said that, however, *Wild Nights---Wild Nights*!, *I never saw a Moor* and perhaps *Doubt me!*...could be performed by younger singers, and since these pieces can be excerpted from the cycle, it makes them especially attractive options. The final piece can also be excerpted, but as has been noted above, it is most appropriate for advanced singers.

Though there are high notes and phrases, the tessitura is generally low in the *melodies* of these pieces. Given the limited upper range and the demands of the lower range, it might be an appropriate cycle for high mezzo-sopranos. Some of the issues that

hinder sopranos would not be issues for mezzo-sopranos. Perhaps someday Thomas will change the title, which currently specifies the soprano *fach*, opening it up to a wider field of singers.[83]

With regard to the *rhythmic element*, there are not any unusual occurrences, with the exception of the meter-less fifth piece. The same can be said for the overall *sound element*. The other two elements of *harmony* and overall *growth* were addressed in the above discussion on the relationship between the overarching story and the keys that Thomas chose.

In conclusion, the ultimate beauty of this cycle is found in the fact that it can impact audiences at varying levels. The amateur listener will enjoy the sweet melodies of the third and fourth pieces, the more-advanced listener will recognize the strength of Thomas' harmonies, and the expert listener will delight in the way Thomas tells the individual stories, as well as the overarching story, through his attention to all of the details.

83Thomas, *Appendix A*, 231-233.

CHAPTER V

SONGS TO POEMS OF EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

Like the previous cycle *At last, to be identified!*, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, was not commissioned by a particular soprano. In fact, it was not originally conceived as a cycle by the composer. However, because these pieces have the same poet, singers programmed them together on recitals. Eventually it made sense for Thomas to publish them as a group.[84] The four poems that comprise this group of pieces are the following: *The Road to Avrillé, To A Young Poet, To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* and *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*.[85] The last piece, *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver,* was dedicated to Karen Beardsley, the first person to sing through the piece in the composition process. Later, she premiered not only that piece, but the entire cycle. However, it should be noted that the piece was not commissioned by her.[86] Setting these poems is an idea that belongs solely to the composer.[87]

While the emotional depth of the first piece, *The Road to Avrillé,* may not be captured fully by a beginner, the rhythmic simplicity, the brevity of the piece, as well as the ease of the melodic line, range (D4-G5) and tessitura make it very accessible to young singers. *To A Young Poet* is not quite as simple as *The Road to Avrillé*: it has rather long phrases and climaxes on a sustained high A, followed by an expansive melisma. Still, overall, the piece is rather short (36 measures), it essentially stays in 4/4 time throughout,

84Thomas, *Appendix A*, 221, 224-225.

85Poetry used by permission from Holly Peppe, Literary Executor for Edna St. Vincent Millay's works, via Vin Barnett, both of *The Edna St. Vincent Millay Society*, January 12, 2011/November 2, 2011: Vin Barnett, e-mail messages to author, January 12, 2011 and November 2, 2011.

86Thomas, *Appendix A*, 221, 224-225.

87Ibid.

and it has harmonic and melodic unity, all of which render this piece appropriate for intermediate singers. *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* is not vocally-demanding, as far as stamina, range ($D^{b}4$-$B^{b}5$) and tessitura are concerned, but the frequent harmonic changes, make the melodic line somewhat tricky. This piece is more appropriate for advanced singers. Finally, the last piece, *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*, is fairly challenging in several regards. Though the melody is memorable, and the meter and tempo are not particularly difficult, the range and tessitura are not easy. The melody dives down to C4 on more than one occasion, and the singer is often required to sustain high notes over several beats. However, probably the biggest obstacle to younger singers is the length of the piece. It has over 450 measures and therefore demands vocal, mental and emotional endurance. For these reasons, this piece and the performance of the cycle as a whole, is better suited to advanced musicians. However, the first two pieces could be excerpted from this cycle and combined with songs from other cycles, for performance by less-advanced singers.

The Road to Avrillé takes place in the month of April near a town called "Avrillé," which appears to be a playful derivative of the French word for April: *Avril*. In this gentle setting, the singer reflects on the birth, growth and death of a love affair. The poem/text is below:

The Road to Avrillé

April again in Avrillé,
And the brown lark in air.
And you and I a world apart,
That walked together there.

The cuckoo spoke from out the wood,
The lark from out the sky.

Embraced upon the highway stood
Love-sick you and I.

The rosy peasant left his bees,
The carrier slowed his cart,
To shout us blithe obscenities,
And bless us from the heart.

Who long before the year was out,
Under the autumn rain,
Far from the road to Avrillé,
Parted with little pain.[88,89]

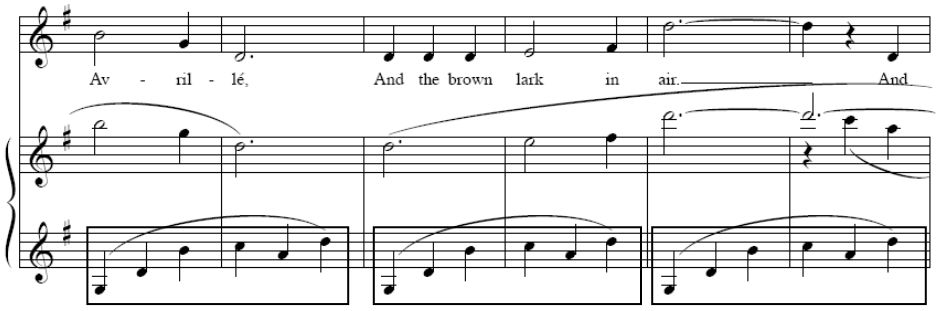
This piece is essentially in the key of G major, though it does briefly visit a few other keys. Of the four verses, three end with the same musical refrain. With the exception of one 5/4 measure, the piece is in ¾ time throughout. The tempo marking given by Thomas ("Tenderly, but not too fast, dotted half-note=48-52") indicates that the piece should be felt in units of one beat per measure, with three subdivisions. This lends itself to the feel of an easy lilting waltz. The left hand of the piano, with its ostinato of arpeggiated chords on quarter-note subdivisions, also helps create this atmosphere, which is quite appropriate for a tender love story.

In this piece, Thomas used a traditional song form ($AABA^1$) to set up expectations of a happy love affair. Then, he deviates from those expectations to underscore the affair's dissolution. The first four measures of this piece consist of a brief piano introduction. Verse one begins in m. 5 and continues through m. 20. The melody is divided into regular 4-bar phrases. The first phrase ends with a half-cadence (V chord=D) in m. 8. However, the V-chord is in second inversion, so it is not a particularly strong

88Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2011), 217.

89Richard Pearson Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 1994), 1-5.

half-cadence. The same V-chord in second inversion occurs at the end of the second phrase in m. 12. (Ex. 5.1) The next phrase is virtually identical in melodic outline and harmony to phrase 1. Similarly, the harmony of phrases 2 and 4 is the same, with only slight variations in the melody. The chief melodic difference between the two phrases comes at the end of the first verse: instead of ending on a D5, as in m. 12, the voice concludes on the tonic, a G4, creating a perfect-authentic cadence in m. 20. Meanwhile, the left hand of the piano repeats the same pattern (a 2-bar ostinato based on the G-major tonic and its dominant-seventh) for the first 24 measures with only one slight variation in m. 17, and the right hand doubles the melody in the voice (at the octave).



Example 5.1: Note the ostinato in the left-hand of the piano, the doubling of the melody in the right hand of the piano and the cadences in mm. 8 and 12; *The Road to Avrillé*, mm. 7-12[90]

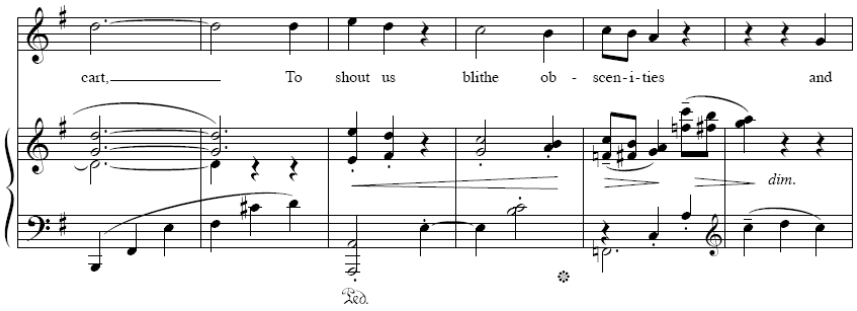
The second verse of the poem begins on the pick-up to m. 23 and continues through m. 38 and has a melodic line and harmony similar to the first verse. One of the few harmonic differences is the appearance of a few C-major chord arpeggiations in the left hand, which are later featured in the first part of the next verse. Also, though there are still cadences every four measures (half-cadences in mm. 26 and 30, an imperfect authentic cadence in m. 34 and a perfect authentic cadence in m. 37), the third cadence is an imperfect authentic cadence instead of a half-cadence, as in the first verse. Another

90Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 1.

difference between this verse and the first verse is that for the most part, the right hand no longer doubles the vocal line. Furthermore, Thomas dropped the left-hand ostinato that supported the first verse and instead, incorporated other varying patterns. However, having taking that hiatus, the ostinato from the first verse makes a brief reappearance in mm. 37-40, this time an octave lower. Though the right hand does not consistently double the voice in this verse, in mm. 24-27, it foreshadows the vocal line in mm. 28-30 ("out the sky"), and towards the end of the verse, it briefly doubles the vocal line.

With regard to the melody, two differences from the first verse that are worth noting are the staccatos which aurally paint and set apart the word "cuckoo" in m. 23, and the 'quarter-note, half-note' rhythm that is prevalent in this verse, as opposed to the 'half-note, quarter-note' rhythmic scheme of the first verse.

The third verse begins on the pick-up to m. 41 and continues through m. 57. In addition to outlining C-major and b-minor chords in the left-hand in the first few measures, as opposed to the traditional G-major (tonic) and D-major (dominant) chords, the cadences in this verse are less decisive—one of the first indications that this love story is doomed. In mm. 44-51, the text also reads, "The carrier slowed his cart,/To shout us blithe obscenities." To emphasize the foul nature of those curses, Thomas created a fleeting dissonant moment in m. 51, by juxtaposing F-naturals and $F^{\#}$s. Furthermore, the right hand doubles the voice at this moment, before echoing the notes an octave higher. (Ex. 5.2)



Example 5.2: Note the juxtaposition of the F-naturals and F$^{\#}$s which aurally paint the text, as well as the doubling of the voice and the echo in the right hand of the piano; *The Road to Avrillé*, mm. 47-52[91]

The next three measures are more dissonant, with either major or minor 2nds on the downbeats (mm. 52-54). This shows that the relationship between the lovers is not perfect. This verse cadences on B-major chords (i.e. a half-cadence in the relative minor: e minor). Also, instead of having interludes as there were between the first, second and third verses, the voice proceeds directly into the fourth verse on the pick-up to m. 58.

The first several measures of the fourth verse are quite dissonant, with D5s and D4s juxtaposed against an E1 in the bass in mm. 58-61, a C-natural against a C$^{\#}$ in m. 63 and a dissonant G$^{\#}$4 in the voice in mm. 64-65 (text: "long before the years was out,/Under the autumn rain" [mm. 58-65]). Thomas indicated that these measures were to be performed "tenderly." The dissonance is quite appropriate for the bittersweet memory of what occurred in the rain that day.

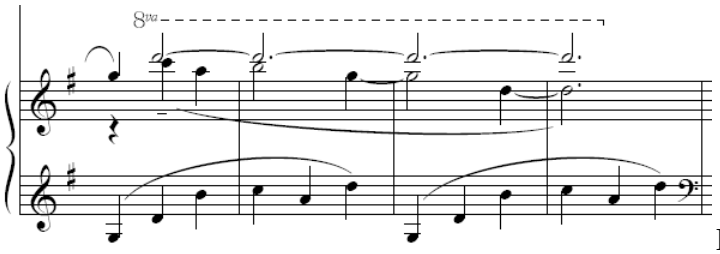
That moment is immediately followed by the climax, which can be divided into two parts. The first part of the climax of this piece occurs in mm. 66-69, when the title of the piece is sung for the first time, "Far from the road to Avrillé," and the voice leaps up to a *piano* G5 (the highest note of the piece) on the first syllable of "Avrillé." From there, the climax proceeds to the moment where listeners discover that the lovers are no longer

91Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 3.

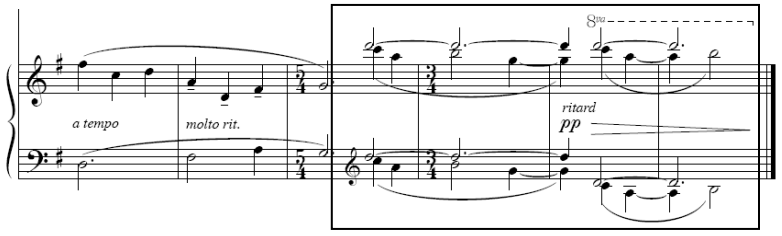
together: “Parted with little pain” (mm. 70-75). Thomas beautifully emphasized the word “pain” by placing a fermata over the rest between “little” and “pain” and setting the word “pain” unaccompanied.

Following this *a cappella* declaration in the voice, the piano re-enters. The left hand of the piano thoughtfully echoes the first and last melodic phrases from verse 1, while the right hand picks up the left-hand ostinato from the beginning of the piece (mm. 74-77). These brief reappearances of former material hint at the memories that still replay in the lover’s mind.

In the last few measures, the piano replays a pattern that occurred in the right hand at the end of the first verse. In mm. 80-82, this pattern ends very conclusively on the tonic. However, when it repeats in mm. 82-83, the piano stops short of completing the pattern. (Ex. 5.3) This incomplete ending may have been Thomas’ way of suggesting that this love story is not completely resolved. This piece appears very simple on the surface, particularly in the first two verses, but Thomas’ setting, though generally simple, ends by suggesting that this love story might actually be a little more complicated.



Mm. 19-22



Mm. 78-83

Example 5.3: Note the pattern in the right hand of the piano at the end of the first verse and its re-appearance in both hands of the piano at the end of the piece; *The Road to Avrillé*, mm.19-22[92] and 78-83[93]

Though this was mentioned earlier, it is again worth noting that this piece is an excellent repertoire choice for young singers. Furthermore, according to Thomas, apparently some singers and their teachers have already taken note of this piece: "*April again in Avrillé* is probably the one that is done the most because it's short and lyrical…."[94]

The second song, *To A Young Poet*, is about immortality. Thomas marked the song "expansive" and "*espressivo*" to capture this feeling of immortality. Though it is set in common time, Thomas gave the tempo marking in half-notes, perhaps to give the singer more of a sense of freedom. The poem/text is below:

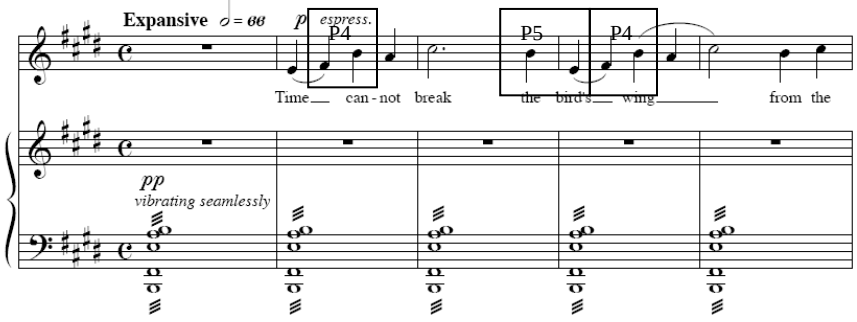
To A Young Poet

Time cannot break the bird's wing from the bird.
Bird and wing together
Go down, one feather.
No thing that ever flew,

92Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 2.
93Ibid., 5.
94Thomas, *Appendix A*, 225.

Not the lark, not you,
Can die [can die as others do,]as others do.[95,96]

The key signature for this piece would indicate that it is in E major throughout. There are no accidentals, with the exception of mm. 25-27, where there are D-naturals. However, a great deal of the accompaniment is based less on traditional E-major harmonies than on quintal-quartal chords. The harmonic movement is also quite slow, to the point of being static. For instance, in the first six measures of the piece, the piano part consists of a single quintal-quartal chord that is sustained by vibrating seamlessly in a tremolo. With the exception of m. 27 and the final three measures of the piece, Thomas' texture of chordal tremolos extends through the entire piece, creating a unique, ethereal sound effect that underscores the hopeful theme of life after death. (Ex. 5.4) Meanwhile, the vocal line is quite simple, and similar to the harmony, it is loosely based on quintal-quartal relationships. For instance, in the first few measures, these relationships exist: $F^{\#}$-B (perfect-4^{th}) and B-E (perfect-5^{th}). (Ex. 5.4) The second verse begins similarly to the first.



Example 5.4: Note the quintal-quartal relationships in the melodic line, as well as the previously-discussed accompaniment; *To A Young Poet*, mm. 1-5[97]

95Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay, 351.
96Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 6-7.
97Ibid., 6.

The dramatic climax of this piece, where the voice leaps up a minor-7th to an A5, occurs on the first utterance of the word "die" in mm. 19-22. The high A is sustained over almost two measures and is followed by a melisma that lasts another two measures. This is also the first instance of any melodic interest in the piano part. Under the high A, the piano foreshadows the melody of the vocal melisma. Thomas repeated the words "can die" in mm. 22-24, emphasizing the phrase even more. Ironically, it is during the last several measures (mm. 28-36) that the elusive E-major tonal center more clearly begins to take shape. This resolution to E major is emphasized as the piano repeats the last phrase of the vocal line in the bass, which serves as a calm reassurance to the object of this poem.

Though this piece is rather short, I have often found myself humming its melody. If it leaves its indelible mark in the mind of other listeners as it has done to mine, it will certainly have served its purpose and carried forth the message of the poem: the remembrance of the impact of a life, long after it is over.

The third poem is *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message*, a melancholy poem of regret. Thomas emphasized the unremitting happiness of the poem in his tempo instructions: "Adagio, inexorable, without *rubato*." The poem/text is below:

To One Who Might Have Borne A Message

Had I known that you were going
I would have given you messages for her,
Now two years dead,
Whom I shall always love.

As it is, should she entreat you how it goes with me,
You must reply: as well as with most, you fancy;
That I love easily, and pass the time.

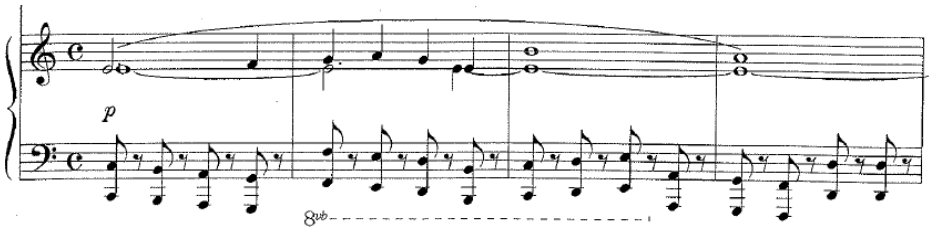
And she will not know how all day long between
My life and me her shadow intervenes,
A young thin girl,
Wearing a white skirt and a purple sweater
And a narrow pale blue ribbon about her hair.

I used to say to her, "I love you
Because your face is such a pretty colour,
No other reason."
But it was not true.

Oh, had I only known that you were going,
I could have given you messages for her![98,99]

This piece begins in the key of C major, with the piano and voice entering simultaneously on the downbeat of m. 1. For the first several measures, the left-hand accompaniment consists of a string of eighth-notes on the strong beats, each set off by an eighth-note rest. After its opening appearance, this pattern re-occurs regularly throughout the piece. Sometimes the eighth-notes are doubled, as in the opening measures, sometimes they are not. The eighth-notes predominantly outline scalar fragments, and this plodding, 'walking bass' could have several sources in the poem. One possibility is that it is inspired by the text, "between/My life and me her shadow intervenes,/A young thin girl," (mm. 22-26). These alternating eighth-notes and eighth-rests could be Thomas' way of personifying this "shadowy figure" and her ominous movements between life and death throughout the piece. (Ex. 5.5) Meanwhile, the right hand essentially doubles the voice.

98Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay, 189-190.
99Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 8-11.



Example 5.5: Note the octave 'chords' in the left hand of the piano; *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message,* mm. 1-4[100]

Though this piece is not strophic, the beginning melody in mm. 1-7 re-appears twice in the piece, which gives this through-composed piece some melodic unity. The first re-occurrence appears in mm. 16-18, restating the first half of the melody a minor-9th higher in the right hand of the piano. The entire melody is heard again in the voice in mm. 30-36.

Harmonically, this piece is very transitory—much like the roaming memories of the regret-filled lover in this poem. In addition, there are not many traditional cadences, not even at the end of the piece. Instead, the piece ends in the key of F^{b} major (or E major) in a very non-traditional I-vi progression.

This piece appears to be more unified by Millay's text than by the way in which Thomas set her text. The character in the poem begins by stating a desire and ends by crying out in anguish at the missed opportunity to fulfill this desire. This cry of anguish is the most poignant and rewarding part of this piece, not only for the listener, but also for the performer. The tessitura and *forte* dynamics of this outburst in mm. 42-44 are well-suited to the soprano voice, and the syncopated setting of the melisma at the beginning of the phrase makes the expression of grief that much more intentional. Still, all in all, this song is not as successful as the first two.

100Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 8.

The fourth and final piece, *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*, which begins in a style that is "Lively, with color," is a substantial piece with over 450 measures. By itself, its length is more than twice that of the previous three pieces combined. This ballad is one of two ballads that Thomas has composed for the soprano voice thus far. The other ballad is *The Ballad of the Boy Who Went to Sea*, which is not part of a cycle and is therefore beyond the scope of this document.[101] The poem/text for *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* is below:

The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver

"Son," said my mother,
When I was knee-high,
"You've need of clothes to cover you,
And not a rag have I.

"There's nothing in the house
To make a boy breeches,
Nor shears to cut a cloth with,
Nor thread to take stitches.

"There's nothing in the house
But a loaf-end of rye,
And a harp with a woman's head
Nobody will buy,"
And she began to cry.

That was in the early fall.
When came the late fall,

"Son," she said, "the sight of you
Makes your mother's blood crawl,--

"Little skinny shoulder-blades
Sticking through your clothes!
And where you'll get a jacket from
God above knows.

"It's lucky for me, lad,
Your daddy's in the ground,

101Thomas, "Curriculum Vitae," 2011.

And can't see the way I let
His son go around!"
And she made a queer sound.

That was in the late fall.
When the winter came,
I'd not a pair of breeches
Nor a shirt to my name.

I couldn't go to school,
Or out of doors to play.
And all the other little boys
Passed our way.

"Son", said my mother,
"Come, climb into my lap,
And I'll chafe your little bones
While you take a nap."

And, oh, but we were (silly)[happy]
For (half) an hour or more,
Me with my long legs,
Dragging on the floor,

A-rock-rock-rocking
To a mother goose rhyme!
Oh, but we were happy
For half an hour's time!

But there was I, a great boy,
And what would folks say
To hear my mother singing me
To sleep all day,
In such a daft way?

Men say the winter
Was bad that year;
Fuel was scarce,
And food was dear.

A wind with a wolf's head
Howled about (our)[the]door,
And we burned up the chairs
And sat upon the floor.

All that was left us
Was a chair we couldn't break,
And the harp with (a)[the]woman's head
Nobody would take,
For song or pity's sake.

The night before Christmas
I cried with [the]cold,
I cried myself to sleep
Like a two-year old.

And in the deep night
I felt my mother rise,
And stare down upon me
With love in her eyes.

I saw my mother sitting
On the one good chair,
A light falling on her
From I couldn't tell where.

Looking nineteen,
And not a day older,
And the harp with a woman's head
Leaned against her shoulder.

Her thin fingers, moving
In the thin, tall strings,
Were weav-weav-weaving
Wonderful things.

Many bright threads,
From where I couldn't see,
Were running through the harp-strings
Rapidly,

And gold threads whistling
Through my mother's hand.
I saw the web grow,
And the pattern expand.

She wove a child's jacket,
And when (it)[she]was done
She laid it on the floor
And wove another one.

She wove a red cloak
So regal to see,
"She's made it for a king's son,"
I said, "and not for me."
But I knew it was for me.

She wove a pair of breeches
Quicker than that!
She wove a pair of boots
And a little cocked hat.

She wove a pair of mittens,
She wove a little blouse,
She wove all night
In the still, cold house.

She sang as she worked,
[Ah, Ah]
And the harp-strings spoke;
Her voice never faltered,
And the thread never broke,
And when I awoke,--

There sat my mother
With the harp against her shoulder,
Looking nineteen,
And not a day older,

A smile about her lips,
And a light about her head,
And her hands in the harp-strings
Frozen dead.

And piled [up] beside her
And toppling to the skies,
Were the clothes of a king's son,
Just my size.[102,103]

At first glance, this piece can appear daunting. In fact, when I interviewed Thomas, he referred to this piece as "a mini-opera."[104] Fortunately for performers, this

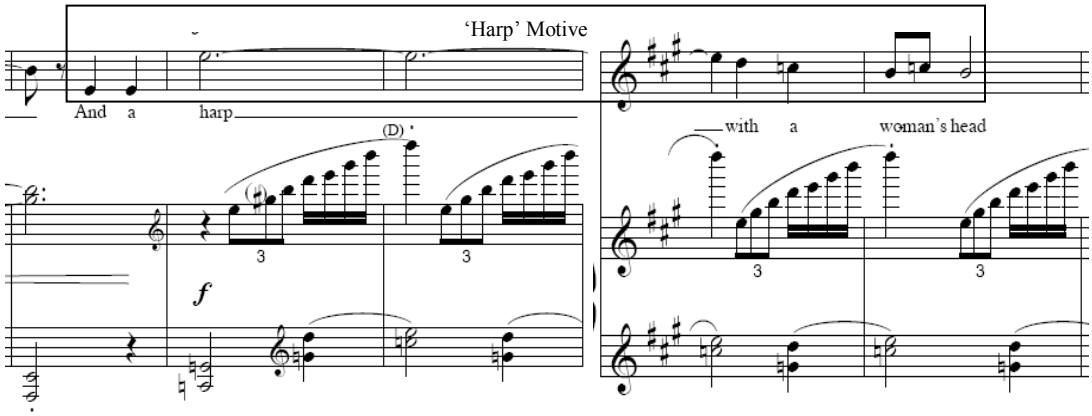
102Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay, 177-184.
103Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 12-38.
104Thomas, *Appendix A*, 225.

piece is made up of several different sections or 'scenes' if you will, which can aid in the learning process. Thomas indicated a number of these sections via style and tempo delineations in the music. However, upon further study, it becomes clear that these main sections can be further divided into smaller sections due to content and musical considerations. Because not all of the sections are specifically indicated by the composer, the ones given below are subjective. The following break-down of measures is one of many ways to approach learning this piece:

1. mm. 1-37: *Introduction*
2. mm. 38-49: *1st Transition*
3. mm.50-77: *Crisis*
4. mm.78-88: *2nd Transition*
5. mm. 88-109: *More Problems Arise*
6. mm. 110-136: *Attempt at Comfort*
7. mm. 137-159: *Rocking Away*
8. mm. 160-187: *The Lullaby*
9. mm. 188-203: *3rd Transition*
10. mm. 204-238: *Even More Problems*
11. mm. 239-286: *Mother's Love*
12. mm. 287-322: *Weaving*
13. mm. 323-364: *Clothes*
14. mm. 365-385: *Singing*
15. mm. 386-408: *Christmas Miracle*
16. mm. 409-426: *Mother's Sacrifice*
17. mm. 427-451: *A Wondrous Sight*

This piece begins with a brief piano prelude. At first, the opening key is somewhat ambiguous. The key signature suggests $f^{\#}$ minor, but upon hearing the first several measures, the modal key of E Mixolydian appears to be more prevalent. Moreover, the modality of these opening measures, gives the piece an archaic, fairy-tale quality. The three characters of this tale all appear in the *Introduction*: the narrator [a boy], his mother and a harp. The melody for this phrase: "'And a harp with a woman's head'," (mm. 28-32) is seen again in the piece and will be known as the 'harp' motive.

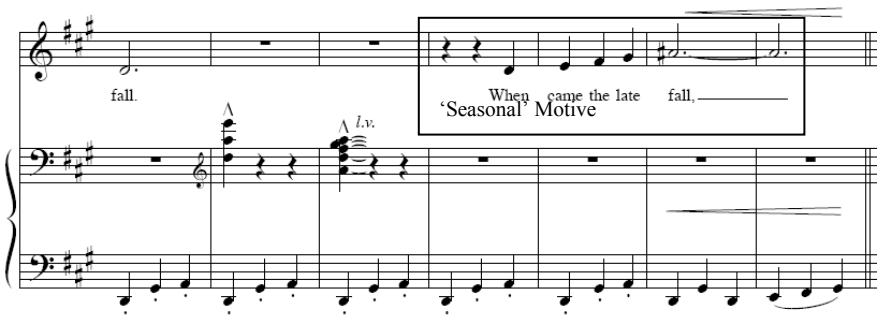
(Ex. 5.6) Because she is not able to provide for her son, the mother feels quite helpless, in the last few measures of this section, the text reads, "And she began to cry" (mm. 35-37). Thomas set this phrase *a cappella* which emphasizes how alone she feels.



Example 5.6: Note the 'harp' motive in the vocal line above; *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver,* mm. 28-32[105]

In the *1st Transition,* the story progresses from one part of the season to another. The singer informs the listeners that the mother's realization that she could not provide for her son (mm. 35-37) occurred "in the early fall" (mm. 42-43). The next part of the story occurs in "the late fall," (mm. 46-49). Thomas set both of these statements over whole-tone scales beginning on D4. The whole-tone scale used here is significant because it is used for all of the seasonal transitions in this piece. Not only are these seasonal phrases unified in and of themselves, they lend an overall sense of unity to this tale. For further reference, this whole-tone scale will be known as the 'seasonal' motive. (Ex. 5.7)

105Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay,* 13-14.



Example 5.7: Note the 'seasonal' motive in the vocal line; *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver,* mm. 43-49[106]

Next, between mm. 47 and 78 (the *Crisis* section), the piece goes through several key changes as his mother worries about their dire situation. However, in m. 78, the piece returns to the opening key of E Mixolydian. This is the beginning of the *2nd Transition*. In mm. 81-82 the text reads, "That was in the late fall," set over the 'seasonal' motive. As before, a few measures later, the new season appears, "When the winter came," (mm. 85-88). However, for this new season, Thomas moved the 'seasonal' motive up a whole-step.

No significant new musical material is presented in the next section, *More Problems Arise* (mm. 88-109). This is appropriate as the text delineates the monotony of their poverty. However, in the following section, *Attempt at Comfort* (mm. 110-136), there is a very beautiful soft phrase, "And, oh, but we were happy for an hour or more" (mm. 125-131), where the voice leaps up to a G5 (the highest note of the piece thus far), marked *dolce*, on "oh." Right after that moment, the singer describes the boy's "long legs," (mm. 133-134). To musically illustrate the length of the boy's legs, Thomas indicated that the singer should slide from the C5 of "long" down to the F4 of "legs." Next, the text continues in mm. 135-136 with the phrase, "Dragging on the floor." Once

106Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 14.

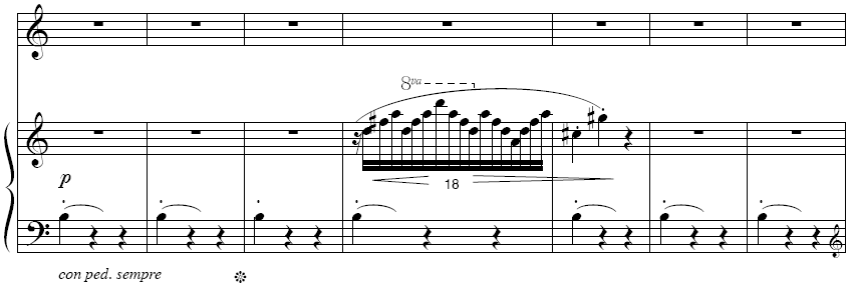
again, Thomas artfully interpreted the phrase by having the vocal line stay on the same note (E^b4) to illustrate the "dragging."

The next section, *Rocking Away* (mm. 137-159), is anything but soothing. Thomas set the section polytonally, emphasizing the lack of comfort. The polytonality also portrays the sound of an old rocking chair creaking back and forth. Immediately after this, in mm. 160-187, Thomas inserted a piano interlude that serves as *The Lullaby*.

At the beginning of the *3rd Transition* (mm. 188-203), the piece returns once again to E Mixolydian. The season is also highlighted once more--"Men say the winter/Was bad that year;" (mm. 192-196). This phrase is set over the 'seasonal' motive, and it effectively serves as the final transition section of the piece.

At the beginning of the next section, *Even More Problems* (mm. 204-238), the singer describes "A wind with a wolf's head" (mm. 205-208). In portraying this image musically, Thomas chose to set this phrase polytonally with a vocal melisma on the word "wind." As this section continues, the singer comes back to a phrase first uttered in the *Introduction* along with the accompanying 'harp' motive: "And the harp with the woman's head" (mm. 28-32/222-228).

The *Mother's Love* section (mm. 239-286) could have been subtitled, the "Perfect-Interval" section. There are a number of melodic perfect-5th and perfect-4th intervals in the melody in this section. At the beginning of the *Weaving* section (mm. 287-322), Thomas wrote some "harp" figures in the piano (mm. 290-304): staccato quarter-notes indicative of plucking and 16th-note patterns indicative of strumming. These are not to be confused with the 'harp' motive discussed earlier. (Ex. 5.8)

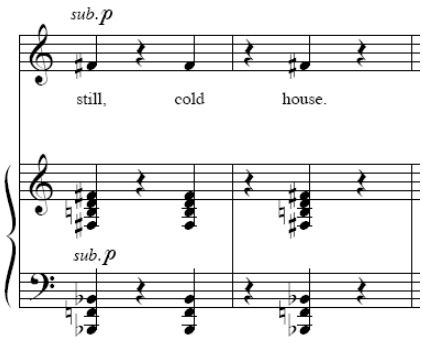


Example 5.8: Note the 16th-notes and staccatos which help portray the harp; *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver*, mm. 287-293[107]

Shortly thereafter, Thomas painted the words "running" (m. 309) and "whistling" (m. 314) by placing trill-like figures in the voice. Finally, in mm. 319-322, Thomas evoked the image of expansion on the word "expand," by extending the D5 of the second syllable for 8 beats (in ¾ time). While seemingly insignificant in and of themselves, all of these little details give this piece its charming storybook quality.

In the *Clothes* section (mm. 323-364), between mm. 323 and 341, there are four different left-hand patterns that evoke the character of the harp: rolled chords and individual quarter-notes (images of the strumming and plucking of the harp). Meanwhile, the boy is describing the beautiful things that his mother is weaving. With his last couple of discoveries, the tessitura rises, heightening the intense excitement of such incredible garments (mm. 354-362). Finally, in describing the environment in which his mother was weaving clothes for him, the boy says, "all night/In the still, cold house" (mm. 361-364). In setting the last words, "still, cold house" (mm. 363-364), Thomas chose a monotone and separated each word by a rest, effectively emphasizing the starkness of the image. (Ex. 5.9)

107Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 29.



Example 5.9: Note the effective word-painting; *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver*, mm. 363-364[108]

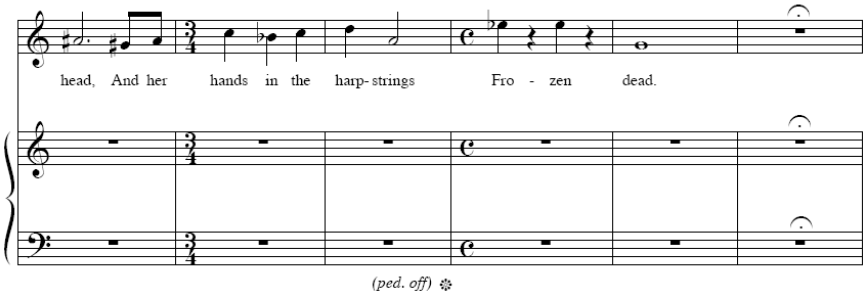
The silence of the house is contrasted with the mother's singing in the next section: *Singing* (mm. 365-385). This section climaxes with a high B^{b}—expressing the mother's ecstasy at finally being able to provide for her son. This section is the most demanding of the entire cycle. The entrances on the off-beat and the several extended high notes require good musicianship and excellent technique, as well as a solid high range and excellent breath management.

The sound of the harp continues in mm. 386-394, a sub-section of *A Christmas Miracle* (mm. 386-408). Considering the text at the beginning of this section, "And the harp-strings spoke;" (mm. 386-389), it is no wonder that Thomas specifically indicated how he wanted the piano part to be played in this section ("strong, rhythmic"). The section ends with a phrase that rhymes with the first, "And when I awoke,--" (mm. 400-404), followed by four measures of rest in the vocal line. Meanwhile, Thomas instructed the piano to sustain its chords from mm. 402-408, beneath the text, "-woke," through m. 423.

Having built up the tension by inserting four measures of vocal silence, Thomas continues the story in mm. 409-426 (*Mother's Sacrifice*). The text: "There sat my

108Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 33.

mother/With the harp against her shoulder,/Looking nineteen,/And not a day older,/A smile about her lips,/And a light about her head,/And her hands in the harp-strings/Frozen dead" (mm. 409-425). Thomas set this section of text *a cappella* (though the piano is actually still sustaining the chords from mm. 402-408), and the first two phrases are set in a near monotone, magnifying the boy's shock at waking up and seeing his mother dead. Also, during this section, in mm. 417-423, Thomas used a whole-tone scale based on D for the words, "A smile about her lips,/And a light about her head,/And her hands in the harp(-strings)," emphasizing the strange eeriness of his mother's peaceful happiness in death and reminding listeners of the 'seasonal' motive used earlier in the piece. Thomas separated the three syllables of the last two words, "Frozen dead" (mm. 424-425), giving further emphasis to these chilling words. This rhythmic device is reminiscent of Thomas' earlier setting of the words, "still, cold house" (mm. 363-364). (Ex. 5.10)



Example 5.10: Note the effective word-painting below; *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver*, mm. 421-426[109]

If the story ended with the words, "Frozen dead," this piece would be very sad indeed. Fortunately, Millay's poem did not end there and neither does Thomas' piece. In the last section of this piece (*A Wondrous Sight* [mm. 427-451]), the boy discovers all of the clothes that his mother has made. To musically illustrate the state of the clothes—

109Thomas, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, 37.

"And piled up" (mm. 427-428)—Thomas used an ascending vocal line. Thomas also set the very last phrase of text, "Just my size" (mm. 438-439), as an ascending line, which gives the idea of future hope. Furthermore, the piano concludes the piece with an upbeat postlude (mm. 440-451). Thus, in the end, the audience is comforted in knowing that the mother did not sacrifice her life in vain: in her final act of selflessness, she provided security for her son.

On the one hand, this piece is full of extremes in the soprano vocal range, dynamic range, length, piano range, tempos, keys, emotions and stamina. It is a show-case for the voice, as well as the piano and the composer. On the other hand, it is a simple folk story with lots of repetition and a strange familiarity. These two sides of this piece make it the truly fascinating composition that it is—one that is well worth studying and performing.

Because these pieces were not originally conceived of as a cycle, there is no built-in through-line. However, certain similarities can be found that help connect the pieces in a somewhat meaningful way. The pieces loosely fit together *harmonically* because the first piece (in the key of G) ends on an implied b-minor chord, with Bs and Ds in the piano. Then, the second piece begins with a quintal-quartal chord assembly beginning on B1 (though the piece is, in fact, rooted in E major). The second piece ends on the tonic, an E-major chord. The third piece begins in C major which is not closely-related to E major. It transitions through several different keys and eventually ends in a key (F^b), which is not at all closely-related to the original key of this piece. However, enharmonically, it does end in the same key as the second piece (F^b=E). The final piece begins in the modal key of E Mixolydian which is not closely-related to F^b major or E

major, but both pieces are rooted on the same tonic: E. Finally, this last piece ends in e minor, the relative minor of the opening key of the first piece.

The other aspects of the pieces are only very loosely related. With regard to *form*, the only one that is not like the others is the first piece, *The Road to Avrillé*. It is in AA^1BA^2 form, while the other three are through-composed, with repeated melodic motives.

Next, with regard to the *melodic element*, the pieces are generally very different. However, all four pieces include a number of melodic perfect-5^{th} and perfect-4^{th} intervals, and the vocal *ranges* (D4-G5; $D^{\#}4$-A5; $D^{b}4$-A5 and C4-$B^{b}5$, respectively) and *tessituras* of the pieces are similar. The *rhythmic element* of all four pieces is generally straight-forward and simple. There are not many meter changes or uncommon meters. Finally, with regard to the *sound element*, naturally all of the pieces are for voice and piano. Beyond that, and more specifically, the relative *dynamics* and *density* of each piece varies within itself. The first piece (*The Road to Avrillé*) is the least dense, with a very simple piano part. The piano part in the second piece (*To A Young Poet*) is full of tremolos, and overall, the piano is much more involved in the third and fourth pieces (*To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* and *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*, respectively).

Though this cycle came together 'accidentally,' by looking deeper into the themes of each of these pieces, it seems that there is more similarity between the pieces than might at first appear. *To A Young Poet*, *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* and *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* clearly involve the theme of death, and all four of the pieces are about love and loss. While 'death' and 'loss' are not very uplifting themes, they are a part of everyone's lives. Fortunately, the second and fourth pieces leave

audiences with hope. *To A Young Poet* is about leaving a legacy that lives on beyond this life, and *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* is about nobly sacrificing oneself in order that others' lives might be better. These are virtues and ideals that all of us can strive for. This cycle moves beyond entertainment and directly challenges humanity. We, as musicians, should fully embrace the opportunity to not only share the gift of music, but also to challenge those who listen.

CHAPTER VI

THREE KISSES

Thomas' next cycle, *Three Kisses,* was commissioned by soprano Diana Tash and given to one of her friends, Lisa Radakovich Holsberg.[110] Ms. Holsberg's key role in the composition of another soprano cycle will be discussed in the next chapter. In keeping with the title, this cycle has just three pieces: *The Look, I hoped that he would love me* and *Fever 103 deg*. The first two pieces are settings of poems by Sara Teasdale, while the last one, *Fever 103 deg* is a setting of a poem by Sylvia Plath. This cycle is unique from the previous cycles in that there is a viola part, in addition to voice and piano. The inclusion of the viola was at Tash's request. One of her good friends, Cynthia Phelps, is a violist, and Tash commissioned the viola part in this cycle for her.[111]

The vocal line in the first two pieces reflects the simple, straightforward style of the corresponding poems. The underlying harmonies generally support the vocal line, and the rhythm is not difficult. The ranges of the two pieces ($C^{\#}4$-A5 and $D^{b}4$-$G^{b}5$ or D4-G5, respectively) are also very accessible to the soprano voice, though the tessitura might be a little low for some sopranos. Along with the consideration of tessitura, the fact that there are two collaborative instruments instead of just one would require a singer who could carry easily, in her middle to low range. There are also a few long, sustained phrases. The most difficult task in performing these two pieces would be the coordination of the voice

110Holsberg, *Appendix B,* 240-241, 249-250.
111Richard Pearson Thomas, e-mail message to author, March 28, 2011.

with both the piano and the viola. Still, with the right kind of voice and enough ensemble practice, these two pieces could be sung by intermediate singers.

Fever 103 deg is not accessible to younger singers. While the harmonies in the viola and piano generally support the vocal line, the piano and viola virtually never double the voice. Additionally, this piece is quite unforgiving of mistakes as the tempo is quite fast and varies throughout the piece. Coordination between the three voices in this piece would be a nightmare for younger singers and their teachers/coaches. Furthermore, the range of the piece is more extensive than the first two pieces ($B^{\#}3$ to B5), and the tessitura is quite high, with many sustained notes above the staff. There are also a number of large leaps in the vocal line. These leaps are very effective in highlighting certain words (e.g. leap from $F^{b}5$ down to C4 on "hurts God," mm. 116-117), but younger singers would find them difficult to negotiate. Another reason this song is not ideal for young singers is the complexity of the text, which is fragmented and full of obscure allusions and symbolism. This piece requires an enormous amount of physical and emotional stamina and interpretive acumen. It is a work of contemporary art that is beautiful in its own right and useful for study, possibly even for the occasional performance. However, most singers should not attempt to perform it.

The Look is an animated song in which the singer reflects on three different men, two of whom kissed her and a third who did not. The third man's missing kiss continues to haunt her, while the kisses of the other two men are taken lightly. The poem/text is below:

The Look

Stephon kissed me in the spring,
Robin in the fall,

But Colin only looked at me
And never kissed at all.

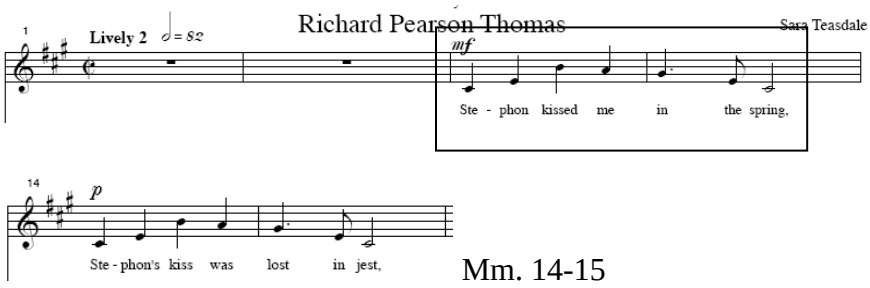
Stephon's kiss was lost in jest,
Robin's lost in play,
But the kiss in Colin's eyes
Haunts me night and day.[112,113]

This piece is marked "Lively," which seems a bit incongruous considering the overall sentiment and the last line of the poem, in particular. However, the tempo may have more to do with Thomas' characterization of the woman, than with the words she utters. The three-voice texture of this cycle (voice, piano and viola) is particularly highlighted at the beginning of this piece with staggered entrances: piano (m. 1), viola (m. 2) and voice (m. 3).

Meanwhile, the key signature indicates A major, but the harmony in the first measures does not solidify that key. After the first few measures, the tonic of A major becomes much clearer, but there are still a number of accidentals throughout and references to other keys within the overarching tonality of A. In other words, this piece is centered around A as tonic, while not necessarily adhering to A as a key. With regard to the vocal melody, there are some melodic motives that are employed in this piece. The melody in the voice in mm. 3-4 is heard again in mm.14-15. The text is also very similar at these two points: "Stephon kissed me in the spring" and "Stephon's kiss was lost in jest." Thus, this can be called "Stephon's melody." (Ex. 6.1

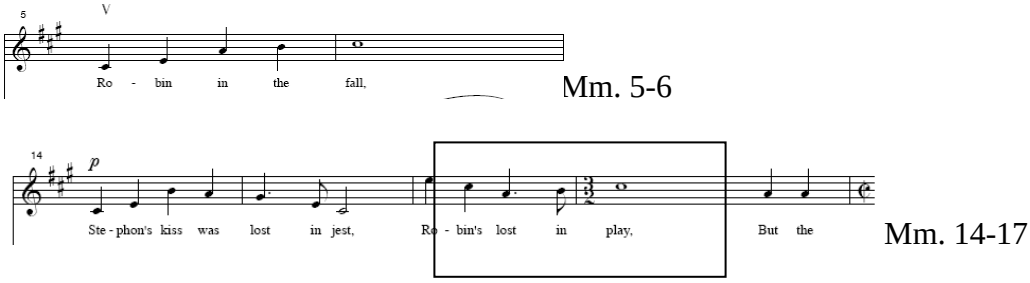
112Sara Teasdale, "The Look," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/the-look-2/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

113Richard Pearson Thomas, *Three Kisses* (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 2000), 1-3.



Example 6.1: Note the two appearances of "Stephon's melody" above; *The Look*, mm. 1-4 and 14-15[114]

Similarly, the melody in mm. 16-17 ("Robin's lost in play) is very much like that of mm. 5-6 ("Robin in the fall"). The only differences between the two melodies are the first two notes, which are an octave higher and in reverse order in the second occurrence. This second phrase can therefore be called "Robin's melody." (Ex. 6.2) When the third man, Colin, is mentioned for the first time, Thomas transposed "Stephon's melody" up a 6th, which outlines the tonic and symbolizes the heightened emotion that Colin inspired.

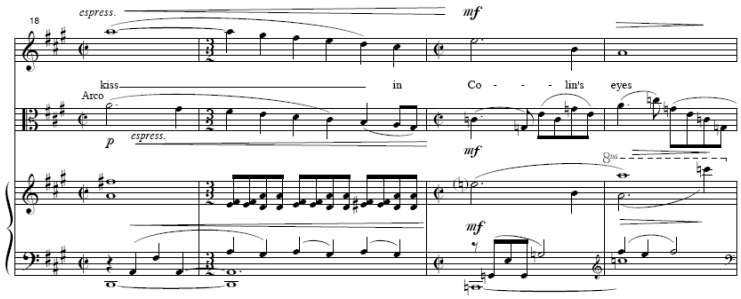


Example 6.2: Note the two appearances of "Robin's melody" above; *The Look*, mm. 5-6 and 14-17[115]

The second verse starts out in a very similar fashion to the first, with a restatement of "Stephon's and Robin's melodies." However, the climax of this piece occurs in mm. 17-21 as the singer poignantly admits, "But the kiss in Colin's eyes…." The vocal line leaps up an octave from A4 to A5 on "the kiss," sustains the delicate high A, and then slowly makes a scalar descent. In m.18, the viola plays a simultaneous A4 and descends

114Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 1-2.
115Ibid.

in a similar fashion, two beats ahead of the voice. Meanwhile, the piano outlines a D-major chord. The brief consonance of this stunning moment quickly fades, but for a moment, the audience is able to peer into the singer's heart and sense the ensuing despair of a woman left with the regret of what could have been. (Ex. 6.3) Right after the singer makes one final declaration in mm. 22-27, the viola begins playing the first part of "Stephon's melody" ($C^{\#}$-E-B-A) in m. 26. This is interesting because it is "*Colin's* look" not Stephon's which "haunts" her.



Example 6.3: Note the beautiful climax of the piece; *The Look,* mm. 18-21[116]

Thomas set the last two measures of this piece (mm. 28-29) polytonally. This is a distinctive moment in this piece where another tonic strongly clashes with the A tonic. This rogue tonic is just a half-step away: b^{b}. This polytonal ending emphasizes the ambiguity of unfulfilled love and the strange power that the withheld kiss holds over this woman.

While two of the more significant moments for the viola in this piece were already noted above, the role of the viola in this piece is worth further discussion. For the first several measures, the viola plays little scalar fragments on tremolo 16^{th} and eighth-notes. However, in mm. 6-7, right before the voice sings about the mysterious Colin for the first time, the viola line becomes much more lyrical. Then, it emphasizes the

116Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 2.

significance of Colin by doubling the voice in mm. 7-9 ("But Colin only looked at me/And"). When the text refers to Stephon and Robin again, the viola returns to the tremolo 16th-notes, followed by some pizzicato notes, emphasizing the playful, superficial love of these two men. Beginning in m. 18, as the text comes back to Colin, the viola is marked *arco*, *espressivo* and doubles the climactic vocal line in thirds, as mentioned above. In mm. 20-21, the viola bursts forth with an ecstatic melody under the singer's utterance of the name "Colin." Though from here to the end, the vocal line is resigned to static, sustained notes, symbolic of the hopelessness the woman feels, the viola continues its passionate melody, poignantly underlining the singer's final regret-filled words, "Haunts me night and day" (mm. 22-27). Finally, after beginning to play "Stephon's melody" in m. 26, the viola settles back into a more textural role in the last few disoriented measures of the piece.

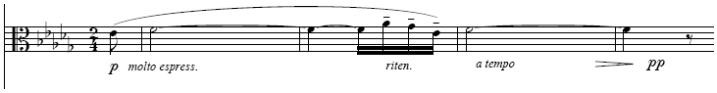
Thomas named the second piece in this cycle *I hoped that he would love me*, though the original title of this poem is *The Kiss*. It is the account of someone who anticipated a kiss for a very long time only to find in the end that it was not all that she imagined it would be. Thomas marked this melancholy piece, "Freely, rubato," which allows the performers the liberty to intensify the disappointment of this woman. The poem/text is below:

The Kiss

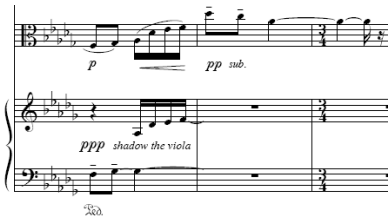
I hoped that he would love me,
And he has kissed my mouth,
But I am like a stricken bird
That cannot reach the south.
For though I know he loves me,
To-night my heart is sad;

His kiss was not so wonderful
As all the dreams I had.[117,118]

This piece begins gently with a soft, expressive viola solo in D^{b} major.[119] This solo is the theme of the piece, which is divided via rests into four sections. The first part of the theme is found in mm.1-5. (Ex. 6.4) The second part of the theme is found in mm. 5-8. In this section the piano enters (m. 6) and doubles the viola part briefly, before resigning to a supporting role. (Ex. 6.5)



Example 6.4: Note the first part of the theme in the example above; *I hoped that he would love me*, mm. 1-5[120]



Example 6.5: Note the second part of the theme, minus the eighth-note D^{b}3 pick-up, in the viola (partially doubled in the piano) in the example above; *I hoped that he would love me*, mm. 5-8[121]

The third part of the theme is found in mm. 8-12.Though much of what the piano plays in this prelude would be considered subordinate, there are a few polychords under this third part of the theme that sound ominously in the background in mm. 9-10 and 11-12, foreshadowing what the singer is about to reveal. (Ex. 6.6) The fourth part of the theme is found in mm. 12-18. (Ex. 6.7)

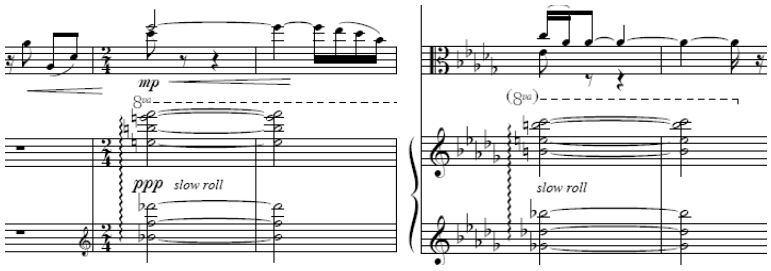
117Sara Teasdale, "The Kiss," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/the-kiss-2/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

118Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 4.

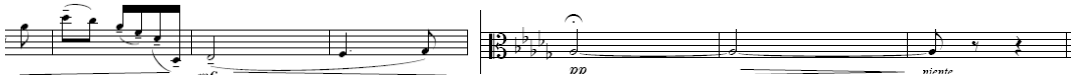
119Note: This piece was originally composed in D^{b} major, but it is also available in D major: Richard Pearson Thomas, e-mail message to author, October 15, 2011.

120Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 4.

121Ibid.

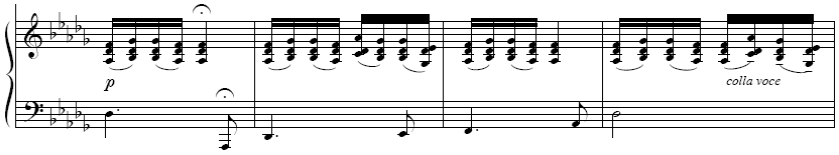


Example 6.6: Note the third part of the theme in the viola line, as well as the polychords in the piano; *I hoped that he would love me*, mm. 8-12[122]



Example 6.7: Note the fourth part of the theme above; *I hoped that he would love me*, mm. 12-18[123]

The theme concludes in m. 16, with an imperfect authentic cadence in D^{b} major in the viola and piano. Under this cadence, the piano begins a new melodic/rhythmic pattern that dominates the accompaniment for the rest of the piece. Due to the disillusionment that permeates the text of this piece, this motive will be known as the 'disillusion'motive.



Example 6.8: Note the 'disillusion' motive in the right hand of the piano; *I hoped that he would love me*, mm. 16-19[124]

The voice enters with the pick-up to m.18, singing the first stanza of the text to the viola melody, with minor variations. The viola is tacit for the first seven measures of the vocal entrance (mm. 18-24), but re-enters in m. 25, settling into a more collaborative role with the voice for the remainder of the first stanza. The piano continues the 'disillusion' motive, interspersed with colorful polychords.

122Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 4.
123Ibid., 4-5.
124Ibid., 5.

At the beginning of the second stanza, the piece remains in D^b major (mm. 31-36). The viola's line remains secondary to the vocal melody, but it is much more melodic than it was in the first stanza. Though they do not share very much material, the contours of the lines of the two parts are complementary. Meanwhile, the piano continues in a similar fashion to the first stanza.

However, from m. 38 to the end of the piece in m. 47, there are some dramatic changes. First, the viola starts playing the 'disillusion' motive along with the piano. Then, the tonal center shifts, and it is not completely definitive. From a dramatic point of view, these choices on Thomas' part make perfect sense because this is where the singer confesses that, "His kiss was not so wonderful/As all the dreams I had" (mm. 39-47). The viola, instead of mirroring the hopeful, lyrical vocal line, allies itself with the more prosaic piano part. The singer's world is falling apart and so is the harmonic structure that was stable up until this point. Furthermore, in the final measures, the viola is in a different key from the voice and the piano. Though the piano is nominally in the home key of D^b major, there is a lowered-7^{th} that precedes the final chord. Meanwhile, the voice sustains a G^b4, which adds to the tonal uncertainty. Like the measures leading up to this point, the ending is inconclusive and full of unrest, similar to how the singer feels now that her hopes have given way to disillusionment.

The third and final piece in this cycle, *Fever 103 deg*, at first does not appear to fit in with the previous two poems and their settings. Indeed, this poem was written by Sylvia Plath, while the other two were written by Sara Teasdale. Moreover, this particular poem is from the point of view of a person having hallucinations resulting from a severe fever. The women in the previous two pieces may have been suffering from regret and

disillusionment, but they did not rant like the woman in this piece. However, the unifying factor—the reason for all of the high emotion in all three poems—is a kiss or a lack thereof. Therefore, these poems are actually more similar than they appear to be at first, and Tash's reasoning in choosing these poems is clear.

Thomas' setting of this poem, while quite different from the first two pieces, is certainly appropriate and offers a drastic contrast. If the first two pieces lull the audience to a melancholic dreamlike state, this last piece will not only wake them up, it will probably bring them to their feet by the end. The poem/text for *Fever 103 deg* is below:

Fever 103 degrees

Pure? What does it mean?
The tongues of hell
Are dull, dull as the triple

Tongues of dull, fat (Cerberus)[Cerebus]
Who wheezes at the gate. Incapable
Of licking clean

The aguey tendon, the sin, the sin.
The tinder cries.
The indelible smell

Of a snuffed candle!
Love, love, the low smokes roll
From me like Isadora's scarves, I'm in a fright

One scarf will catch and anchor in the wheel.
Such yellow sullen smokes
Make their own element. They will not rise,

But trundle round the globe
Choking the aged and the meek,
The weak

Hothouse baby in its crib,
The ghastly orchid
Hanging its hanging garden in the air,

Devilish leopard!
Radiation turned it white
And killed it in an hour.

Greasing the bodies of adulterers
Like Hiroshima ash and eating in.
The sin. The sin.

Darling, all night
I have been flickering, [off, on, off, on,]off on, off on.
The sheets grow heavy as a lecher's kiss.

Three days. Three nights.
Lemon water, chicken
Water, water make me retch.

I am too pure for you or anyone.
Your body
Hurts me as the world hurts God. I am a lantern---

My head a moon
Of Japanese paper, my gold beaten skin
Infinitely delicate and infinitely expensive.

Does not my heat astound you. And [my light,]my light.
All by myself I am a huge camellia
Glowing and coming and going, flush on flush.

I think I am going up,
I think I may rise---
The beads of hot metal fly, and I, love, I

Am a pure acetylene
Virgin
Attended by roses,

By kisses, by cherubim,
By whatever these pink things mean.
Not you, nor him

Not him, nor him
(My selves dissolving, old whore petticoats)[125]*---*
To Paradise. [To Paradise. To Paradise!][126,127,128]

125Note: The parentheses in the penultimate line of this poem are in the original poem. They are not meant to indicate the omission of these words in Thomas' setting.

126Poem used by permission: Oxford University Press, e-mail messages to author, October 17, 2011 and October 19, 2011.

This piece can be divided into three parts: mm. 1-98 (first section), mm. 99-117 (second section) and mm. 118-220 (third section). The poetry does not necessarily require this piece to be set in three sections. However, Thomas created these sections in this piece by setting them with distinct compositional devices.

As in *The Look*, the harmony of this piece is best discussed in terms of which note is most prominent in any given section, since the harmony cannot be said to be functional in any mode. The numerous tonal shifts in this piece aptly reflect the ever-changing moods and random outbursts of the singer. Because the harmonic movement is so rapid, it would be impractical to describe each shift in detail.

The piano and viola enter in m.1, and it immediately becomes clear that the most prominent note is E^b. The viola has a pizzicato ostinato on the notes E^b and B^b over sustained whole notes in the piano. Meanwhile, the voice enters in m. 5, announcing itself on a sustained E^b4. Then in m. 9, a different ostinato begins in the left hand of the piano, on the notes E^b and B^b. At this point, the viola ostinato ends, though the viola continues to play fragments of the ostinato and is still essentially limited to the notes E^b and B^b. The tonality stays centered around E^b through m. 14.

The text is describing Cerebus at this point: "Who wheezes at the gate./Incapable/Of licking clean/The aguey tendon" (mm. 14-19). The spelling of "Cerebus" or "Cerberus" is inconsistent between versions of Plath's *Fever 103 deg*, and in his setting, Thomas spelled it as "Cerebus."[129,130,131,132,133,134] However, it can be

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127Sylvia Plath, *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*, ed. David Lehman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2006), 895-896.

128Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 8-24.

129Plath, *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*, ed. David Lehman, 895-896.

130Sylvia Plath, "Fever 103 deg," americanpoems.com, http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/sylviaplath/1395 (accessed July 30 and September 7, 2011).

131Sylvia Plath, "Fever 103," angelfire.com, http://www.angelfire.com/tn/plath/103.html (accessed July 30 and September 7, 2011).

assumed, regardless of the spelling that Plath was referring to "Cerberus," the three-headed dog that stands at the gate of Hades. Corresponding to these textual phrases are three different chromatic lines: two ascending fragments in the viola (mm. 15-18) and one descending fragment in the left hand (m. 16). The viola's fragments are set with irregular rhythms, completing the aural depiction of the wheezing, feverish guardian of Hades.

Shortly after, in mm. 21-26, new ostinati are introduced in the accompaniment, along with the bi-tonal prominence of the notes E^b and F. In this section, specifically in mm. 23-24, the 'sin' motive is first introduced in the vocal line: F5-G^b5-F5. Continuing on into mm. 27-30, the viola and left hand of the piano hold firmly to the original tonic of E^b, while the right hand of the piano and the voice boldly proclaim the recently introduced F. In mm. 31-32, during a brief piano interlude, the bi-tonality disappears, and the supremacy of E^b is re-asserted. When the other voices re-enter in m. 33, they re-affirm E^b for the next several measures. Meanwhile, the rhythmic ostinato continues in the piano part, shifting to new tonal centers in several places. All of this monotonous repetition seems to be Thomas' musical portrayal of the protagonist's stages of extended agony.

Shortly thereafter, the voice sings the text, "the low smokes roll/From me like Isadora's scarves" (mm. 38-43). With this text, the tessitura rises dramatically, and the voice hits and sustains a B^b5. Aurally, this effectively portrays the panicked state of the

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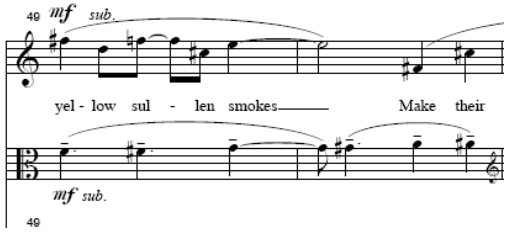
132John M. Hunt, http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/bdodge/scaffold/gg/creature.html#Cerberus (accessed September 7, 2011).
133Lady Gryphon, http://www.mythicalrealm.com/creatures/cerberus.html (accessed September 7, 2011).
134Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 8-24.

protagonist. However, from a performer's point of view, singing a high B^{b} within the first 45 measures of a piece that is 220 measures long, is a bit extreme and serves to further a point that was made at the beginning of this chapter: the main reason this piece is so difficult is that it requires so much energy, skill and pacing from the performers from beginning to end.

In m. 45, the tonal center shifts briefly to A. At the same time, in mm. 45-47, the text reads, "One scarf will catch and anchor in the wheel." Following these words in the voice, the viola alternates quickly between $F^{\#}3$ and E3 (mm. 47-48). This alternation of notes evokes the image of a spinning wheel, particularly because it is coupled with triplets in the piano part. Immediately after that, the text reads: "yellow sullen smokes," (mm. 49-50) which is accompanied by a chromatically-ascending viola line that corresponds to the wafting fumes. (Ex. 6.9) In the ensuing measures, the song exhibits extreme tonal and dynamic ranges with indications of "eerie" and "creepy," which effectively paint the suffocating effects of the smoke.

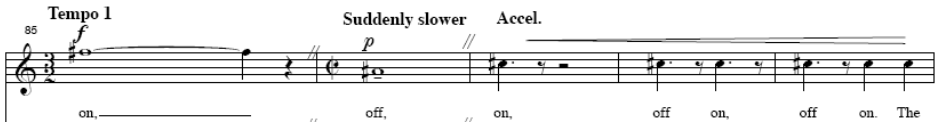


Example 6.9: Note the ascending chromatic line in the viola; *Fever 103 deg*, mm. 49-50[135]

When discussing "the sin" in mm. 76-80, the music returns to the texture and melody of the first utterance of these words in m. 21. Here, the tonic moves to E, and the voice is thus a half-step higher. The piano ostinato returns, but this time, the viola plays accented 5^{ths} in irregular patterns for four measures, before doubling the passionate

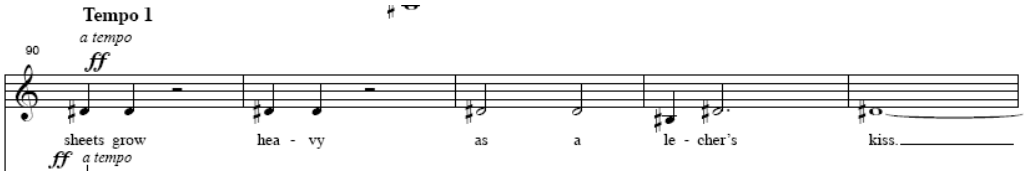
135Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 12.

melody of the voice on the text, "Darling, all night/I have been flickering, off" (mm. 81-84). When the protagonist repeats, "off, on, off, on," (mm. 83-89), Thomas appropriately differentiated between these two states of being by placing pauses between the two words. Irregular rhythms and changing tempos mark this delirious passage. At first these pauses are very dramatic, marked with caesuras. With the third and fourth repeats, however, they are marked with an *accelerando* and are simply separated by rests. (Ex. 6.10)



Example 6.10: Note the rests between the words in the vocal line; *Fever 103 deg*, mm. 85-89[136]

Finally, just before the end of the first section, the voice sings, "The sheets grow heavy as a lecher's kiss" (mm. 89-95). Once again, the melody provides a brilliant aural picture of these words. Not only are there rests between the words, but the low tessitura and ever-slowing rhythmic motion depict how the life that this woman once had is now being suffocated out of her. A *fortissimo* dynamic level further depicts the heaviness she feels. (Ex. 6.11) With these words, the woman appears to lose consciousness briefly. The ending of the first section is quite sparse and concludes with a long fermata.



Example 6.11: Note the low tessitura, the ever-slowing rhythm and the dynamics in the vocal line; *Fever 103 deg*, mm. 90-94[137]

136Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 15.
137Ibid.

The woman starts to awaken in the second section (mm. 99-117) which was written for *a cappella* voice and is marked "Quasi recit., freely ad lib." It is free in tonality and rhythm, which perfectly portrays the hazy consciousness to which she has awakened. The vocal line continues the wide range of dynamics and pitches that was prevalent in the first section. This section has two fermatas which further divide it into three subsections corresponding to three distinct trains of thought. In the first subsection, she talks about what she has been living on for the three days and nights of her illness. In the second subsection, she addresses another person for the first time in the piece, saying, "I am too pure for you or anyone" (mm. 108-112). Then, in the third subsection, she acknowledges the pain that this person has caused her. This second section ends with a fermata, similar to the ending of the first section.

Because this section is *a cappella* and devoid of tonality, the singer would have to memorize the individual intervals and how they relate to each other, in order to attempt to sing this section accurately. Though many of the intervals in this section are the same: perfect-5^{ths}, minor-3^{rds}, etc., it is still quite difficult. However, if done correctly, the result can be stunning. The lack of tonality makes the section sound appropriately random, like the ravings of a slightly-crazed person, when in fact the accuracy of the intervals is paramount in order for it to be effective.

In the third section, the structures of tonality and rhythm return, but the slower tempo suggests a certain sluggish mental exhaustion. Harmonically, the third section of this piece begins where the first section left off, centered on E. There is an ostinato in the right hand of the piano based on the notes E4 and $F^{\#}4$ (mm. 118-123) which particularly emphasizes the tonic. This pattern is remarkably similar to the 'disillusion' motive in the

second piece of the cycle, *I hoped that he would love me*, and recurs regularly throughout the rest of this piece. The left hand enters in m. 120, the voice enters in m. 121 and the viola enters in m. 122 (another layered entrance—Thomas used this technique in the previous two pieces as well). In addition to the voices entering at different times, Thomas introduced new notes in layers, as at the beginning of this piece. At first, the only two notes are E and $F^{\#}$ (mm. 118-120). Then, in m. 121, B is added. In m. 124, G and A are added, etc. The perfect-5^{ths} and perfect-4^{ths} in the melody, along with the text, also give this subsection (mm. 118-130) a bit of an Asian feel in keeping with "the Japanese lantern" text (mm. 121-133).

There are also some polychordal measures in the third section, which serve to intensify the text: mm. 134-137 ("does not my heat astound you") and mm. 139-143 ("light, my light"). These texts are further highlighted by extended melismas. Shortly thereafter, Thomas wrote in a low tessitura that gradually rises with the text, "I think I am going up,/I think I may rise--" (mm. 153-163). There is also an *accelerando* throughout this subsection, as the singer begins to regain the crazed intensity with which she began the piece. This subsection climaxes on the text, "I/Am a pure acetylene/Virgin" (mm. 169-173), with *fortissimo* dynamics and a high tessitura in the vocal line. Furthermore, the vocal line is doubled in parallel octaves by the piano in mm. 169-171. A marked change in texture immediately ensues, and the viola drops out for the text, "Attended by roses,/By kisses, by cherubim,/By whatever these pink things mean" (mm. 173-181). Though the tempo continues to push ahead, this short section diminishes in intensity as the feverish woman tries to make sense of her hallucinations.

The viola takes over the melody in mm. 180-189, ushering in the final measures of the piece. The voice re-enters in m. 190 with the text, "Not you, nor him,/(My selves dissolving, old whore petticoats)" (mm. 190-202). Here, a new pattern is introduced in the piano: 16th-note fragments which depict her "selves dissolving," (mm. 199-203). Finally, at m. 204, the voice is again at the top of the range, singing "To Paradise" (mm. 203-207), in a section marked "Maestoso (with ecstasy)." The 'disillusion' motive returns in both the piano and the viola, now transcendent with the harmony centered around G. The piece ends ecstatically with a G-major sonority as the woman repeats the text, "To Paradise" (mm. 210-212 and 214-220).

Despite the frantic and scattered quality of this last piece, there are some beautiful moments for all three members of the ensemble. The difficulty lies in the physical and emotional pacing. With multiple climaxes, many of which have sustained high tessituras, and the intense nature of the text, the singer could easily be too frazzled and emotionally-spent to do justice to the climax through to the end of the piece ("To Paradise. [To Paradise. To Paradise!]" mm. 203-220). However, if the singer can take advantage of the few places of rest and not give too much too soon, the final section of the piece is a spectacular way to end the cycle and possibly even an entire recital.

As can be seen above, Plath's poem ends with the words, "To Paradise," while Thomas chose to repeat the words twice more. Thomas and I did not discuss the reason for this decision, but based on a conversation about his Emily Dickinson cycle, *At last, to be identified!*, his reasons for doing this can be surmised. Just as the final song in that cycle (*At last, to be identified!*) was written as a celebratory contrast to the piece before it (*There is a certain Slant of light*), so the extra references to "To Paradise" in mm. 210-

212 and 214-220 are likely meant to stand in beautiful contrast to the rest of the piece and in fact, the entire cycle.

As far as the overall *harmonic element* of the cycle is concerned, the first and last pieces are similar in that they are centered around certain notes as tonics, as opposed to fulfilling the requirements of specific keys. The first and second pieces are similar in that they both have key signatures, though at times, the actual harmony of the first piece strays far from the key indicated. Overall, however, the harmony in each of the first two pieces is consistent, with the exception of their inconclusive endings. In contrast, *Fever 103 deg* does not have any key signatures or functional harmony, but it ends very conclusively on a major chord. All three pieces share the element of polytonality.

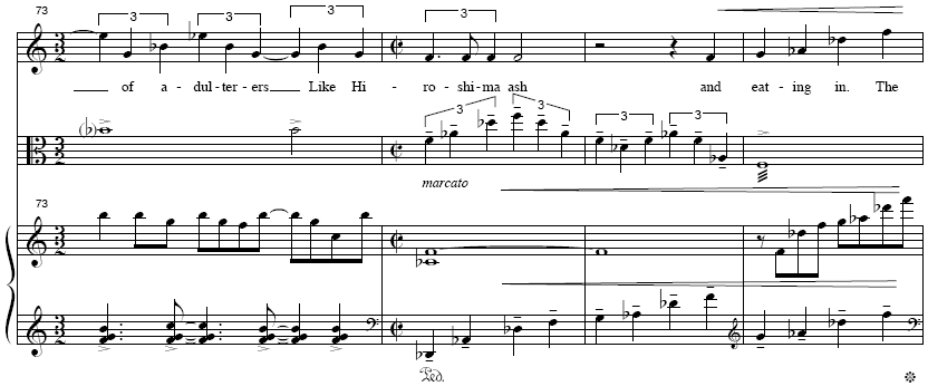
There does not appear to be a harmonic through-line for the three pieces. *The Look* begins in and stays in a tonality centered around A, but the last chord is a polytonal combination of A and b^b minor. The next piece, *I hoped that he would love me*, is in the key of D^b major (or D major/b minor), which is the relative major of b^b minor, one of the keys in which the previous piece ended. This piece, in turn, ends on a combination of a D^b(D)-major chord and an $f^{\#}$(f)/g^b(g)-minor chord, which is far from conclusive. Finally, *Fever 103 deg* begins in a tonality centered around E^b, a note that was not even present in the ending chord of the previous piece, and it ends in G major.

As for the *form* of these pieces, each of them is structured very differently. The first piece is somewhat strophic, but its form depends more on the repetition of two melodic ideas. *I hoped that he would love me* is unified by a theme first stated in the viola, then repeated by the voice. *Fever 103 deg* is through-composed and does not appear to be unified in any particular way, but it can be divided into three large

sections—crazed monotony, hazy consciousness and final ascension—based on how Thomas decided to set the text. The first section is built on a series of rhythmic ostinatos and the 'sin' motive. The last section is unified by the 'disillusion' motive.

Melodically-speaking, the first two pieces are fairly conventional and tuneful, while the last has so much variety that is defies categorization. However, the first and third pieces include many perfect-5^{ths} and perfect-4^{ths} in the melodic line, and as mentioned earlier, in each of the three pieces there are some melodic motives/themes that help tie the melodic structures together. While the *tessitura* of all three songs lies a bit low, the *range* of the third piece spans two octaves from a B$^{\#}$3 to a B5.

Rhythmically-speaking, the first two pieces are similar in that their rhythms and meters are straight-forward, uncomplicated and unobtrusive. However, in *Fever 103 deg*, Thomas made sure to emphasize the importance of the rhythm with style and tempo markings such as the following: "Feverish, very rhythmic." In addition to being important, the rhythm in *Fever 103 deg* is quite complex. Below is an example of one of the difficult passages. (Ex. 6.12)



Example 6.12: Note the difficulty of the rhythm in this passage; *Fever 103 deg*, mm.73-76[138]

138Thomas, *Three Kisses*, 14.

Finally, with regard to the *sound element*, these pieces are similar in that they were written for three voices: voice, viola and piano. While the inclusion of the viola was part of the commission, it works quite well in this cycle, adding a darker, melancholy quality which highlights the disillusionment found in these poems. Even with the addition of the third voice, however, the overall *texture* in these pieces is not particularly dense. If anything, Thomas' compositional style in these three pieces leans more towards sparser textures.

One of the best things about Thomas' cycles for soprano is that they are relevant and accessible to all kinds of audiences, and the first two pieces in this cycle are no exception to this generalization. On the other hand, *Fever 103 deg* is a bit of an exception. It is decidedly different than the other songs in the cycles discussed in this document. However, along with that clear difference, there is a raw, unmasked quality in this piece that is appealing. People can get tired of "pretty." This piece offers a release from the status quo of art song recitals. Furthermore, even with all of its seemingly random metaphors, at the heart of the text is a woman who was deeply hurt by a man. In fact, though the pieces in this cycle are quite different, they all share an important common denominator: a negative impression of a past "kiss." Who does not have some kind of tangible reaction to a "kissing" story? To some, the drama of these pieces will be absurdly funny. To others, these pieces might offer a much-needed catharsis. Therein lies the incomprehensible beauty in Thomas' work—the ability to touch a wide-variety of people at some level.

CHAPTER VII

RACE FOR THE SKY

The cycle *Race for the Sky* was commissioned by soprano Lisa Radakovich Holsberg in 2002 after she came across three poems at an exhibit by *City Lore* commemorating the events of September 11, 2001.[139,140] The pieces in this cycle are the following: *To the Towers Themselves*, *How My Life Has Changed*, *Meditation* and *don't look for me anymore*. I have had the opportunity to perform this cycle twice and have found it to be one of the most rewarding pieces in my repertoire. It is a soul-gripping setting of words from individuals reacting to this horrific event that forever changed not only the United States, but the entire world.

Most of Thomas' cycles are settings of texts by the same poet. However, *Race for the Sky*, like *Three Kisses*, is unified by subject matter rather than by author. The poet of *To The Towers Themselves* is unknown, the poem *How My Life Has Changed* was written by Hilary North, and the poem *don't look for me anymore* was written by Alicia Vasquez. The third piece in the cycle, *Meditation*, is set for solo violin and piano.

This cycle was originally commissioned as a traditional art song cycle for soprano and piano. However, in the midst of the composition process, Thomas felt that the violin needed to be added as a third voice.[141,142] His inspiration came from the famous violinist, William Harvey, who remarked after the 2001 tragedy that, "words only go so far—and

139Holsberg, *Appendix B.*
140Thomas, *Appendix A*, 225-228.
141Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 247-248, 251.
142Thomas, *Appendix A*, 226.

even music can only go a little further from there."[143,144,145] Thus the violin plays a key part in this cycle, expressing the inexpressible.[146,147,148] This cycle has gone on to touch the lives of people all over the United States.[149,150]

Holsberg, along with Thomas, and violinist, Kirsten Davis, premiered this cycle on the first anniversary of September 11 at the *New York Historical Society*.[151] From there, Holsberg traveled around the country performing the cycle.[152] The biggest showcase for *Race for the Sky* came when this cycle was featured at the *National Association of Teachers of Singing*'s National Convention in New Orleans in 2004. Holsberg performed it there with violinist Katie Kresek and pianist LeAnn Overton. [153,154]

It was there that the cycle came to the attention of my advisor, Dr. Melissa Malde, who suggested that I perform these pieces for my first doctoral recital. I was immediately drawn to the subject matter and found them to be very accessible musically. Thomas set the text so naturally, and it was such a joy to sing because it so clearly expressed the emotions of these poets. Later, one of my voice students gave a collaborative piano recital and asked me to sing a contemporary cycle on the program. When I suggested *Race for the Sky*, he was immediately drawn to it as well. Both performances were highly rewarding for performers and audiences alike.

143Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 247-248.
144Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, "Music, Poems and Peace," additional notes to *Race for the Sky: Songs for New York and* 9/11, Sean Swinney Studios, CD, 2005/2008, 4.
145Thomas, *Appendix A*, 226.
146Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 247-248.
147Holsberg, "Music, Poems and Peace," additional notes to *Race for the Sky: Songs for New York and* 9/11, Sean Swinney Studios, CD, 2005/2008, 4.
148Thomas, *Appendix A*, 226.
149Holsberg, *Appendix B.*
150Lisa Holsberg, www.raceforthesky.org.
151Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 244-248.
152Ibid., 241, 248, 250-252.
153Ibid., 248, 250-252.
154Holsberg, "Music, Poems and Peace," additional notes to *Race for the Sky: Songs for New York and 9/11*, 6.

In the first piece, *To the Towers Themselves*, the piano and violin parts double or at least support the vocal line throughout. The piece is rather short, and the vocal range is accessible to younger singers. Also, the rhythm and tempo are not unusually difficult. Unfortunately, the tessitura of this piece lies generally in the middle to low range of the soprano voice, and the ensemble dynamics are often quite loud. In places, it would be difficult for a younger singer to carry the melody above the piano and violin.

As in the first piece, the vocal line in the final piece (*don't look for me anymore*) is supported or doubled by the piano and violin parts throughout. Also, the melody and text of this piece are not difficult and are somewhat repetitive. The rhythm is also quite simple, and the piano and violin parts are not difficult. The most difficult aspect of performing this piece would be the rather low vocal tessitura of the piece, in addition to the soft, controlled dynamics and the need for emotional composure. While all of the pieces address the sadness and loss of that day, this last piece is particularly wrought with emotion.

The second piece, *How My Life Has Changed*, is more difficult than the pieces just discussed. The piano and violin often support, double or echo the voice, but not always. Additionally, the range and dynamics of the vocal line are quite large and varied. There are also several measures where the tessitura is quite low. However, probably the most difficult aspect of performing this piece is the fast-paced tempo and the irregularities of the rhythm. While most of the piece features one basic rhythmic motive, there are times when it is varied. These sections are particularly difficult to work through and keep the ensemble together.

The third piece, *Meditation*, is written for violin and piano. The violin part is lyrical and not particularly difficult musically, and the piano part merely supports the violin. However, the depth and beauty required for the violin solo is not to be undertaken lightly.

Thus, while the first and last pieces in this cycle could be sung by younger singers, the subject matter of this cycle does not lend itself well to the option of excerpting those two pieces, and performing this entire cycle is a challenge more suitable for advanced students or professionals.

The first song in this cycle is *To The Towers Themselves*. Quite appropriately, this is the grand opener for the cycle. From the beginning of the prelude to the very last chord, one senses a mournful, yet refined composure, which helps create this powerful setting.

The anonymous poem was left among the ruins on the streets of New York, where it was eventually collected by *City Lore* and put on display.[155,156]As might be expected from the title of the poem, it is about the destroyed twin towers of the World Trade Center. The poem/text is written below:

To The Towers Themselves

They were never the favorites,
Not the Carmen Miranda Chrysler
Nor Rockefeller's magic boxes
Nor the Empire, which I think would have killed us all if she fell.
They were (the) two young dumb guys,
Beer drinking
Downtown MBA's
Swaggering across the skyline,
Not too bright.
Now that they are gone,

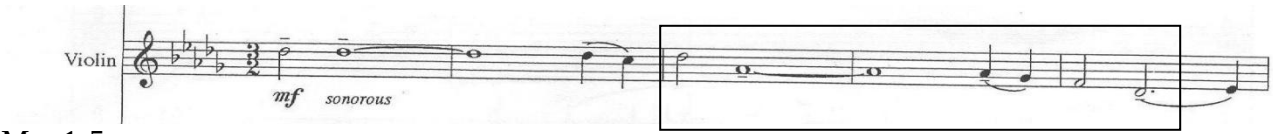
155Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 241-247.
156Thomas, *Appendix A*, 225-226.

They are like young men
Lost at war,
Not having had their life yet,
Not having grown wise and softened with air and time.
They are lost like
Cannon fodder
Like farm boys throughout time
Stunned into death,
Not knowing what hit them
And beloved
By the weeping mothers left behind. [mothers left behind.][157]

This piece begins in the key of D^b major, with slow, even chords in the piano and an expansive melody in the violin. Thomas marked the beginning as "sonorous." While the chords are not dense, the interplay of the piano and violin creates a rich sound. There is also a kind of fresh beauty in these first few measures, which perhaps depicts the promising sunrise over New York City that morning, just before the tragedy.

Though the piece essentially remains in D^b through m. 26, several accidentals appear throughout these measures, particularly in the left hand. When these accidentals first appear in the left hand in mm. 5-6, the dissonance aptly foreshadows the mournful soliloquy that is about to begin. The voice enters reminiscently in m. 9, with the words, "They were never the favorites" (mm. 9-10). This melody was heard in the violin part at the beginning of the piece. At the vocal entrance, it appears in diminution. Furthermore, a varied version of this melody is seen again at the beginning of the second verse, and later, the violin plays it again as a haunting reminder. This melodic phrase will be known as the 'remembrance' motive. (Ex. 7.1)

157Richard Pearson Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11* (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 2002/2005), iii-v, 1-5.

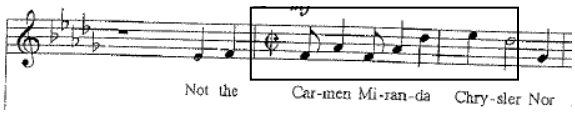


Mm.1-5

Mm. 6-10

Example 7.1: Note the first appearance of the 'remembrance' motive in the violin and then the appearance of it in the vocal line in diminution; *To The Towers Themselves*, mm. 1-5[158] and 6-10[159]

In mm. 12-13, just after beginning the second phrase, the voice sings, "Carmen Miranda Chrysler." The playfully-syncopated melody plainly refers to the colorful Brazilian singer. It is heard again immediately in the next two measures, to the text, "Rockefeller's magic boxes" (mm. 14-15) and later throughout the piece. For further reference, it will be labeled the 'Carmen Miranda' motive. (Ex. 7.2) Then, in mm. 21-22, right after the voice sings the phrase, "Nor the Empire, which I think would have killed us all if she fell," (mm. 16-20), there is a brief interlude for violin and piano.



Example 7.2: Note the 'Carmen Miranda' motive in the voice; *To The Towers Themselves*, mm. 11-13[160]

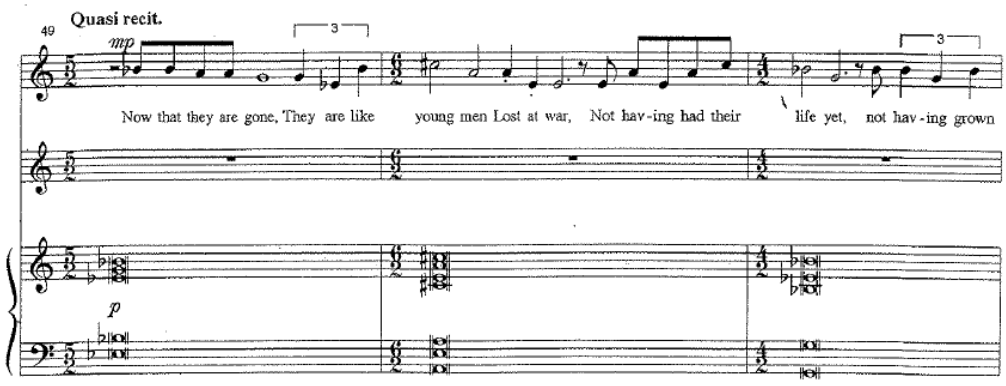
In m. 23, the voice returns with the next sentence of text. The introduction to this section begins very similarly to the first one, and there is a varied rendition of the 'remembrance' motive in the voice in mm. 24-25. The 'Carmen Miranda' motive also appears twice, to the text, "Beer drinking/Downtown MB(A's)/Swaggering across the

158Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 1.
159Ibid.
160Ibid.

skyline" (mm. 25-28). However, by m. 27, it becomes clear that this section is moving in a different direction than the first. Among other things, there is a definitive key shift to G major in that measure. In mm. 28-30, the second section climaxes with the words, "not too bright."

As the voice sustains the word, "bright," the piano and violin play a beautiful C-major chord. From there, the piece transitions into the key of C major with an interlude for piano and violin (mm. 31-48). The interlude begins rather sparsely with only the piano, but by the end, it is a full-fledged celebration of the two fallen towers.

At the end of the majestic interlude, the violin temporarily drops out, leaving a simple, almost empty, voice and piano texture, not unlike the New York City landscape now that the towers are gone. Thomas marked this section (mm. 49-53) "Quasi recit." While the voice delivers the third sentence of text in a straight-forward manner, the piano supports the voice with whole-note chords at the beginning of each measure. This tonally-ambiguous section of the piece is a stunning, intimate moment. The simple elegance found in these measures is timeless. (Ex. 7.3)



Example 7.3: Note the beginning of this "Quasi recit." section; *To The Towers Themselves*, mm. 49-51[161]

161Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 4.

In m. 55, the fourth and final sentence begins with acute intensity. There is a *subito forte* in that measure, along with a vocal tessitura that is higher than before. Furthermore, Thomas marked this section "impassioned." The text no longer evades the fate of the World Trade Center. It compares the towers to "Cannon fodder" (m. 57) and "farm boys" (m. 58) that were "Stunned into death" (mm. 60-62). As the voice sustains the word "death" (mm. 61-62), the violin plays the 'remembrance' motive.

Right after this moment, the voice, doubled in the right hand of the piano, sings "Not knowing what hit them," (mm. 62-64) over the 'Carmen Miranda' motive, which is echoed in the violin. Until now, this motive has been associated with the exuberant Chrysler Building and the youthful brashness of the twin towers. It is hard to understand why this jocular motive is repeated here at this somber moment of the text. Perhaps, it is a reference to the naiveté of the towers—that they seemed invulnerable until the moment of destruction.

Then, in mm. 65-70, towards the end of the fourth section, the music begins to build towards the climactic ending with the words, "And beloved/By the weeping mothers left behind" (mm. 65-70). On "beloved" (mm. 65-67), there is a poignant *subito mezzo-piano* which especially highlights the bittersweet subtext of that word. The climax of the piece occurs a few measures later, with the repeated text, "mothers left behind" (mm. 71-76). Thomas repeated this phrase from the poem, emphasizing the position of these towers as sons, not as lifeless, inhuman objects. The first instance of the word "mothers," is set on a long high G^{b}. When Thomas repeated the word, he set it over a long melisma that soars to an $A^{b}5$. Thomas also placed a dramatic pause with a fermata over a rest before the final re-iteration of the text, "left behind." This pause, along with

specific style indications such as "Slightly slower, deliberate," further emphasizes the finality of the loss.

The last few measures of this piece find their way back to the original tonic (D^b major), though there still are some rogue accidentals in the left hand. By the last measure, the voice has dropped out, so only the violin and piano remain to play the final 'left-behind' chord (m. 77). Though the last chord is the tonic, it is in first inversion, which weakens its conclusive power, much like the attacks on September 11, 2001, weakened our nation's confidence.

The second piece in this cycle, *How My Life Has Changed*, is a fast-paced, almost frantic setting of Hilary North's reflections on how nothing in her life will be the same, now that all of her co-workers have been killed. North was the only one in her office who survived the tragedy because she was out of the office when the planes hit the towers.[162,163] The poem/text is written below:

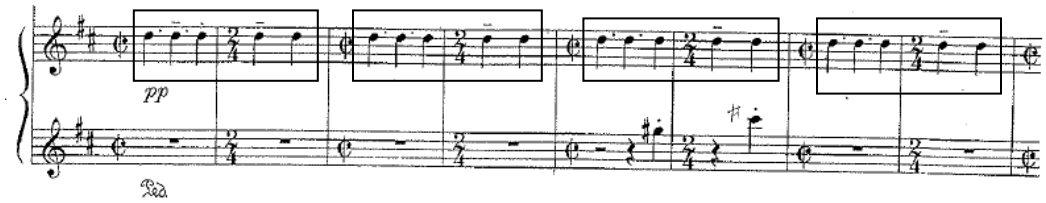
How My Life Has Changed

I can no longer flirt with Lou.
I can no longer dance with Mayra.
I can no longer eat brownies with Suzanne Y.
I can no longer meet the deadline with Mark.
I can no longer talk to George about his daughter.
I can no longer drink coffee with Rich.
I can no longer make a good impression on Chris.
I can no longer smile at Paul L.
I can no longer confide in Lisa.
(I can no longer) work on a project with Donna R.,
(I can no longer) get to know Yolanda.
(I can no longer) call the client with Nick.
I can no longer contribute to the book drive organized by Karen.
I can no longer hang out with Millie.
I can no longer give career advice to Suzanne P.

162Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 244-246.
163Thomas, *Appendix A*, 226-228.

(I can) no longer laugh with Donna G.
(I can no longer) watch Mary Ellen cut through the bull.
I can no longer drink beer with Paul B.
I can no longer have a meeting with Dave W. [Double-U].
(I can) no longer leave a message (with)/[for] Andrea.
I can no longer gossip with Anna.
(I can no longer) run into Dave P. at the vending machine.
I can no longer call Steve about my computer.
I can no longer compliment Lorenzo.
I can no longer hear Herman's voice.
I can no longer trade voice mails with Norman.
I can no longer ride the elevator with Barbara.
I can no longer say hello to Steve every morning [every morning].
I can no longer see the incredible view from the 103rd [hundred third] Floor (of the South Tower).
I can no longer take my life for granted.[164,165]

Thomas stated that the text of this piece was particularly difficult to set until he started to visualize Hilary North writing these words. Thomas said that he imagined her sitting at her desk tapping her pencil. The nervous tapping of her pencil is how he came up with the underlying rhythmic motive for this piece: dotted-quarter, dotted-quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter.[166] As can be seen above, Thomas cut a few words of text, due to the repetitious nature of the poem, but the overall effect remains. Because of the way in which this motive was conceived, it will be known as the 'pencil-tapping' motive. (Ex. 7.4)



Example 7.4: Note the 'pencil-tapping' motive, which is repeated several times, in the left hand of the piano; *How My Life Has Changed*, mm. 1-8[167]

164Poem used by permission from Hilary North: Hilary North, e-mail messages to author, March 6, 2010 and October 18, 2011.
165Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, iii-v, 6-20.
166Thomas, *Appendix A*, 228, 234.
167Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 6.

At first glance, this piece can appear to be a never-ending list of what someone "can no longer do." However, if one uses the several key shifts, varied melodies, rhythmic irregularities and changes in dynamics and density to interpret the varying emotions of the singer, the piece not only becomes much easier to understand, it also becomes much more interesting.

This piece begins with repeated D5's in the right hand of the piano, set to the 'pencil-tapping' motive. The left hand interjects a couple of dissonant notes, but essentially, the right hand is alone until the voice enters in m. 11 with a brief, but devastating statement: "I can no longer flirt with Lou" (mm.11-15). This is followed by more of the 'pencil-tapping' motive. Then, there is a second utterance: "I can no longer dance with Mayra" (mm. 21-25). Nearly every phrase of text in the first several measures is separated from the next phrase by a measure or two of piano, often accompanied by violin. Meanwhile, the 'pencil-tapping' motive in the piano continues virtually without a break through the first several measures.

Though most of the text-setting in this piece is syllabic, there are a few places where Thomas set a person's name or another word over a melisma. The first of these occurs in the first section in mm. 40-49 on the name "Mark." This and the other melismas are somewhat awkward to navigate with the voice, and difficult to sing on only one breath. However, these extended melismas provide variety, in addition to giving a different subtext to the memory of each colleague.

In mm. 69-74, the 'pencil-tapping' motive briefly disappears, and some of the singer's anger and bitterness that heretofore was masked by shock, starts to show. Though it is not the first time in the piece that the 'pencil-tapping' motive has briefly

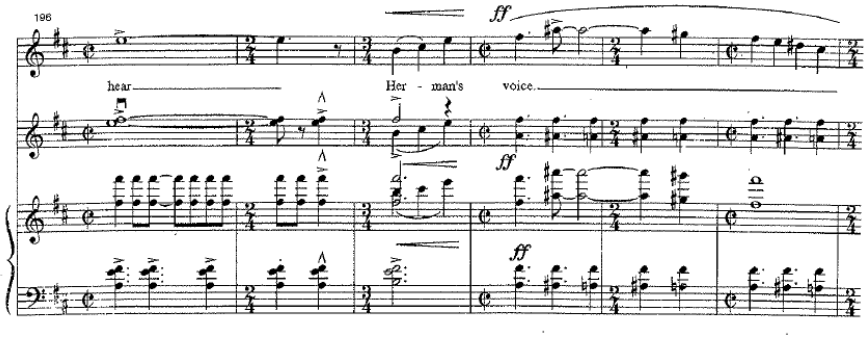
exited, the faster rhythmic pulse of these particular measures, along with the *tenuto* marks in the vocal line, especially emphasize the text at this point: "I can no longer make a good impression on Chris" (mm. 69-73). Later, beginning in m. 81 and continuing through m. 97, the tension starts to build even more as the singer blurts out a long continuous list of things she can no longer do. Thomas really built up the frenzied nature of this section by deleting some of the "I can no longer" phrases and just listing all of the now-impossible activities.

In m. 98, the 'pencil-tapping' motive leaves again, this time for an extended period of time (through m. 128). In the midst of several unhappy memories, a beautiful, bittersweet moment occurs as the singer remarks, "I can no longer laugh with Donna G." (mm.115-123). There is a *subito mezzo-piano* on the downbeat of m. 117 with the beginning of the word, "laugh" (mm. 117-120).

The deliberate 'pencil-tapping' motive exits for another extended period beginning in m.139. That, along with the slurs in the violin and piano parts in this section, makes it especially difficult to sense the rhythmic pulse. The aural picture that this creates is that of a person lost in a world of disbelief.

In m. 169, the ensemble suddenly snaps out of this reverie and returns to a more rhythmic section based on the 'I can no longer' motive. At first, the anger behind the words is somewhat subdued, but as the vocal tessitura and dynamics rise, and the rhythm and the melody become more jagged, the singer releases more and more of her frustration. Beginning in m. 181 and continuing through m. 194, measures of sheer $F^{\#}$ octaves in right hand of the piano and violin alternate with accented statements in the

voice and violin (without piano). From here the bitter angst builds even more to mm. 198-201, where it climaxes on a *fortissimo* melisma. (Ex. 7.5)



Example 7.5: Note the climax here in this section; *How My Life Has Changed*, mm. 196-201[168]

Starting in m. 204, the voice and violin drop down to repetitive C4's and *pianissimo* dynamics. The harshness of the brevity of the vocal phrases, along with the *pizzicato* in the violin creates a bitter mood. Like the previous section, this section also gradually rises in tessitura and dynamics. It climaxes on the repetition of "every morning" in mm. 233-237, complete with intense dynamics and a relatively high vocal tessitura.

After this, the intensity of the bitterness dissipates somewhat, and the voice begins the next section with measures marked by Thomas, "Quasi recit." (mm. 238-246). Not only does the singer appear to have come to a point of closure in these measures, she also seems to have discovered a meaning in the losses she has suffered: "I can no longer take my life for granted" (mm. 248-258). After this despairing section, the voice exits.

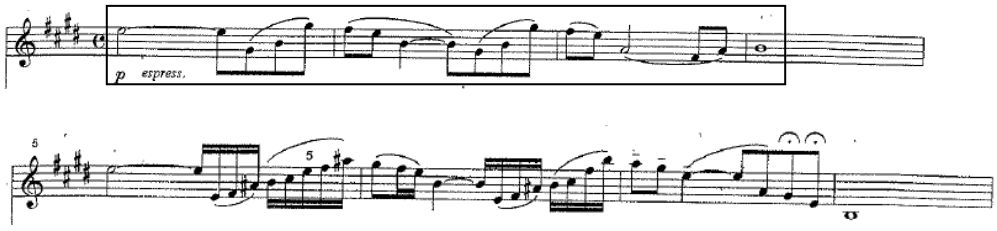
In the postlude, the violin part features a jagged melody, with frequent double-stops, in a high tessitura, and the piano repeats loud, dissonant chords in the upper-half of the keyboard (mm. 259-268). For the final nine measures, there is no melody at all, just

168Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 16.

high, dissonant, accented chords that are repeated in an angular rhythm—implying that there is still a lot of underlying frustration. The piece ends inconclusively on an inverted, extended b-minor chord in the key of b minor.

As was mentioned above, the third piece in this cycle, *Meditation*, is scored for only violin and piano. In contrast to the previous piece, this piece is peacefully-subdued, which gives the audience an opportunity to reflect on the event, adding their own narrative to the cycle in the midst of the performance.

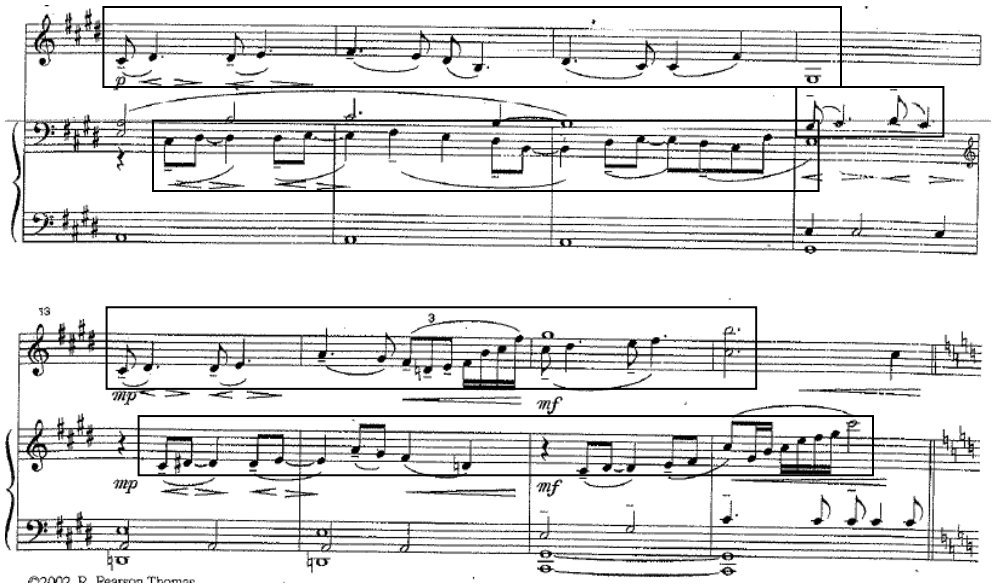
It begins in E major, with a bittersweet theme marked "*espressivo*" in the violin. The essential form of this piece is classically traditional, with each phrase lasting approximately four measures. The main theme (Theme A), which is introduced in the violin in mm.1-4, is embellished in mm. 5-8. (Ex. 7.6) Meanwhile, the right hand of the piano plays repetitive E4s, while the left hand of the piano plays two descending scalar patterns.



Example 7.6: Note the main theme and its embellished repetition in the violin; *Meditation*, mm. 1-8[169]

In mm. 9-12, a second theme (Theme B) is introduced in both the violin and the right hand of the piano. It is repeated and embellished in mm. 13-16. (Ex. 7.7) Meanwhile, the left hand of the piano supports the violin and the right hand of piano with sustained pedal tones.

169Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 21.

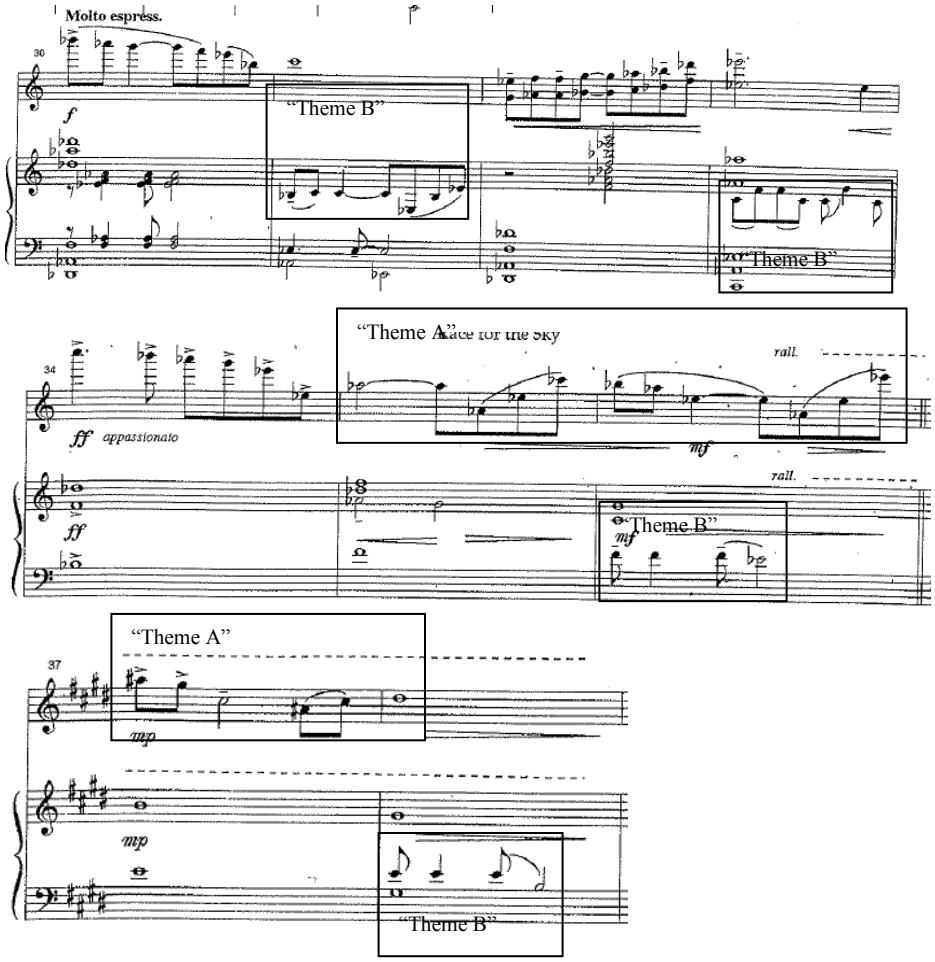


Example 7.7: Note the second theme and its embellishment in the violin and piano; *Meditation*, mm. 9-16[170]

Theme A reappears in mm.17-20, with even more rhapsodic variations. Here, the tonal center transitions to other keys, and there is a brief section of polytonality. When Theme B returns in mm. 21-24, it is in a new key. This repetition features double-stops in the violin, making it even richer than before.

Beginning with the pick-up to m. 30 and continuing through m. 38, a third melody appears, based on a combination of elements from Theme A and Theme B, along with new melodic material. This section is the first climax of the piece, with a high tessitura that is marked "molto *espressivo*." By m. 34, at the peak of the climax, which is marked "*appassionato*," the emotional fervor has reached *fortissimo* dynamics. Though the piano does not quite reach the intensity of the violin part in this section, in the first few measures, in particular, it is quite involved. (Ex. 7.8) Then, in mm. 39-40, there is a brief interlude for the piano based on the main motive from Theme B.

170Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 21.



Example 7.8: Note the third melody with its collage of Theme A (mm. 35-38), Theme B (mm. 31, 33, 36 and 38) and new material; *Meditation*, mm. 29-38[171]

When the violin returns in m. 41, the tonal center transitions back to E major in preparation for the return of the original theme in m. 44. The piano rolls a delicate *pianississimo* chord at the beginning of m. 41. However, by m. 44, the overall dynamics are *forte* with the re-appearance of Theme A. The final climax of the piece occurs two measures later on a *fortissimo* A5. The high tessitura and growing dynamics set this moment up very dramatically. Finally, in the last four measures of the piece, there is a brief postlude where the instruments slowly fade away into silence.

171Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 22-23.

The last piece in this cycle, *don't look for me anymore*, is a gentle, but particularly heart-wrenching plea written from the perspective of a mother, to those who are searching for her. The text of this poem, written by Alicia Vasquez[172], is below:

don't look for me anymore

don't look for me anymore
it's late and you are tired
your feet ache standing atop the ruins of our twins
day after day searching for a trace of me
[don't look for me anymore]
your eyes are burning red
your hands cut bleeding sifting through rock
[day after day searching for a trace of me]
it's my turn, I'm worried about you
watching as you sift through the ruins of what was
day after day in the soot and the rain
I ache in knowing you suffer my death
don't look for me anymore
hold my children as I would
hold my sisters, hold my brothers
hold my children for me
since I can't bring them up with the same
love you gave me
(and) I'll rest assured
you're watching my children
(don't look for me anymore)
[it's late and you're tired]
go home and rest…
[and don't look for me
don't look for me
don't look for me anymore][173,174]

Though the poem is not divided into stanzas in its original form, it appears that Thomas divided the poem into sections when he set it, creating a form that looks something like this: A—first verse, A^1—second verse, B—bridge, C—third verse and

172Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 244-247.

173 Poem used by permission from Alicia Vasquez: Alicia Vasquez, e-mail messages to author, March 7, 2011 and October 18, 2011.

174Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, iii, v, 24-29.

D—coda. As such, the first and second verses of this piece are virtually the same, which is the case in strophic settings. Beyond these two verses, the piece appears to be through-composed. Structural unity is provided at the beginning of the third verse, however, when the piano plays the melody from the opening two phrases of the first and second verses.

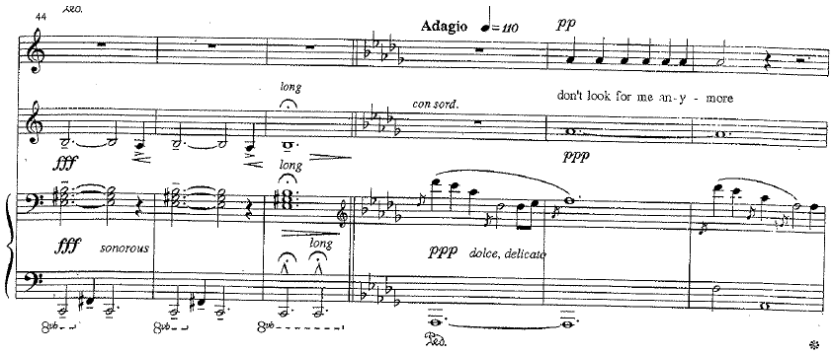
This piece begins in C major, which is very appropriate, as this piece is the epitome of simple profundity. The piano gives a brief introduction in mm.1-4, followed by the entry of the voice with the title line. The first eight measures of the piece are completely diatonic. They are in the key of C major—pure and simple. The violin is entirely absent from the first verse, further simplifying the texture. The absence of the violin also allows the voice and the piano to interpret the *rubato* and the various fermatas with complete freedom and intimacy.

In m. 9, the purity of the key of C is tainted with some dissonance. At this point, the text is about pain ("your feet ache standing atop the ruins of our twins..." [mm. 9-13]), so it is appropriate that Thomas added the accidentals as a means of intensifying the pain. From here, the vocal line ascends, then descends, the dynamics grow, and the first verse climaxes in m. 14, with the words, "Day after day searching…." The last note in the vocal line of this verse has a fermata. Then, there is another fermata over the last two beats in the piano part, which is very sparse. Thus, this section ends in quiet reflection.

The second verse goes from m. 18 through m. 29. It is very similar to the first verse both in content and in length. It also has a similar climax near the end of the verse, in mm. 24-26, with the words, "sifting through rock/Day after day searching…." The addition of the violin in this verse gives more support to the vocal line, alternating between sustaining notes and doubling the vocal line.

At this point, there is a melodic shift and the bridge (mm. 29-46) begins, with the text, "it's my turn I'm worried about you…" (mm. 29-32). The violin continues to double the vocal line except at the text, "day after day in the" (m. 36), which is set dissonantly and marked "*poco pesante*," emphasizing the drudgery and hopelessness of the search. The first climax of the piece occurs at the end of the bridge, with the gut-wrenching words, "at knowing you suffer my death," (mm. 39-41). After the voice cuts off, the violin and piano continue with a very loud and somewhat dissonant interlude (mm. 42-46) that begins with the piano doubling the high, passionate melody in the violin. The instruments reach a dynamic level of *fortississimo* in m. 44, before tapering away in preparation for the third verse. (Ex. 7.9)

The next section (mm. 47-58) begins with the right hand of the piano playing the first two phrases from verses 1 and 2, marked "*dolce, delicato*" and stated at a *pianississimo* dynamic level, a minor-9th higher than the original. (Ex. 7.9)



Example 7.9: Note the end of the emotional violin/piano interlude, along with the beginning of the third verse; *don't look for me anymore*, mm. 44-49[175]

When the voice enters, the first two phrases are sung in a near monotone at a *pianissimo* dynamic level. However, as the melody develops, the vocal line exhibits

175Thomas, *Race for the Sky: Voices of 9/11*, 27.

similar contours and rhythms to verses 1 and 2.The density and the melodic intensity of the music builds as the victim pleads with those around her to "hold my children…since I can't bring them up with the same love you gave me…" (mm. 50-58).

In the coda (mm. 59-76), the woman tells her family, "I'll rest assured/you're watching my children/it's late and you're tired/go home and rest" (mm. 58-66). The last part of this climactic phrase is probably the most poignant phrase of the entire piece. Holsberg said that something inexplicable came over her and the entire room at the *New York Historical Society* when she sang those words on September 11, 2002.[176] This moment is followed by some repetitions of the title of the piece in mm. 67-72. These phrases have the same contour as the opening phrases of the piece. Though the vocal tessitura is low throughout this piece, it coincides well with the more introspective dynamics and the fact that this is her final good-bye.

As a cycle, these pieces work very well together. *Harmonically*, Thomas brought everything full-circle from start to finish because *To The Towers Themselves* begins in D^{b} major, and *don't look for me anymore* ends in the key of D^{b}. The *forms* of these pieces are not quite as neat and tidy, but they can be placed in some general categories. Both *To the Towers Themselves* and *How My Life Has Changed* are through-composed. *Meditation* is traditional in the sense that it has symmetrical phrases and recurring themes, and finally, *don't look for me anymore* is a combination of the modified-strophic and through-composed forms.

The *melodies* of these pieces are generally tonal. Additionally, the text-setting in these pieces is mostly syllabic, and the overall vocal ranges are similar: $D^{b}4$-$A^{b}5$, $C^{\#}4$-

176Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 247.

$A^{\#}5$ and C^{4}-G5. *Stylistically*, the first piece is declamatory, the second is angular and rhythmic, and the last two pieces are very lyrical.

From a *rhythmical* standpoint, these pieces, with the exception of *How My Life Has Changed*, have relatively few meter changes and mostly straight-forward rhythms, compared to some of the other pieces considered in this document. The frequent meter changes in *How My Life Has Changed* can seem a bit daunting at first, but once the overall rhythmic pattern is learned, the parts come together quite naturally.

Finally, the overall *sound factor* is the same for three out of the four pieces in this cycle, with there being three different voices (voice, violin, piano), instead of the usual two. As noted earlier, the one exception in this cycle is *Meditation*, which excludes the voice. With regard to *density*, the pieces range from very sparse to dense depending on the number of voices (i.e. voice, violin and piano) present at any given moment and the occasional use of double-stops in the violin and rolled chords in the piano. Though there are some rich sonorous moments in these pieces, in general, they are not terribly dense.

This cycle is Thomas' best vocal work to date. It is difficult for the performers, but musically and topically accessible. It is also arguably one of the more important modern American cycles. As Lisa Radakovich Holsberg pinpointed in our interview, this cycle has a universal theme: peoples' natural responses to this international tragedy.[177] Holsberg was so moved by the fact that people were united in finding an outlet for their pain, in the arts, that she repeatedly impressed upon me the importance of knowing this and of grasping the potential of what this says about the arts.[178]

177Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 241-248, 250-252.
178Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

A WICKED GIRL

The next song cycle is a little different than Thomas' other soprano song cycles. In the other cycles and in most song cycles in general, individual pieces succeed each other, with small breaks between songs. This cycle, however, has continuous music: cello/piano interludes connect the three songs that make up this cycle.[179] The poems that Thomas set in this cycle are by Edna St. Vincent Millay: *The Penitent*, *Thursday* and *The Betrothal*.[180] This cycle was commissioned by the *New York State Teachers of Music Association* to be performed at one of their conventions by cellist Sylvie Beaudette, pianist Susan Seligman and soprano Eileen Strempel.[181] The association wanted the poet to be a woman and for the cycle to be funny, so they originally suggested that Thomas set poems by Dorothy Parker. However, in an interview in October 2009, Thomas admitted that he did not find the poetry of Dorothy Parker to be particularly funny, so he chose to set poems by Millay instead.[182]

The addition of a stringed-instrument is not unprecedented in Thomas' song output. He included viola in *Three Kisses* and violin in *Race for the Sky*. As has been

179Richard Pearson Thomas, e-mail message to author, October 5, 2009.

180Poetry used by permission of Holly Peppe, literary executor, via Vin Barnett, both of *The Edna St. Vincent Millay Society*, January 12, 2011/November 2, 2011: Vin Barnett, e-mail messages to author, January 12, 2011 and November 2, 2011.

181Thomas, *A Wicked Girl* (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 2003), 1.

182Thomas, *Appendix A*, 221-222, 224.

mentioned before, Thomas has a particular affinity for stringed-instruments. This cycle is further evidence of that.[183]

With the addition of another voice, the complexity of any cycle increases. Despite this, *A Wicked Girl* is still not terribly difficult. In fact, the first piece (*The Penitent*) is relatively simple. It is centered around the key of *a minor*, both the piano and cello support the vocal line, and it is modified-strophic in form. Though the meter changes frequently, the pulse is even and the tempo is steady. The range and tessitura are very accessible to sopranos, and there are not any extreme dynamic demands. This piece could be sung by young to intermediate sopranos.

The next piece in the cycle is a little more challenging. The piano consists almost entirely of tone clusters, and the cello line is varied and unpredictable, except when it echoes the vocal line. Because of this, the singer gets virtually no help from the collaborating instruments. Furthermore, the arpeggiated vocal lines are difficult to negotiate. This is due mainly to the range and to the irregularity of leaps in the lines. These lines span a range from $C^{\#}4$ to $G^{\#}5$, or in other words, from low-middle to head voice. Intermediate singers with good technique could negotiate this span of registers easily, but younger singers who have not yet figured out how to transition smoothly between registers, should probably not expect to perform this piece. Having said this, however, this piece could be turned into a useful *vocalise* for younger singers. In a sense, the piece already seems somewhat like an exercise because of its brevity. The vocal line consists of only eight phrases.

The third and final piece is much more exciting to sing than the second piece. It transitions through a number of keys, and the tempo is much quicker than the previous

183Thomas, *Appendix A*, 219.

piece. There are some large leaps in the vocal line, and it frequently alternates between low-middle and head voice. In general, the range is more extensive on the upper end, which sopranos usually love. In fact, the soprano for whom this was written, asked Thomas for a show-off note at the end.[184] Being able to sustain high notes, while also being able to easily transition back down to middle voice would be the most difficult technical aspect of this piece. While in some regards it sounds similar to *Thursday*, it really is very different. Probably the most important difference is that *The Betrothal* is not nearly as delicate as *Thursday*, which makes it much easier to sing. Thus, if a soprano can master the register transitions of *Thursday* and sustain the high notes of the last piece, while having power in her lower middle to carry over the cello, she would be able to sing this cycle.

The Penitent is a playfully-naughty piece about a girl who has been very wicked and who wishes to repent of her wickedness. However, in the end, she finds that she just cannot conjure up a contrite spirit and decides to enjoy life instead. This piece, which Thomas set in modified-strophic form, begins in *a minor*. The poem/text is below:

The Penitent

I had a little Sorrow,
Born of a little Sin,
I found a room all damp with gloom
And shut all us all within;
And, "Little Sorrow, weep," said I,
"And, Little Sin, pray God to die,
And I upon the floor will lie
And think how bad I've been![how bad I've been!]"

Alas for pious planning—
It mattered not a whit!
As far as gloom went in that room,
The lamp might have been lit!

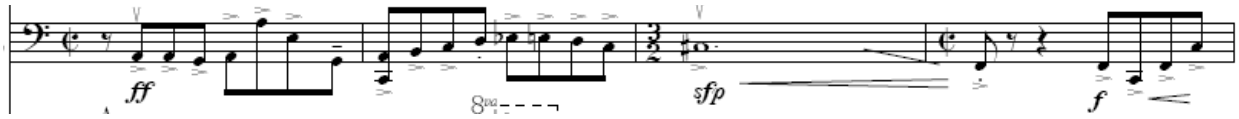
184Thomas, *Appendix A*, 224.

My little Sorrow would not weep,
My little Sin would go to sleep—
To save my soul I could not keep
My graceless mind on it!
So I got up in anger,
And took a book I had,
And put a ribbon on my hair
To please a passing lad,
And, "One thing there's no getting by—
I've been a wicked girl," said I:
"But if I can't be sorry, why,
I might as well be glad!"[185,186]

There are three main compositional techniques that bring this story to life. The first is his personification of the girl via the cello part. The second is his repetition of two melodic fragments, and the third is his use of large leaps to emphasize certain phrases. Of course, there are many other details that Thomas used to complete the package, but these three techniques are especially worth noting.

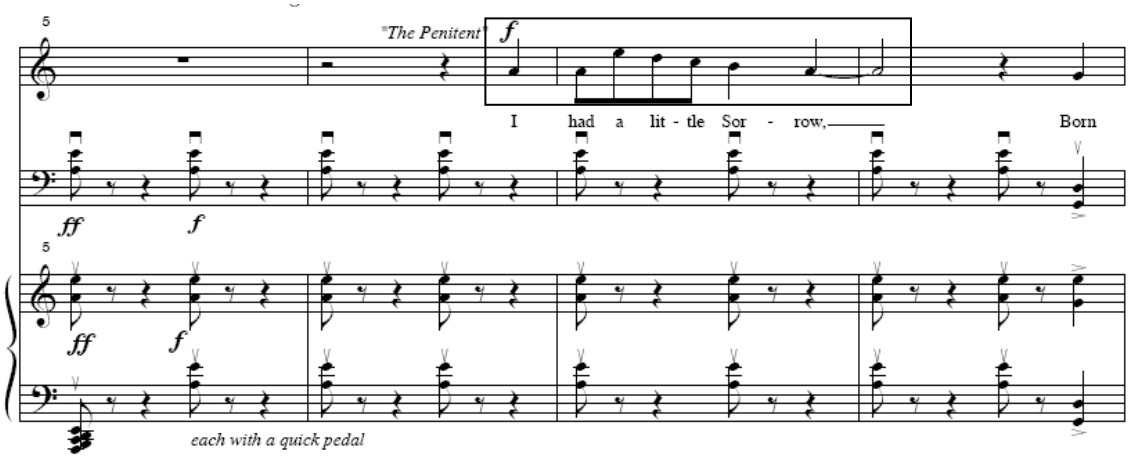
The 'wicked girl' and her mischievous actions are introduced right at the beginning of the prelude with the cello's opening line. This devilishly-playful line immediately characterizes this spirited girl and her unfettered nature, before even one word of text is sung. (Ex. 8.1) However, as listeners soon discover, this girl has two sides: one that wants to have fun, and one that wants to do the right thing. Therefore, throughout the piece, the cello portrays both sides of this morally-conflicted girl. Sometimes the cello line cooperates with the melody (i.e. 'good girl'), and sometimes, it takes its own mischievous path (i.e. 'wicked girl'), with lines similar to the one shown below. (Ex. 8.1)

185Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay, 139-140.
186Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 1-7.



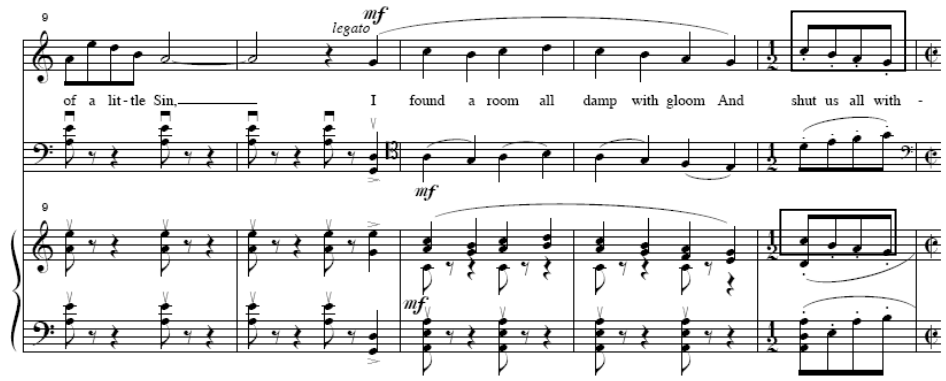
Example 8.1: Note the cello line which here personifies 'wicked girl;' *The Penitent*, mm. 1-4[187]

The voice enters in m. 6, where the girl begins telling her story in rather short, blunt phrases, indicative of her youth: "I had a little Sorrow/Born of a little Sin" (mm. 6-10). These first two phrases are set to the same melodic fragment, which occurs again later, establishing the overall modified-strophic form of the piece. Beneath these phrases and subsequent appearances of this fragment, the cello and the piano play ostinati consisting of open-5^{ths} and 4^{ths} on A and E. (Ex. 8.2) A few measures later, the girl sings, "shut us all within" (mm. 13-16) over another pattern that will be heard again throughout the piece. Here, the pattern is doubled in the right hand of the piano. This brief descending pattern will be known as the 'wicked' motive. (Ex. 8.3) Meanwhile, 'wicked girl' (via the cello) appears beneath the end of that phrase, in mm. 14-15. (Ex. 8.4)

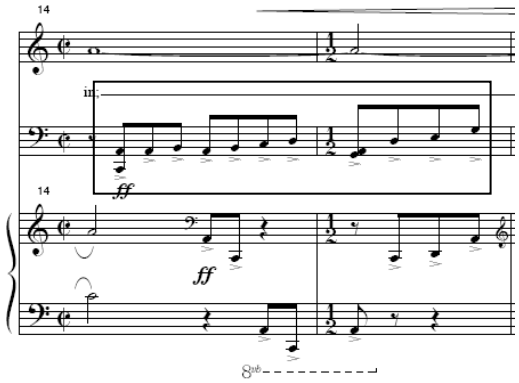


Example 8.2: Note the melody of the opening vocal phrase, as well as the piano and cello ostinati ; *The Penitent*, mm. 5-8[188]

187Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 1.
188Ibid.



Example 8.3: Note the first appearance of the 'wicked' motive in the voice (doubled in the right hand of the piano; *The Penitent*, mm. 9-13[189]

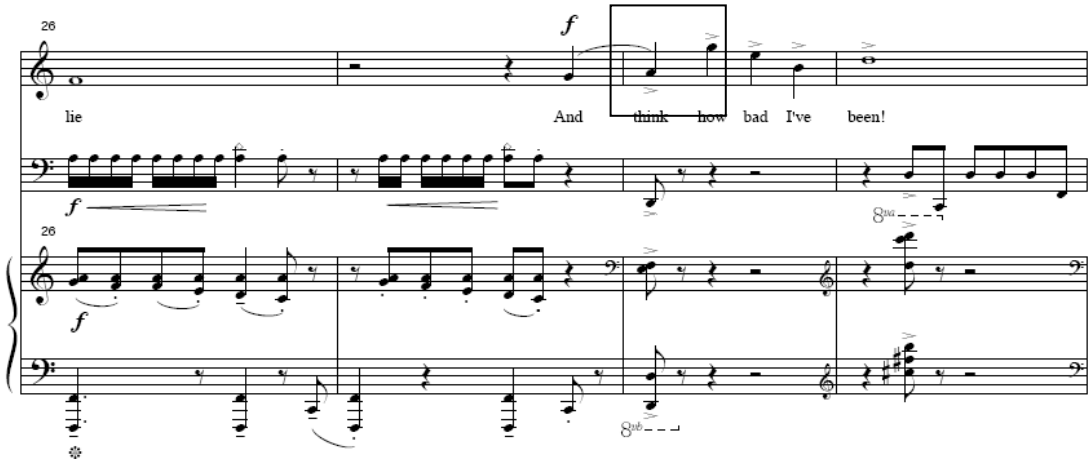


Example 8.4: Note 'wicked girl' in the cello; *The Penitent*, mm. 14-15[190]

The second part of the first stanza (mm. 17-19) begins with the same melodic fragment that opened the piece (text: "And, 'Little Sorrow, weep'"). The only difference here is that there is a B^b instead of a B-natural. However, the B^b is very appropriate, because the girl is trying to make herself cry. The B^b on the word "weep" gives it that little bit of melancholy sadness that she is so desperately trying to cultivate. Thomas also used several large leaps in the vocal line to display the girl's overtly dramatic character. A few of these occur when she rashly vows, "'And I upon the floor will lie'," in mm. 23-26. The voice leaps up a major-6^{th} between the words, "And" and "I" (mm. 23-24) and then drops down a major-7^{th} from "will" to "lie" (mm. 25-26). A similar leap of a minor-

189Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 1.
190Ibid., 2.

7th occurs in m. 28 between the words, "think" and "how" in the first instance of the phrase, "And think how bad I've been!" (mm. 27-29). (Ex. 8.5)



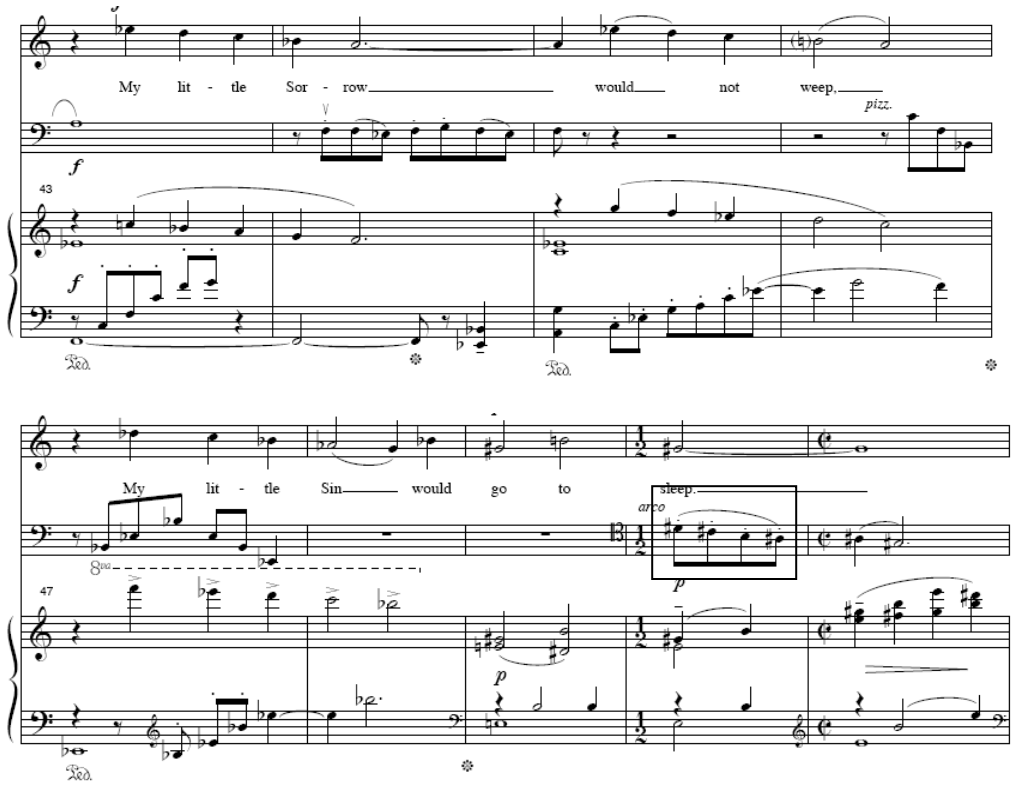
Example 8.5: Note the large leap in the vocal line between "think" and "how," as well as 'wicked girl' in the cello; *The Penitent*, mm. 26-29[191]

Immediately following this confession, the cello as 'wicked girl' appears in m. 29. (Ex. 8.5) Then, in mm. 30-32, beneath the repeat of that phrase, the cello and piano double the vocal line, emphasizing her self-abasement, before the cello once again becomes 'wicked girl' in mm. 31-32. Here, in the cello's portrayal of 'wicked girl,' the 'wicked' motive itself is heard again in m. 32.

A few measures later, the 'wicked' motive appears again in both the voice and in the right hand of the piano (a 3rd below), accompanying the text, "It mattered not a whit" (mm. 36-38). Then, in m. 43, she whimpers, "My little Sorrow" (mm. 43-45) over another descending line. The second part of this phrase is set similarly, only with a B-natural instead of a B^b: "would not weep" (mm. 45-46). This is immediately followed by, "My little Sin" (mm. 47-48), which is set over the same pattern, just a whole-step lower.

191Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 3.

Meanwhile, the cello depicts her unruly 'Sorrow' and 'Sin' beneath these phrases, along with re-iterating the 'wicked' motive (mm. 43-51). (Ex. 8.6)



Example 8.6: Note the cello's depiction of 'Sorrow' and 'Sin,' the 'wicked' motive in the cello line in m. 50 (in box) and the similar descending lines in the voice; *The Penitent*, mm. 43-51[192]

At this point, the reality of her predicament (i.e. wanting to be good, but not knowing how to accomplish it) begins to become clearer to her. Beginning in m. 52, the tempo "pushes ahead." Then, the tessitura and dynamics progressively rise with her desperate cries, "To save my soul I could not keep/My graceless mind on it!" (mm.52-59). The cello echoes these vocal phrases in mm. 53-56, before transforming back into 'wicked girl.'

Her frustration builds with the 16th-notes in the cello, which are accompanied by a tremolo on octave C's in the right hand of the piano. This feverish mini-interlude leads to

192Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 4.

the climactic third stanza, where she finally gives up on piety. Here, the opening melodic fragment makes its last two appearances, accompanying the intense *fortissimo* phrases, "So I got up in anger,/And took a book I had/And put a ribbon on my hair" (mm. 62-69). This moment is further highlighted by another significant vocal leap between "And" and "put."

Then, suddenly, in the midst of her frustration, Thomas created a light moment—a reference back to the beginning—with the 'wicked' motive in both the voice and the right hand of the piano accompanying the phrase, "Please a passing lad" in mm. 69-70. The additional staccato eighth-notes in this particular rendition of the motive further help to relay the impermanent quality of the word "passing." Right after this, in m. 70, the cello and the right hand of the piano play the 'wicked' motive, followed by another re-iteration by the cello in m. 71.

Finally, while the cello delightfully portrays the girl's naughty nature beneath the voice, she out-rightly admits to her faults: "'One thing, there's no getting by--/I've been a wicked girl,'" (mm. 72-78)—complete with the 'wicked' motive on "Wicked girl" in m. 77. The right hand of the piano also plays the 'wicked' motive, but it is a 9^{th} higher than the voice, which creates an appropriately-dissonant rendition of it. In m. 79, the cello plays the opening melodic fragment, just before the girl blurts out her solution to her inner battle with the words, "'But if I can't be sorry, why,/I might as well be glad!'" (mm. 80-90). Here, beneath the phrase, "But if I can't be sorry," set to an augmented version of the opening melodic fragment, the right hand of the piano plays the opening melodic fragment in its original rhythm. These last two phrases of text are drawn out over several measures, with the climax of the piece occurring at the end of the second phrase.

Meanwhile, the cello continues as 'wicked girl,' who is now reveling in her new freedom from guilt. Between mm. 81 and 85, the 'wicked' motive is played eight times.

After such a long build-up, one might expect a really high note in the tonic chord to top it all off, but "glad" is sustained over a $D^{\#}5$ (in the key of E major). Ending the piece in a major key makes sense now that the girl has finally found an answer she can live with, but having the singer sustain the leading-tone on the final word is both vocally and aurally dissatisfying. However, given the unruly nature of the girl and her final decision to be 'wicked,' Thomas' choice to have the soprano sustain a note that obnoxiously clashes with the tonic makes perfect sense.

At this point, the piano and cello continue to play a lengthy postlude. Until now, the cello alternated between 'good girl' and 'wicked girl.' However, the cello personifies the 'wicked girl' through the entire postlude. As such, most of the cello's notes are staccato eighth-notes that descend and ascend in a scalar fashion. The piano also has several staccato eighth-notes. The two hands of the piano and the cello interweave with each other in a mischievously-playful way, taking turns playing variations of the opening melodic fragment, as well as the 'wicked' motive. Given its placement between songs, this postlude simultaneously functions as an interlude between the first and second pieces, but stylistically and motivically, it clearly belongs to the first.

The second piece in this cycle is *Thursday*. In this matter-of-fact piece, the singer is of the mindset that it does not matter to her if she told someone that she loved him on Wednesday. Today is Thursday, and she no longer feels the same about him. See the poem/text below:

Thursday

And if I loved you Wednesday,
Well, what is that to you?
I do not love you Thursday—
So much is true.

And why you come complaining
Is more than I can see.
I loved you Wednesday,--yes—but what
Is that to me?[193,194]

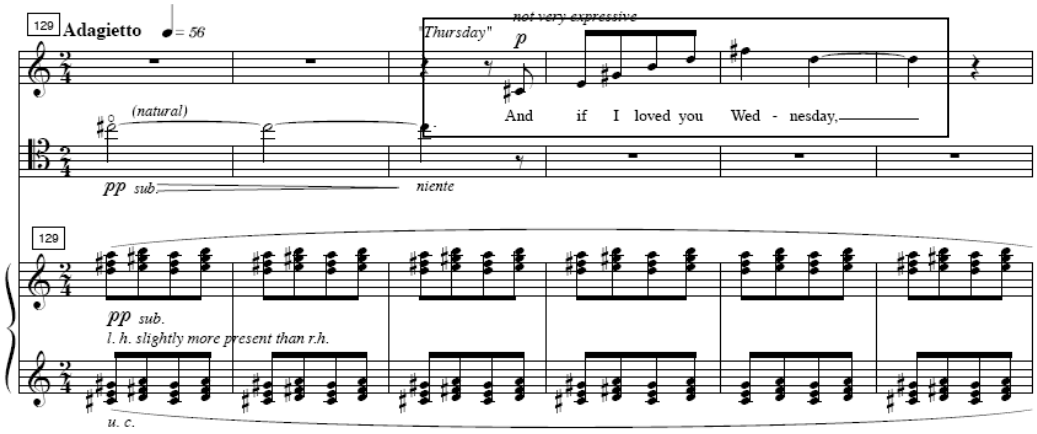
The postlude at the end of *The Penitent* continues without a break into a piano prelude in C major (mm.120-128) at the beginning of this piece. Thomas used this prelude to set an entirely different, reflective mood for this second piece. In addition to changing the meter to 3/4 and slowing down the tempo, he indicated "totally different color, *espressivo*" in the piano part at the beginning of this prelude.

Though the prelude serves as a 9-measure transition, it does not introduce any thematic material for the second song. The prelude ends in m. 128; in m. 129, the tonal center dissolves, and the tempo slows down even more. In this same measure, the piano immediately switches from the sweet lyricism of the prelude, to polychords, which sound like tone clusters. The polychords are created as each hand of the piano alternates between two different chords. While the right hand alternates between D-major and E-major chords, the left hand alternates between $c^{\#}$-minor and D-major chords. The rhythm in the piano part consists of even eighth-notes. (Ex. 8.7)

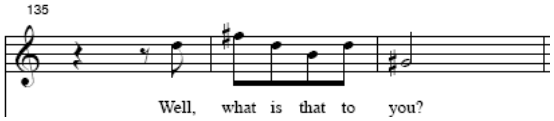
The cello also enters along with the piano in m. 129 with a sustained harmonic written as a $C^{\#}5$. Then, on the pick-up to m. 132, the voice enters as an eighth-note $C^{\#}4$. Thomas marked the vocal line "not very expressive," emphasizing the heartlessness of

193Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay, 129.
194Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 10-11.

the singer. The first line quietly and unemotionally ascends, before landing on a D5, with the text, "And if I loved you Wednesday" (mm. 131-134), which is answered by the phrase, "Well, what is that to you?" (mm. 135-137) set over a descending pattern. These first two phrases are significant because most of the melody in this short piece is built on variations of these two melodic fragments. (Ex. 8.7) (Ex. 8.8)



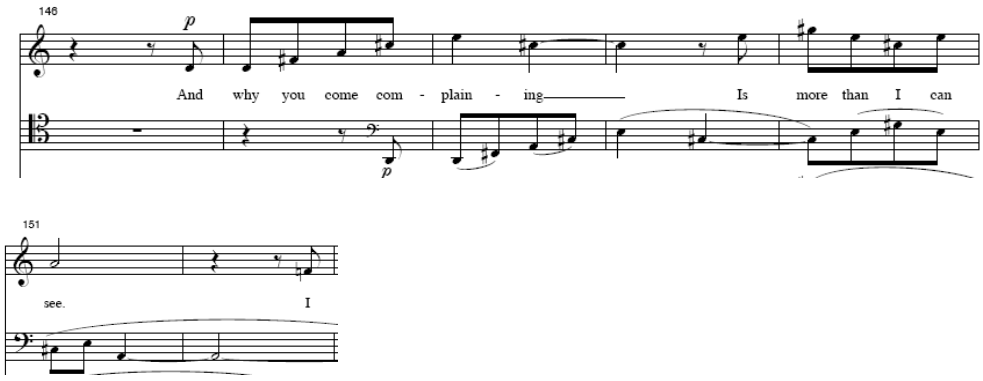
Example 8.7: Note the first melodic fragment in the voice, as well as the tone clusters in the piano; *Thursday*, mm. 129-134[195]



Example 8.8: Note the second melodic fragment in the voice; *Thursday*, mm. 135-137[196]

The first melodic fragment, with the exception of a substitution of D$^{\#}$5 for D5 is seen again in the phrase in mm.139-141, "I do not love you Thursday—," and then again in a more varied version beneath the text, "And why you come complaining" (mm. 146-149). This is answered with the phrase, "Is more than I can see" (mm. 149-151) with the second melodic fragment. These renditions of the two melodic fragments are echoed in the cello line in mm. 147-153. (Ex. 8.9)

195Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 10.
196Ibid.



Example 8.9: Note a varied rendition of the first melodic fragment, answered by a slightly-varied version of the second melodic fragment, along with the echoes in the cello line; *Thursday*, mm. 146-152[197]

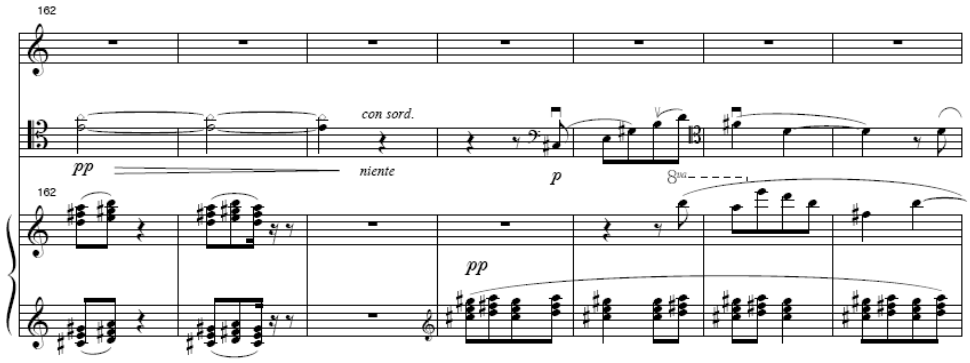
The final appearance of the first melodic fragment occurs in the next two measures. This version, which is slightly shorter and a fourth higher than the original, accompanies the text, "I loved you Wednesday," (mm. 152-153). With the conclusion of this phrase comes the climax, "but what/Is that to me?" (mm.156-161). The voice leaps up a minor-7th to a G5 on "what," before slowly and heartlessly descending to a sustained D4. This descent is accompanied by a decrescendo and is set to quarter-notes, instead of the usual eighth-notes. The notes of this phrase also outline a C-major chord. Though it would seem that a major chord would be a positive gesture on the girl's part, here, because of the minor-quality that pervades the piece, the major chord—a C-major chord, no less—seems very out of place. This, along with the decrescendo and the steady quarter-notes, make the girl seem particularly cold.

The subtle collage of clashing polychords continues through to the postlude with only a few measures respite. The cello also plays a textural role through the bulk of the piece, with various sustained double-stops whose upper notes are written as harmonics. However, with the advent of the postlude, a now-muted cello repeats the vocal melody an

197Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 11.

octave lower. Here, the melody is more subtle, less bright, almost as if it is the sound of the singer's voice replaying in the broken heart of the forsaken lover—a haunting reminder of her callous words. Furthermore, in this rendition of the melody, the cello stops short of the last two phrases.

Meanwhile in the piano, only the left hand continues playing chords, while the right hand plays a melody which counters the melodic theme in the cello line. Throughout the postlude, the right hand of the piano responds to each of the cello's phrases with this countermelody. (Ex. 8.10) Without the right-hand chords that characterized the piano part until this point, the texture of the postlude is much lighter. However, it is no less dissonant because the melodies in the piano and the cello, though rhythmically-related, do not have many notes in common. Finally, in the last few measures of the postlude, the right hand plays a melody reminiscent of the prelude, which helps to meld the two very different sections of this piece together. (Ex. 8.10)



Example 8.10: Note the beginning of the vocal melody being replayed in the cello line (mm. 165-168), the counter-melody in the right hand of the piano and the chords in the left hand of the piano; *Thursday*, mm. 162-168[198]

The final piece in this cycle is *The Betrothal*. When the postlude for *Thursday* ends in m.188, the fast-paced introduction to *The Betrothal* promptly begins with a

198Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 12.

rhythmic ostinato based on open-5^{ths} (C-G). The pragmatic singer in this piece gives the man who loves her reasons why he should marry her even though she does not love him in return. The poem/text is below:

The Betrothal

Oh, come, my lad, or go, my lad,
And love me if you like.
I shall not hear the door shut
Nor the knocker strike.

Oh, bring me gifts or beg me gifts,
And wed me if you will.
I'd make a man a good wife,
Sensible and still.

And why should I be cold, my lad,
And why should you repine,
Because I love a dark head
That never will be mine?

I might as well be easing you
As lie alone in bed
And waste the night in wanting
A cruel dark head.

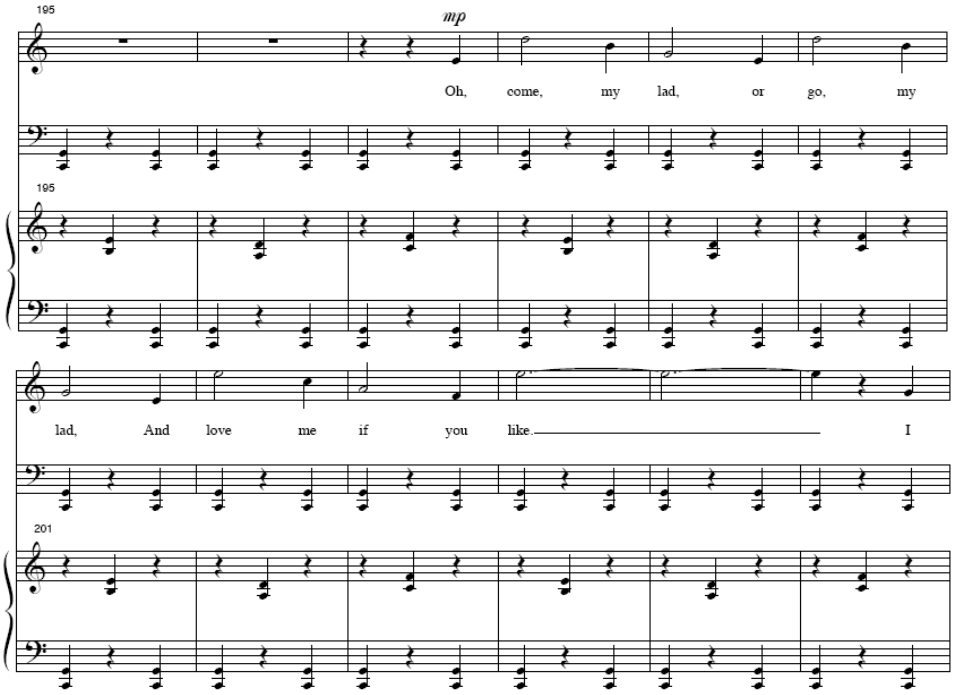
You might as well be calling yours
What never will be his,
And one of us be happy.
There's few enough as is.
[And one of us be happy.
There's few enough as is.][199,200]

In the prelude and on into the beginning of the piece, the piano and cello establish a basic rhythmic ostinato in ¾ time: the left hand of the piano and the cello play quarter-note perfect-5^{ths} (C-G) on the first and third beats, while the right hand answers with quarter-note perfect-4^{ths} on the second beat. The inner voice provides the only melodic

199Millay, *Collected Poems: Edna St. Vincent Millay*, ed. Norma Millay, 173-174.
200Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 13-21.

movement, repeating three parallel-4^{ths}. This is the first of many ostinati in the piano and cello parts. (Ex. 8.11)

There could be any number of reasons why Thomas wrote the piano and cello parts in this repetitive fashion. Perhaps the unending repetition hints that this is not the first time that the singer has made her argument for marriage and that she is becoming insistent. Perhaps, having heard her arguments, the man has been a little reluctant to marry her, and consequently, she has had to continuously argue in favor of it. Or perhaps, she has not yet even made the argument to *him*, she is still trying to convince *herself* that it truly is better this way. Another possibility is that the seemingly-unending ostinati reflect the tiresome marriage that either she or he or both of them envision.

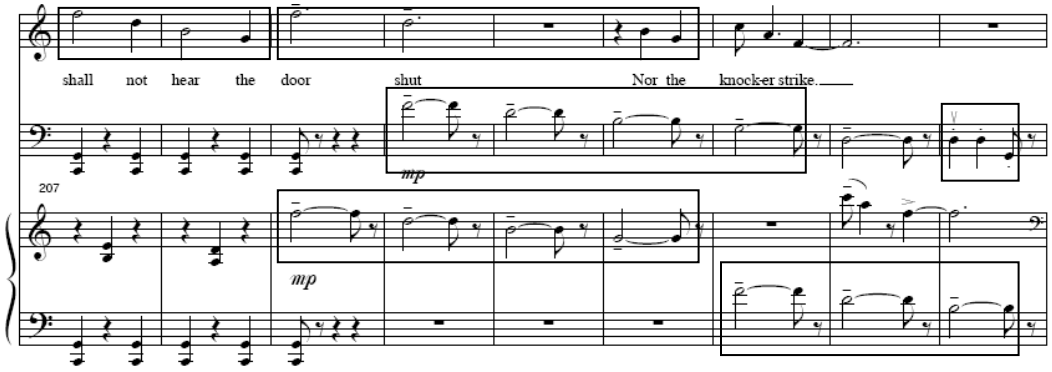


Example 8.11: Note the arpeggiated lines in the voice and the ostinato in the cello and the piano; *The Betrothal*, mm.195-206[201]

201Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 13-14.

The opening text implies ambivalence and is set with descending triadic arpeggios that repeat in sequence, starting first on D, then E and then F. This rather banal, repetitive and unsentimental melody captures the seemingly indifferent attitude of the girl, while the persistent ostinato beneath her, belies her seeming nonchalance. (Ex. 8.11)

In mm. 207-209, the voice sings the final descending arpeggio to the text, "I shall not hear the door shut." Thomas emphasized the possible finality of this image with a momentary cessation of the ostinato pattern, and instead, had the piano and cello parts echo the vocal melody in mm. 209-215. Meanwhile, the voice sings the same motive again, though it is not as obvious the second time because it is broken up with a measure of rest between the first and the last two notes (mm. 209-210 and 212). The alternate image of the lad knocking on her door is set with an appropriate rhythmic figure and echoed in the piano, while three staccato notes appear in the cello (m. 215), representing "the knocker." (Ex. 8.12)



Example 8.12: Note the brief pattern featured in all four voices and the staccatos in the cello; *The Betrothal*, mm. 207-215[202]

Beginning in m. 216, there is a marked change. Though the piano continues the rhythmic ostinato (this time based on C), the cello drops out completely. The vocal line is

202Thomas, *A Wicked Girl*, 14.

nominally in C major and continues with the same rhythm and use of repeated patterns, though it now moves in step-wise motion.

The cello re-enters in m. 225, playing a complementary melody under the text, "I'd make a man a good wife" (mm. 224-232). This phrase also features one of the few melismatic phrases (on the word "good") in the relatively-syllabic vocal line of this piece. Following this, Thomas inserted a blank measure: m. 233. This measure is dramatically effective, serving not only to highlight what has just been sung, but also to emphasize the next part of her argument: that she is "sensible and still" (mm. 234-235 and 237-239). However, while the voice sustains, "still," the cello and piano contradict her argument by playing moving notes.

Beginning in m. 241, the tessitura begins to rise. Though the vocal line still uses repetitive melodic cells in sequence, it sounds more romantic as she sings about her love for "a dark lad" (mm. 257-264). Meanwhile, the cello doubles the vocal line, underscoring the singer's passion. This leads to the first climax of the piece on the phrase, "That never will be mine" (mm. 265-278). This phrase is particularly highlighted by the highest note of the piece (B^b5, m. 268) in the melisma on the word "never" (mm. 265-271) and the measure of vocal rest (m. 274) between "be" and "mine." Underneath, the harmony in the piano shifts between D^b major and d^b minor, emphasizing the heartache of unattainable love.

As the voice sustains the last note of this phrase, the rhythmic ostinato returns in the piano, now based on A^b, and the cello plays a melody that incorporates the descending arpeggios from the opening vocal phrases. However, the cello part quickly becomes agitated: the interlude becomes louder and higher and uses shorter note values

before breaking off abruptly. In mm. 289-290, there are two full measures where none of the voices sound. This emphasizes the underlying passion and frustration of the girl who is trying so hard to appear unconcerned.

For a moment, she recovers her control, and the next section begins quietly. The new argument not only begins in a new key (D), it also features the return of the step-wise melodic motion in the voice. However, as the piece continues, the girl's emotions intensify further as she again loses her nonchalance and becomes increasingly desperate and bitter: "And waste the night in wanting a cruel dark head" (mm. 300-310). These last three words are set on the same $D^{b}5$, each lasting two measures and each separated by rests for emphasis. Following this, the tessitura and dynamics rise, heightening the intensity and leading to a second climax, on the phrase, "And one of us be happy/There's few enough as is" (mm. 328-358). Like the build-up to the first climax, this section also features high, lyrical phrases.

Thomas chose to repeat this text in a coda, emphasizing the bitter unhappiness that the girl suffers because she cannot be with the man that she really loves. In setting the repetition of this text, the voice drops down dramatically to a repeated D4 for the words, "And one of us be happy" (mm. 361-364), before building up to the third and final climax. Like the climax in *The Penitent*, the last line of text is elongated via rests in the vocal line between the last two words. The final word requires the singer to sustain an E5 for seven measures before leaping up to and sustaining an A5. Because of the fast tempo, this final melisma on the word "is" (mm. 376-388) goes by fairly quickly even though it spans just over 12 measures. The awkwardness of the phrase does make a little more

sense, however, when taking into consideration the fact that Thomas had essentially already composed the piece when the soprano requested a high note at the end.[203]

Though this piece began in a carefree manner, by the end, it is quite bold and emphatic. The *fortissimo* dynamics, which continue to grow, the high A in the voice, and the ostinati in the cello and piano, make for a dramatic ending, not only to the piece, but to the cycle as a whole. Unlike the first two pieces, which were succeeded by long postludes, this piece ends within seconds of the vocal cut-off.

The harmony under the final word begins in A major, but reverts to *a minor* to end the piece, indicating that the girl is still torn between true love and convenience. The return to *a minor* also serves another function by returning to the opening key of the first piece of the cycle, which brings the cycle full-circle harmonically.

The pieces in this cycle are arguably more closely-related to each other than the individual pieces of most other song cycles because they are connected by continuous music. Having said that, the postludes and preludes are still definitive enough that should someone choose to perform only one or two of these pieces, instead of the entire cycle, it would be possible. However, ideally, these pieces will be performed together in the way the composer intended.

These pieces have more in common than continuous music. They have the same poet, the same theme (female wickedness) and perhaps even the same protagonist. Regardless of what Millay intended, Thomas essentially created one protagonist for these pieces: "a wicked girl." Additionally, these pieces are all written for voice, cello and piano, and finally, they were composed for a specific group of people for a specific occasion.

203Thomas, *Appendix A*, 224.

Beyond the surface similarities, these pieces fit together *harmonically* because the first piece begins in (and is centered around) the key of *a minor*, and the cycle ends in *a minor*. In terms of the *form* or *growth* of these pieces, all have repeated material that connects the different sections of the pieces. While some of this material is rhythmic, much of it is melodic. This repetition is therefore a salient feature of *melody* as well as *form*. The text-setting in all three pieces is generally syllabic, though both *The Penitent* and *The Betrothal* feature some melismatic lines. The overall *range* of the cycle ($C^{\#}4$-$B^{b}5$) fits within soprano parameters, but the *tessitura* is often a little low in *Thursday* and *The Betrothal*. With regard to both *harmony* and *melody*, there are a number of chords and melodies based on perfect-5^{ths} and perfect-4^{ths}. Furthermore, there is *rhythmic* stability. Unlike some of Thomas' pieces where the meters constantly change, the pieces in this cycle have essentially one or two meters that are maintained throughout. As for the overall *sound*, the first piece is generally loud and boisterous, the second piece is generally soft and heartless, and the last piece grows from a controlled beginning to a wild ending, where the girl bitterly argues in favor of a marriage she does not desire.

The protagonist is full of life in the opening piece, perhaps too much for her own good. In the second piece, she does not even pretend to care, and in the third piece, she begins by trying to be calm and practical, only to let her emotions get the best of her by the end. The trials and tribulations of this "wicked girl," which provide room for plenty of creativity, along with the beautiful combination of timbres, make this cycle an entertaining recital-closer.

CHAPTER IX

SPRING RAIN

The penultimate cycle that will be examined in this document is *Spring Rain*. This cycle was commissioned by soprano Hope Hudson.[204] There are four songs in this cycle, settings of four different Sara Teasdale poems: *Old Tunes*; *The Ghost*; *Child, Child*; and *Spring Rain*. All of the poems have some aspect of reflecting on the past.

This cycle is best-suited to a soprano with an excellent ear, a sizeable middle register, the ability to sing long phrases, substantial dynamic control and emotional maturity. Each song has some element of particular difficulty. *Old Tunes* is quasi-atonal, and the last note in the vocal line is a sustained *pianissimo* F5. *The Ghost* requires *forte* dynamics in the middle register and has long sustained phrases. *Child, Child* is the least-demanding song. However, the tonicizations (and accompanying accidentals) during the verses and piano interludes are not simple. *Spring Rain* is not particularly difficult with regard to the harmony and melody, but has several long sustained notes and phrases, often including large leaps and high dynamic levels. One phrase lasts for 29 beats, which is a very long phrase, even when taking the fast tempo into consideration. Though *Spring Rain* contains the most extensive phrases, all the songs have at least one phrase that is difficult to sustain on one breath. In addition, these pieces demand vocal and emotional expression of regret about the past that is best-suited to mature singers.

204Thomas, *Appendix A*, 221, 225.

Having made this argument, however, it can also be argued that, individually, these pieces could be good practice for less-experienced singers. The rhythm is not difficult, and the range is not terribly demanding. The lowest note in three of the four pieces is D4, and the highest note in three of the four pieces is $A^{b}5$. (In *The Ghost*, the lowest note is $E^{b}4$; in *Old Tunes*, the highest note is G5.) The tessitura is also generally within normal soprano parameters.

The cycle begins with a wistfully nostalgic song entitled *Old Tunes*. In it, the singer is remembering songs from her past. See the poem/text below:

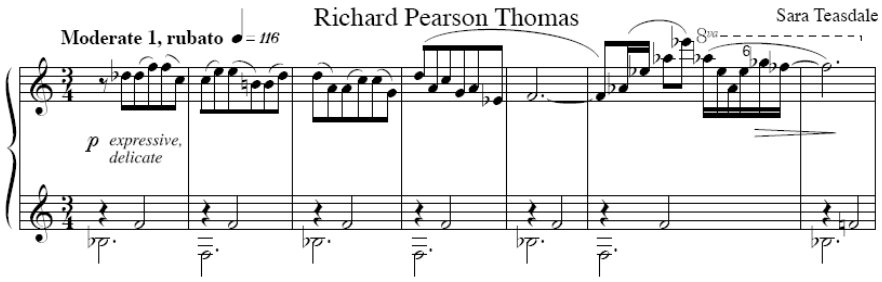
Old Tunes

As the waves of perfume, heliotrope, rose,
Float in the garden when no wind blows,
Come to us, go from us, whence no one knows;
So the old tunes float in my mind,
And go from me leaving no trace behind,
Like fragrance borne on the hush of the wind.
but in the instant the airs remain
I know the laughter and the pain
Of times that will not come again.
I try to catch at many a tune
Like petals of light fallen from the moon,
Broken and bright on a dark lagoon.
But they float away--for who can hold
Youth, or perfume or the moon's gold?[205,206]

The song opens with a 25-bar piano prelude, which introduces the two main structural elements of the song. In measures 1-7, the right hand plays a theme that seems to be an imperfectly-remembered 'old tune.' Meanwhile, the left hand of the piano repeats a lilting rhythmic ostinato. (Ex. 9.1)

205Sara Teasdale, "Old Tunes," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/old-tunes-2/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

206Richard Pearson Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale* (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 2005/2008), 2-6.

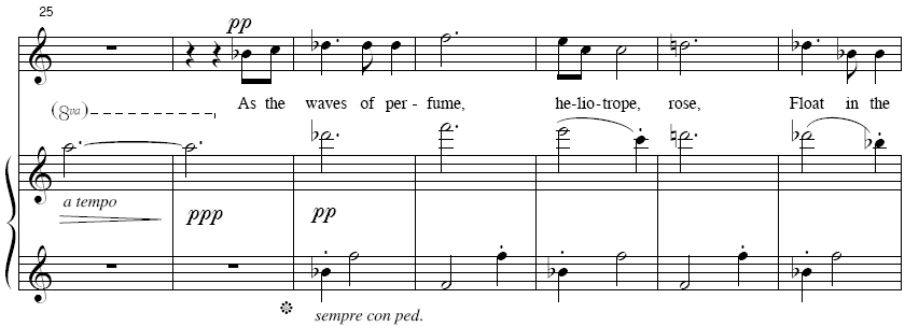


Example 9.1: Note the theme in the right hand and the rhythmic ostinato in the left hand; *Old Tunes*, mm. 1-7[207]

The 'old tunes' theme reappears throughout the piece, though never exactly the same and often in fragments. For example, it reappears in mm. 8-12 with harmonic variations and again, fragmented, in mm. 15-17. There are many more occurrences throughout the piece, ending with a nearly exact repetition in mm. 112-119 at the end of the piece. The rhythmic ostinato in the bass is also prevalent throughout the piece. These melodic and rhythmic elements give the song a sense of structural unity.

The harmonic structure is less clear. For the first eight measures, the bass line clearly outlines the tonic-dominant relationship in b^b minor or B^b major. This outline of B^b appears an octave higher twice more in the piece, first at the vocal entrance in mm. 27-32 (Ex. 9.2), and again, at the end of the piece in mm. 112-116. There are other references to B^b as well. For instance, in mm. 15-18 and 21-24, the left hand outlines B^b-major triads. In mm. 55-59, the right hand of the piano and the vocal line are clearly in the related tonality of g minor, and that tonality returns in mm. 107-110. The piece ends with the tonic-dominant relationship outlining B^b, established in the first seven measures. With no key signature and numerous accidentals, the piece cannot be said to be in the key of b^b or B^b in the traditional sense. Still, there does appear to be an encompassing neo-tonal structure based around B^b.

207Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 1.



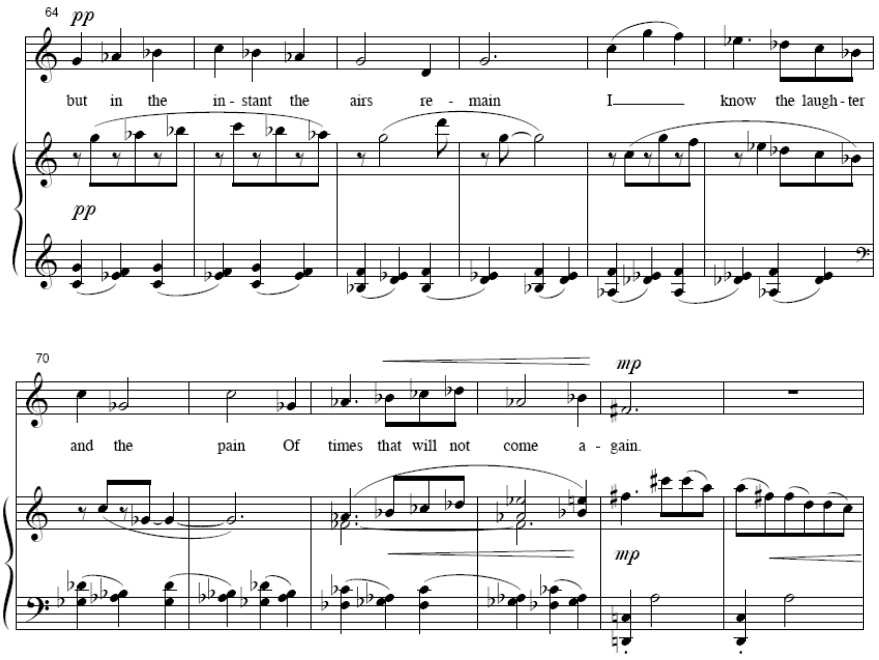
Example 9.2: Note the B^b-F relationship in these measures, which suggests a B^b/b^b tonality; *Old Tunes*, mm. 25-31[208]

The texture in the piano part becomes much sparser as the voice enters in m.26. As the voice utters the first few words, "As the waves of perfume, heliotrope, rose,/Float in the garden when no wind blows" (mm. 26-34), the left hand begins the rhythmic ostinato outlining B^b, noted above, while the right hand doubles notes at the octave in the vocal line. Then, after a brief piano interlude that features a variation of the 'old tunes' theme, the voice re-enters in mm. 45-49 with the text, "So the old tunes float in my mind." The vocal melisma that Thomas employed for the word "tunes" is another variation on the main theme and serves well to paint the aural picture of the "floating tunes."

A few measures later, in mm. 55-58, there is a sudden rhythmic change away from the persistent ostinato in the left hand, to an eighth-note pattern on $F^{\#}$ and $C^{\#}$. Meanwhile, the voice and right hand of the piano are firmly in g minor. This break from the two main patterns, coupled with clear polytonality, is evocative of the accompanying text, "Like fragrance borne on the hush of the wind" (mm. 55-61). Beginning in m. 64 and continuing through m. 73, five different hemiola patterns are introduced in the left hand of the piano, while the vocal line is doubled in the right hand, often offset by an

208Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 2.

eighth-note. In the midst of this, the singer expresses regret: "I know the laughter and the pain/Of times that will not come again," (mm. 68-74). The uneasy rhythm of this passage clearly expresses pain and loss. (Ex. 9.3)



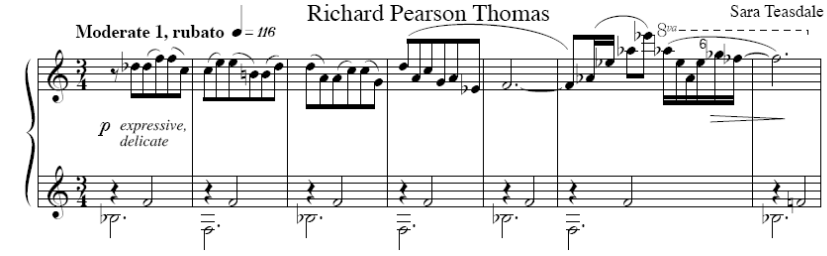
Example 9.3: Note the doubling of the voice in the right hand of the piano and the hemiola pattern in the left hand of the piano; *Old Tunes*, mm. 64-75[209]

The piano interlude (mm. 75-83) that follows, returns to the rhythmic ostinato and variations on the 'old tunes' theme and serves well as a time of reflection for the singer and the audience alike. Then, beneath the text, "Like petals of light fallen from the moon" (mm. 88-92), the voice sings a melody based on a descending chromatic line depicting the "falling petals." Meanwhile, the left hand plays a variant of the rhythmic ostinato, now with intermittent *pianissimo* staccatos and with the note values reversed in some cases. The soft brevity of the staccatos, along with their high tessitura, paints an aural picture of the "petals of light." These staccatos continue into the next phrase, "Broken and bright on a dark lagoon" (mm. 93-100), while the rhythm in the voice and right hand

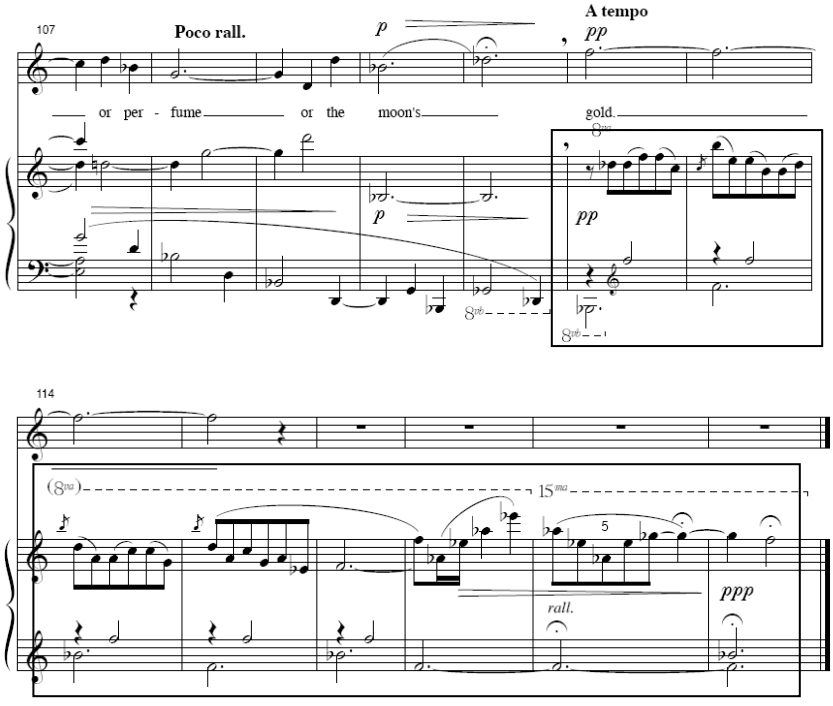
209Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 4.

of the piano is "broken" and "brightened" via the dotted-quarter notes and the high tessitura (mm. 93-94).

Finally, near the end of the piece, while the voice is sustaining a *pianissimo* F5 on the last word, "gold" (mm. 112-115), the piano plays the beginning of the prelude. Though the prelude is slightly altered in this rendering, it is still close enough to the original to serve as the means of bringing the piece full circle. (Ex. 9.4)



Mm. 1-7



Mm. 107-119

Example 9.4: Note the prelude and its re-appearance in the concluding measures; *Old Tunes*, mm. 1-7[210] and 107-119[211]

210Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 1.
211Ibid., 6.

As can be seen from the previous paragraphs, the piano carries the essence of this piece. The syllabic vocal line, while beautifully lyrical, serves mainly to deliver the text. However, the soul of this piece is in the intricate details of the piano part. The recurring motives, patterns and intervals all create a score within a score of these dear, "old tunes."

The second song in this cycle, entitled *The Ghost*, is marked "restless, sonorous." With its heavy accents, *forte* dynamics and lack of a piano prelude, the opening provides a stark contrast to *Old Tunes*. In this piece, the singer re-visits a place where she used to live. She goes there with certain feelings and expectations, but soon discovers that there is a factor she was not anticipating. The poem/text is below.

The Ghost

I went back to the clanging city,
I went back where my old loves stayed,
But my heart was full of my new love's glory,
My eyes were laughing and unafraid.

I met one who had loved me madly
And told his love for all to hear--
But we talked of a [thousand,]thousand things together,
The past was buried too deep to fear.

I met the other, whose love was given
With never a kiss and scarcely a word—
Oh, it was then the terror took me
Of words unuttered that breathed and stirred.

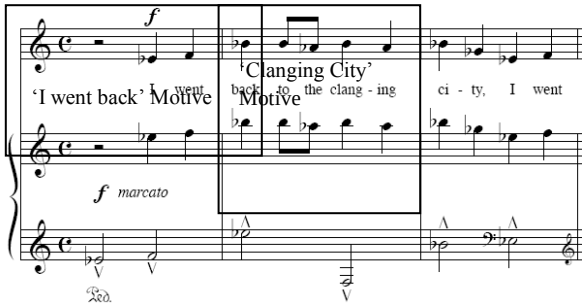
Oh, love that lives its life with laughter
Or love that lives its life with tears
Can die--but love that is never spoken
Goes like a ghost through the winding years….

I went back to the clanging city,
I went back where my old loves stayed,
My heart was full of my new love's glory,--
But my eyes were suddenly afraid.[212,213]

212Sara Teasdale, "The Ghost," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/the-ghost-2/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

After an initial downbeat in the left hand, the voice and the right hand enter simultaneously and continue with the piano doubling the voice at the octave for the first seven measures. As in *Old Tunes*, there is no given key signature. Yet, the accidentals in this piece are consistent enough to suggest certain key centers. The opening (mm. 1-7) is in E^b Dorian. The modal quality of the melody and corresponding text ("I went back to the clanging city," [mm. 1-3]) immediately evokes another time and place.

The main theme is stated in the opening vocal line in mm. 1-6 and is repeated in the voice in mm. 15-20 with only slight alterations. The first three notes of this melody, set to the text "I went back," appear by themselves elsewhere in the piece and will be differentiated from the entire theme as the 'I went back' motive. (Ex. 9.5) In addition to the repeated melodic material, the opening rhythm comes back in different tonalities a few times later in the piece. For future clarification, this rhythmic motive will be known as the 'clanging city' motive. (Ex. 9.5)



Example 9.5: Note the 'I went back' and 'clanging city' motives; *The Ghost*, mm. 1-3[214]

In m.15, the voice introduces the second stanza, which begins much like the first, but soon takes some different melodic turns. Still, the overall melodic contour of the two stanzas is similar, as is their emotional content. The second stanza ends with the words,

213Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 7-13.
214Ibid., 7.

"The past was buried too deep to fear," (mm. 24-27). Immediately following this statement, the piano plays a short interlude with a descending line (mm. 27-31), evoking the image of the descent into "the buried past." This piano interlude also serves as a buffer of contrast between the woman's two very different former lovers.

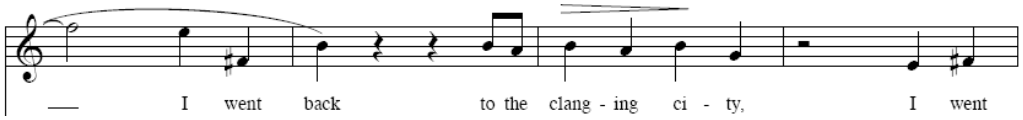
Just before the voice re-enters for the third stanza with the words, "I met the other," (mm. 34-36), the right hand of the piano plays the 'I went back' motive in augmentation. With this stanza, the music takes an entirely different turn, in a new tonality with a new melody. The melody is much more independent of the piano, which all but disappears for the first 10 measures of the stanza. Whereas at the beginning of the piece and on into the second stanza, the piano was doubling and otherwise significantly helping the voice, here the piano part plays a subordinate role with long, sustained pitches. While the first lover appears to have been rather straightforward, this second lover appears to have been moody and taciturn, neither obeying the rules, nor falling into the mold of others' expectations.

Aside from assigning the subtext for the two lovers to the piano, there are more specific instances of word-painting, as is common in Thomas' songs. For example, the word "terror" (m. 46) sounds very rich and beautiful until the voice goes up a half-step to a very dissonant $E^{b}5$ on the second beat. Then, in the next line of text, "Of words unuttered that breathed and stirred," (mm. 47-54), Thomas put a vocal melisma on the word "stirred."

Under this melisma (mm. 52-54), the 'clanging city' rhythmic motive suddenly sounds repeatedly in the right hand of the piano, forming a counter-melody that extends under the beginning of the fourth stanza. This is appropriate because this stanza begins

with memories of the open, straightforward lover (mm. 55-64): "Oh, love that lives its life with laughter/Or love that lives its life with tears/Can die." When the text moves to memories of the taciturn lover in mm. 65-74, "but love that is never spoken/Goes like a ghost through the winding years…," the 'clanging city' motive briefly disappears.

In mm. 74-87, the 'clanging city' motive returns, along with the main theme which is now a half-step higher. However, as can be seen in the example, the vocal melody is not so confident this second time. The rhythmic pattern is interrupted by several rests in-between the phrases, and the theme is no longer reinforced by the piano. (Ex. 9.6) This lack of confidence is explained in mm. 91-97, with the last phrase of text, "Were suddenly afraid." The word "afraid" is set as a G^{b}5 in the voice, which very much wants to descend to a C^{b}5—its current tonic. Instead, Thomas has the voice descend a half-step to F5. That note and the underlying dissonant harmony in the piano give the ending a beautifully eerie feeling, mirroring musically the singer's changed feelings.



Example 9.6: Note the beginning of the theme re-stated in these measures; *The Ghost*, mm. 74-77[215]

The third piece is *Child, Child*. This piece is a gentle, yet passionate exhortation to the young to live their lives according to the eternal law of love. The poem/text is below:

Child, Child

Child, child, love while you can
The voice and the eyes and the soul of a man,
Never fear though it break your heart -
Out of the wound new joy will start;

215Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 12.

Only love proudly and gladly and well,
Though love be heaven or love be hell.

Child, child, love while you may,
For life is short as a happy day;
Never fear the thing you feel -
Only by love is life made real;

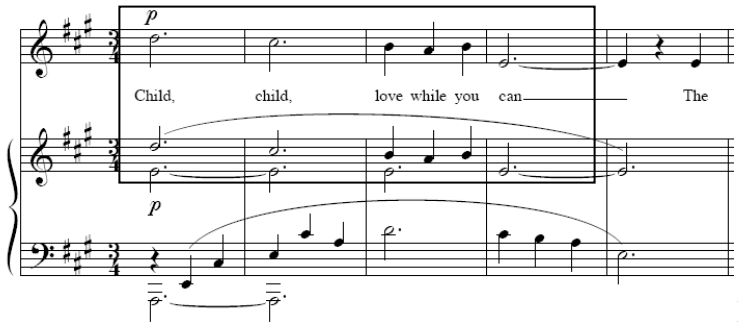
Love, for the deadly sins are seven,
Only through love will you enter (heaven)[heav'n].[216,217]

This piece begins without introduction in A major, and the first verse remains centered around that key, though there are some key changes in the middle. At the advent of the second verse, the tonal center moves down a half-step to A^b major, and Thomas elongated this verse by inserting an interlude before the last two lines of text. Though there are several tonicizations in the second verse and in the interlude, by m.80, the tonality returns to A^b major for the remainder of the piece.

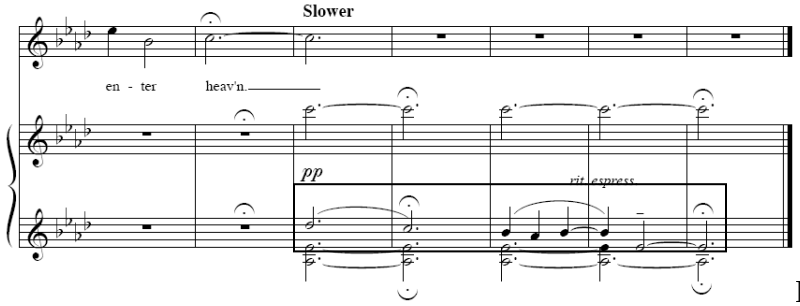
The overall form of this piece is modified-strophic, and it is quite simple and straightforward, with very little textual enhancement. The only example of word-painting worth noting is the way in which Thomas rhythmically set the word "happy" (m.41) in the second verse. The meter throughout most of this piece is in ¾, and for that word, Thomas used a dotted-quarter note followed by three eighth-notes. By setting the word with this rhythm, Thomas gave the word an appropriate uplifted feel. As a final touch of grace, as the voice is singing its last word, "heav'n," (mm. 82-83), the piano begins to softly play the opening theme. (Ex. 9.7)

216Sara Teasdale, "Child, Child," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/child-child-2/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

217Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 14-17.



Mm. 1-5



Mm. 81-87

Example 9.7: Note the theme in the vocal line at the beginning of the first verse that is re-stated by the piano at the end of the piece; *Child, Child*, mm.1-5[218] and 81-87[219]

Given the repetitive form, the quiet dynamic levels, the rocking triple meter, and the fact that the text is addressed to a child, this piece can be seen as a lullaby. What better time than bedtime for a loving parent to deliver an important life lesson to their child? At first, a lullaby might seem a little out of place in this cycle of regret and missed opportunities. However, this piece actually fits in quite well with the overall theme. It is a tender wish from an older person who suffers from regret, to spare their child the same fate.

The final piece in this cycle is the title piece *Spring Rain*. In this impassioned piece, the rain reminds the singer of a past experience of love on a stormy night. The poem/text is below:

218Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 14.
219Ibid., 17.

Spring Rain

I thought I had forgotten,
But it all came back again
To-night with the first spring thunder
In a rush of rain.

I remembered a darkened doorway
Where we stood while the storm swept by,
Thunder gripping the earth
And lightning scrawled on the sky.

The passing motor busses swayed,
For the street was a river of rain,
Lashed into little golden waves
In the lamp light's stain.

With the wild spring rain and thunder
My heart was wild and gay;
Your eyes said more to me that night
Than your lips would ever say….

I thought I had forgotten,
But it all came back again
To-night with the first spring thunder
In a rush of rain.

[Ah, I thought, I thought I had forgotten,
I thought I had forgotten…][220,221]

As with *Old Tunes* and *The Ghost*, no key signature is given at the beginning of this piece. However, unlike those pieces, Thomas did decide to use a key signature later in the piece. In the beginning, the key is indicated through other means. With the exception of two notes, the first six measures contain only the note G over a range of four octaves. Of those two exceptions, one is an A and the other is an $F^{\#}$, both of which are consistent with the key of G major. Though the reiteration of this note lends credence to

220Sara Teasdale, "Spring Rain," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/spring-rain-3/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

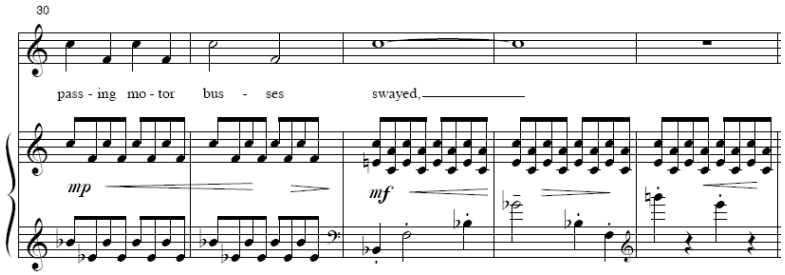
221Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 18-23, 25-27.

the fact that the opening tonal center is G, Thomas more likely used the constant repetition of G as a sonic depiction of the beginning rainstorm.

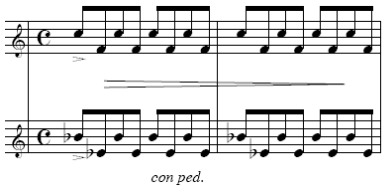
This depiction of raindrops is only the first of several notable word-painting examples in this piece. In mm. 23-24, the text is: "Thunder gripping the earth." Beneath these words, the piano plays loud major-7^{th} intervals based on G, before moving to descending quarter-note triplet intervals in the right hand (minor-7^{th}-perfect-5^{th}-tone cluster), accompanied by the sustained major-7^{th} in the left hand. At the end of the phrase, beneath "earth," a sustained D1 leaps up to an F2 which clashes with an $F^{\#}$ in the right hand. Needless to say, the "thunder" is heard, even as the word is being sung. Then, in m.28, during a brief interlude, the piano starts playing an oscillating pattern of parallel major seconds (mm. 28-31). This dissonance, along with the steady rhythm of the eighth notes, creates another aural picture, this time of the rain accumulating on the ground and flowing down the roads. Since the phrase, "For the street was a river of rain," does not occur until mm. 36-39, this is an aural foreshadowing of what has already begun and of what will continue.

The effect of the rain continues as the voice re-enters with the text, "The passing motor busses swayed" (mm. 29-33). Thomas' compositional genius is clearly seen in his setting of this phrase. While the rhythm of the "rain" (i.e. the piano) remains unchanged and steady, the rhythm in the vocal line gradually slows down. The result is a vivid aural image of the "swaying busses." In other words, the eighth-notes in the piano continue while the rhythm of the text gets progressively slower. "The passing motor" is sung on quarter notes, "busses" is sung on two half-notes and "swayed" is sustained over two whole notes. (Ex. 9.8) Also, beneath the word "swayed" (mm. 32-33), the left hand starts

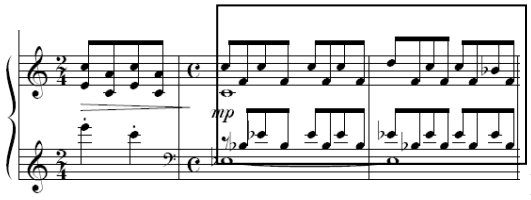
playing staccato quarter and half-notes, while the right hand plays two sets of eighth-notes, minor-6^{ths} apart. (Ex. 9.9) The staccatos could portray individual raindrops in the midst of the downpour or the sparkles of lamplight glistening on the river of rain. Thomas re-used the technique from mm. 28-31 in mm. 36-37, and mm. 38-39 (text: "For the street was a river of rain," [mm. 36-39]) are similar to mm. 32-35 (Ex. 9.8)



Example 9.8: Note the natural *ritard* in the vocal line while the piano remains steady, as well as the staccatos in the left hand which accompany the stacked minor-6th eighth-notes in the right hand in the last three measures; *Spring Rain*, mm. 30-34[222]



Mm. 28-29



Mm. 35-37

Example 9.9: Note the eighth-note parallel minor-2nds-technique that Thomas used in both of these examples; *Spring Rain*, mm. 28-29[223] and 35-37[224]

The vocal line soars to a high G at the text, "My heart was wild and gay" in mm. 54-60. Under the high G, in m. 59, Thomas began a repetition of the opening vocal melody at a *forte* dynamic level in the piano, leading to an 8-bar interlude. This melody

222Thomas, *Spring Rain: A Song Cycle on Poems of Sara Teasdale*, 20.
223Ibid., 19.
224Ibid., 20.

was associated with the text, "I thought I had forgotten/But it all came back again/To-night with the first spring thunder/In a rush of rain" in mm. 5-13. At this point, the rhythm also changes to steady quarter-note chords, reminiscent of excited heartbeats (mm. 59-66). This subtle, yet persistent melodic return serves as an unmistakable reminder of what the singer tried to forget for so many years: "Your eyes said more to me that night, than your lips would ever say" (mm. 68-79). Meanwhile, the texture in the piano becomes more sparse, making way for a slightly-varied vocal rendition of the opening (mm. 5-13) in mm. 82-92 (this time, a half-step lower, with a slightly different contour). By the time the voice enters in mm. 82-87 with the words, "I thought I had forgotten/But it all came back again," only the left hand remains, sustaining an open-5th. When the voice begins, "Tonight with the first spring thunder" (mm. 87-89), the left hand drops out, and the right hand sounds and sustains a tone cluster. It is like a sudden lull before an even stronger storm.

At this point (mm. 93-139), the piano takes over, in a new tempo and key: A^{b} major, complete with a key signature that quickly becomes obsolete due to the D-natural accidentals, which changes the key to E^{b} major. These 47 measures represent the many years that have transpired since the first rainstorm, and the piano beautifully represents the heartache caused by her regret and guilt over what she gave up. In this timeless reverie, singer and audience come face to face and heart to heart, as never before in this cycle. Interestingly, Thomas originally added the interlude simply to make the piece longer.[225]

In m.140, the voice re-enters with a heart-wrenching "Ah," which continues until the downbeat of m.147. At this point, she tries to articulate her pain, but in the end, all

225Thomas, *Appendix A*, 224-225.

she can do is repeat, "I thought I had forgotten" (mm. 147-150, 151-158 and 170-173). The piano concludes the piece (back in A^b major) via an extended arpeggiation of an A^b-chord. This coda seems to sum up the theme of the entire cycle: the melancholy of reliving bittersweet memories. Yet the ending is so beautiful, that it extends hope to the singer and to the audience. It is no wonder that this inspiring piece is both the title piece and the closing piece for the cycle.

There does not appear to be an overall *harmonic scheme* for this cycle. However, between the third and fourth pieces, there is a progression of keys that is worth noting. *Child, Child* begins in the key of A major. The entire first verse is centered around this key, before moving down a half-step to the key of A^b major. Though there are some key modulations in the second verse, by the end of the piece, we are back in A^b major. Finally, *Spring Rain* begins in G major and ends in A^b major. Thus, we have two half-step descents, followed by a half-step ascent: A-A^b-G-A^b.

As for the *form* or *growth* of these pieces, each one is different. *Old Tunes* is through-composed, but has repeated motives and achieves a kind of tonality through unconventional means. *The Ghost* has a traditional AA^1BCA^2 structure along with repeated motives. C*hild, Child*, the most traditional of the four pieces, not only has a traditional form (modified-strophic), it also has specific key signatures. Finally, *Spring Rain* is through-composed with some repeated material and a textual refrain.

Rhythmically, these pieces are relatively simple compared to some of the pieces previously examined. Whereas some of Thomas' pieces have had frequently changing meters, meter changes in this cycle are the exception, rather than the rule.

As for the *melodies* of these pieces, they are generally lyrical and melodic, though not entirely predictable. However, the right hand of the piano doubles the melodic line in the voice (mostly at the octave) quite often, giving sonic affirmation and support to the singer. Also, the *vocal ranges* for these pieces are very similar (D4-$A^{b}5$), with a medium tessitura appropriate for a lyric soprano.

This is a solid cycle, worthy of the recital stage. The pieces work well together as a recital package. They provide plenty of contrast, alternating between intimate and quiet (*Old Tunes* and *Child, Child*) and fervent and forceful (*The Ghost* and *Spring Rain*). They are well-composed and have vocal lines that show many facets of the soprano voice to advantage. They share the same poet and a universally-accessible theme: reflections on past, life experiences. All of these characteristics make this cycle attractive to performers and a wide variety of audiences.

CHAPTER X

TWILIGHT

The last soprano song cycle considered in this document, *Twilight*, was commissioned by Karen Eckenroth and Otterbein College in Ohio, where Eckenroth teaches.[226] The cycle consists of settings of three poems by Christina Rossetti: *A Birthday, Mirage* and *Song*. This cycle is set for solo soprano and piano.

Vocally, these pieces are not terribly demanding. The tessitura in *A Birthday* is a bit tiresome because it sits just high enough to be uncomfortable, but not high enough to be fun. However, the ranges (D4-A5; $C^{\#}$4-A5; and D^{b}-A5, respectively) and the tessitura of these pieces are not unusual for the soprano voice. *A Birthday* is standard in other major aspects as well. Though it might prove to be a bit challenging for younger singers, intermediate singers would be able to perform this piece successfully. However, the same cannot be said for the second and third pieces, *Mirage* and *Song*. The ever-alternating meters (many of which are uneven) in *Mirage* and the lengthy phrases in *Song* are difficult to master. Furthermore, beyond the technical difficulties, these pieces present challenging emotional content that is best left to advanced performers.

In the first piece, *A Birthday*, the singer excitedly exults in her discovery of true love. Thomas' setting of this celebratory poem is through-composed and in cut-time. See the poem/text below:

226Richard Pearson Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems of Christina Rossetti for High Voice* (Riverdale, NY: Portage Press Publishing, 2007/2008), i, 2.

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is (in)[like]a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles (in)[on]a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.
[And my heart is like a singing bird!][227,228]

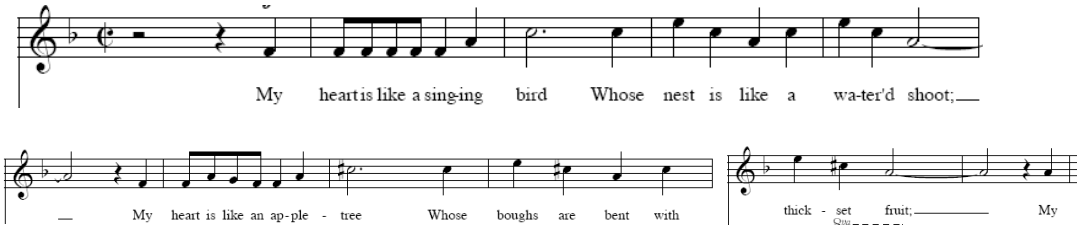
The piece begins exuberantly with a very short piano introduction in m. 1. While the F in the bass corresponds with the F-major key signature, the tremolo in the right hand of the piano (mm. 1-6) outlines *a* minor. Then, in m. 7, when the left hand takes over the tremolo technique, it outlines A major. However, from the very beginning, the harmony is more coloristic, than functional, classifying this piece as Impressionistic. Furthermore, the coloristic harmony helps portray the blissful happiness of the singer in this piece.

The voice enters just after the piano in m. 1, immediately proclaiming to the world, "My heart is like a singing bird/Whose nest is like a water'd shoot; /My heart is like an apple tree/Whose boughs are set with thickset fruit;" (mm. 1-11). Though the text indicates a person giddy with excitement, the actual melody in the voice is quite simple

227Christina Georgina Rossetti, "A Birthday," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/christina-georgina-rossetti/a-birthday/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

228Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems of Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 2-7.

compared with the rich beauty of the piano part. Measures 6-11 are essentially a repeat of the first two phrases, with an added $C^{\#}$. Together the first four melodic phrases merely outline the following triads: F-a-F-A (Ex. 10.1), while the accompanying tremolos in the piano effectively depict the excited fluttering of the singer's heart.

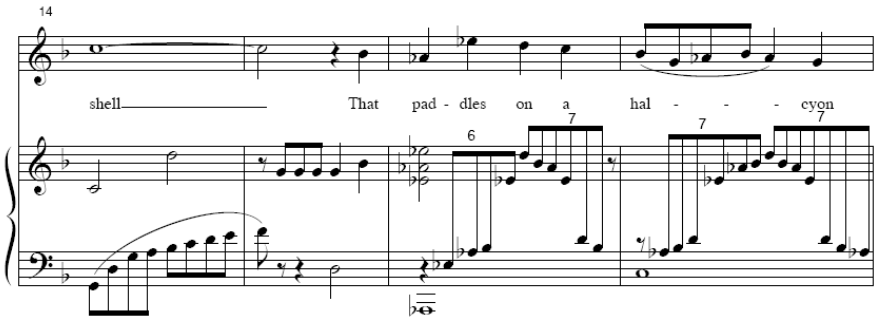


Example 10.1: Note the melody in the voice that outlines F major, *a* minor, F major and A major triads; *A Birthday*, mm.1-5[229] and 6-11[230]

After these phrases, the tremolo in the piano part disappears for several measures, but it appears again throughout the piece, usually when the singer mentions something about her heart or her love, as it has established itself as the primary means of portraying the singer's thrilled heart.

Besides the tremolos, there are other accompaniment patterns that Thomas used to aurally portray the text. For instance, in m. 15, the piano begins playing a series of arpeggios (6 and 7-note rhythmic patterns) beneath the text, "That paddles on a halcyon sea;" (mm. 15-19). Though arpeggios such as these are standard in Impressionism and are used elsewhere in this piece, here, they also beautifully portray the gentle ripples gliding across the peaceful, calm sea. (Ex. 10.2)

229Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 2.
230Ibid.



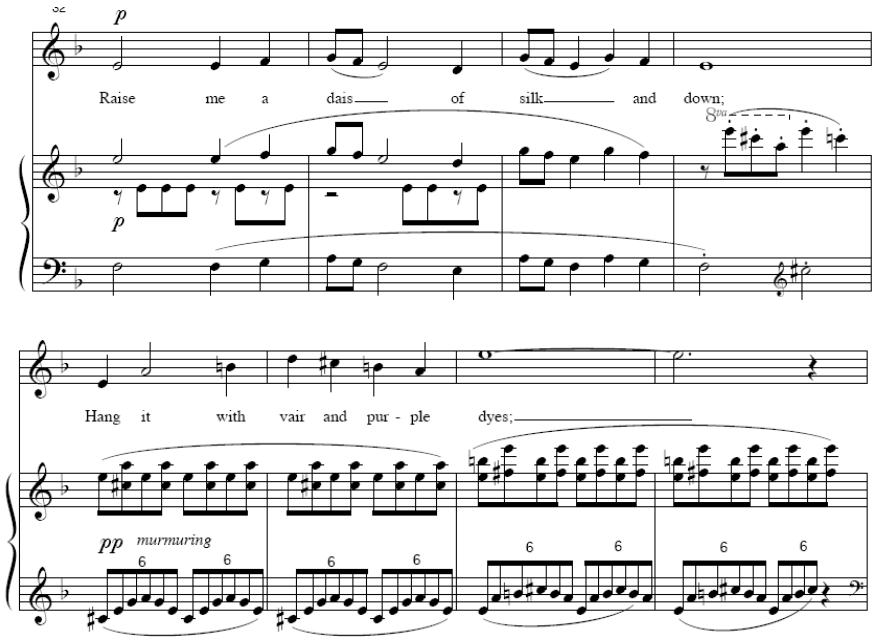
Example 10.2: Note the arpeggios in the piano part and the coinciding text; *A Birthday*, mm. 14-17[231]

As the first stanza nears its end with the text, "My heart is gladder than all these" (mm. 19-23), the voice climbs up to a G5, the highest note that has been sung so far, on "heart," as the key shifts briefly to G major. The last phrase of the first stanza, "Because my love is come to me" (mm. 23-29), is somewhat anti-climactic compared to the dramatic leap up to "heart," but the rhythm in the voice slows down with the last few words and the last word, "me," is sustained on a D5 over a tremolo in the left hand, ending verse one on an intimate, rather than exuberant note.

Another characteristic of Impressionism is the use of pentatonic scales, and the beginning of the second stanza could be an excellent example of this technique, with three different pentatonic scales: mm. 32-34 (D-E-F-G-A), mm. 36-37 ($C^{\#}$-E-G-A-B), and mm. 38-39 ($C^{\#}$-E-$F^{\#}$-A-B). On the other hand, these same measures which accompany the following lines of text, "Raise me a dais[232] of silk and down;/Hang it with vair[233] and purple dyes" (mm. 32-39), could simply be based on some sort of E tonic in a neo-tonal sense (i.e. not in the traditional sense of E major or e minor). However, given the exquisite Romantic text, the idea of having to determine the exact harmony that Thomas intended does not seem important. Moreover, the harmonic ambiguity perfectly

231Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 3.
232Note: According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, s.v. "dais," is kind of platform.
233Note: According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*, s.v. "vair," is a type of fur.

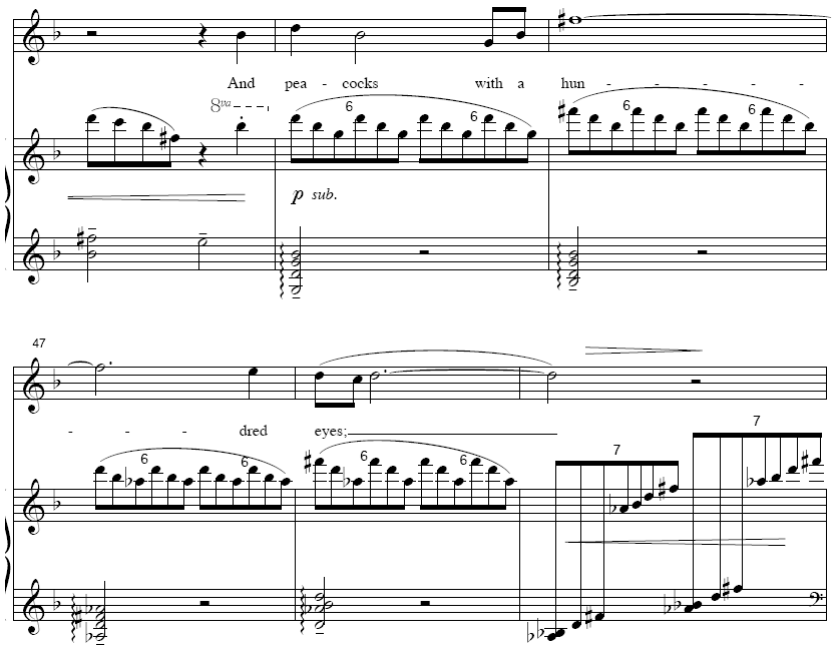
supports the vague ambiance of these lines. While it is difficult to describe concretely what makes these measures so enchanting, their indelible beauty cannot be overlooked. (Ex. 10.3)



Example 10.3: Note the coloristic piano part that flows beneath these exquisite lines by Rossetti; *A Birthday*, mm. 32-39[234]

Later, beneath the text, "And peacocks with a hundred eyes" (mm. 44-49), more 6 and 7-note arpeggios appear in the piano part, along with rolled chords. The high notes in the right hand highlight the peacocks' shimmering eyes as well as the many colors of their feathers. The Impressionistic nature of the undulating arpeggios and rolled chords also supports Rossetti's romantic text. Furthermore, these patterns and the whole-tone harmony (B^{b}-C-D-E-$F^{\#}$-A^{b}) of this section help erase the listeners' sense of reality and usher them into a colorful and ever-changing world. (Ex. 10.4)

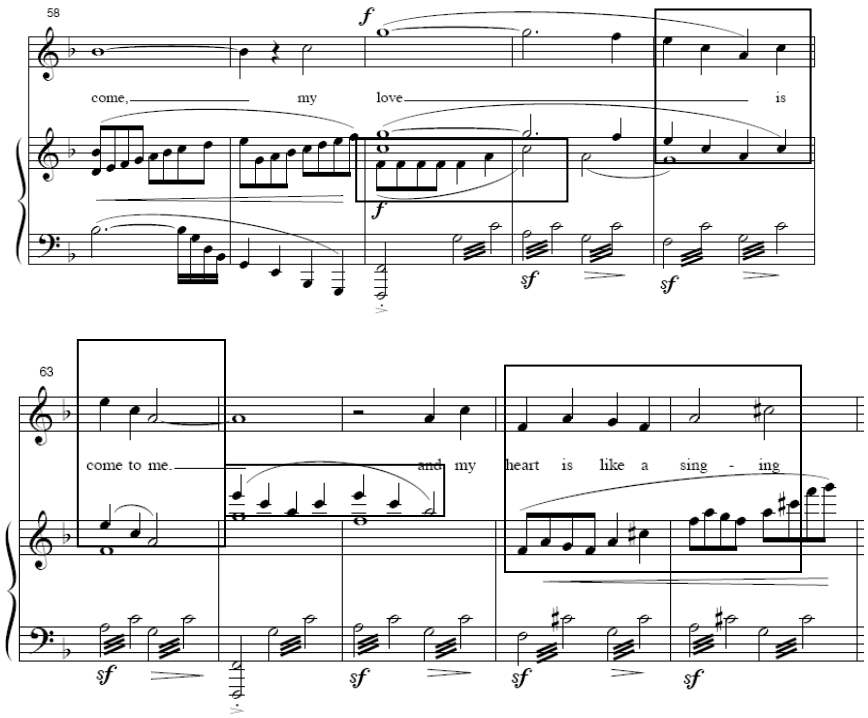
234Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 4.



Example 10.4: Note the arpeggios and rolled chords in the piano which paint the text; *A Birthday*, mm. 44-49[235]

The opening melodic lines return in mm. 60-67, only this time a bit more subtly. As the voice sustains a G5 on the word, "love" (mm. 60-61) from the phrase, "love is come to me," (mm. 60-64), the right hand of the piano outlines the opening F-major chord pattern. Meanwhile, the left hand starts the expected tremolo technique. In m. 62, the voice outlines an a-minor chord on the text, "love is come to me" (mm. 62-64). At this point, the right hand doubles the voice, before echoing the last part of that a-minor triad up an octave in mm. 64-65. In the very next measure, the right hand and the voice outline the second F-major chord pattern (mm. 66-67). (Ex. 10.5)

235Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 5.



Example 10.5: Note the re-occurrence of the opening melodic phrases; *A Birthday*, mm. 58-67[236]

The voice completes the phrase with "bird" (mm. 68-72) on a glorious, joyous high A—the climax of the piece. Unfortunately, the voice does not sustain the A5. Instead, it descends to a D5, just as it did at the end of the first stanza, outlining a d-minor chord and weakening what could have been a stunning ending. This anti-climactic vocal finish is the most disappointing part of the piece.

Meanwhile the left-hand of the piano plays a series of descending open-octave chords, while sustaining an open-5th (B^{b}-F), and the right hand arpeggiates over 4-note patterns, which again illustrates the singer's wildly-beating heart. At this point, it sounds like it should resolve to an F-major chord, but that chord does not occur until after a brief postlude (mm. 73-75), which is in an entirely different tonality. Though the brief

236Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 6-7.

excursion into another key is at first disconcerting, it actually serves to heighten the listeners' satisfaction when the F-major chord is finally heard.

The next song is *Mirage*. In this melancholy piece, marked "Mysterious," a once-hopeful singer repeatedly blames her ill fate on her inability to give up on a dream. The poem/text is below:

Mirage

The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silent harp there, wrung and snapped
For a dream's sake.

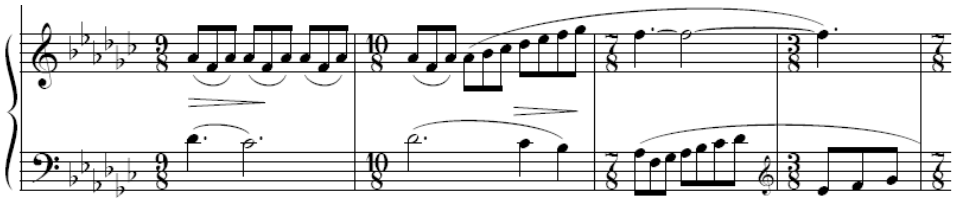
Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.[237,238]

The tonality of this piece is ambiguous, particularly in the piano prelude. The scalar patterns indicate e^{b} minor, but the cadences suggest the modal key of F Phrygian. As in *A Birthday*, the piano part dominates this piece, but in an entirely different way. In *A Birthday*, the lush romanticism of the piano overwhelms the simple vocal line. Here, the piano begins with a 24-measure prelude composed primarily of scalar patterns, particularly in the first 12 measures, that alternate between the right and left hands of the piano. These interweaving 'scalar' motives make this piece quite enchanting, despite the depressing text. Thomas indicated that he wanted these piano patterns played "legato,

237Christina Georgina Rossetti, "Mirage," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/christina-georgina-rossetti/mirage/ (accessed 7 January 2011).

238Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems of Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 10-14.

espressivo," but also "evenly." The meter changes frequently, but the eighth-note stays constant. There is no vertical element to the sound—it is entirely linear and often quite dissonant. This, together with the unstable meter in this prelude easily evokes a sense of a bleak, dreamlike state, to which the singer often refers. (Ex. 10.6)



Example 10.6: Note the scalar patterns and changing meters in the prelude; *Mirage*, mm. 5-8[239]

The linear texture and changing meters continue as the voice enters in m. 25 with the prophetic words, "The hope I dreamed of was a dream" (mm. 25-28). It continues, "Was but a dream; and now I wake" (mm. 29-30), also over a scalar pattern. Then, with the last phrase of the stanza, "For a dream's sake" (mm. 36-39), the voice jumps up to $G^{b}5$ on "dream's" and slowly descends via a melisma to an F4 on "sake."

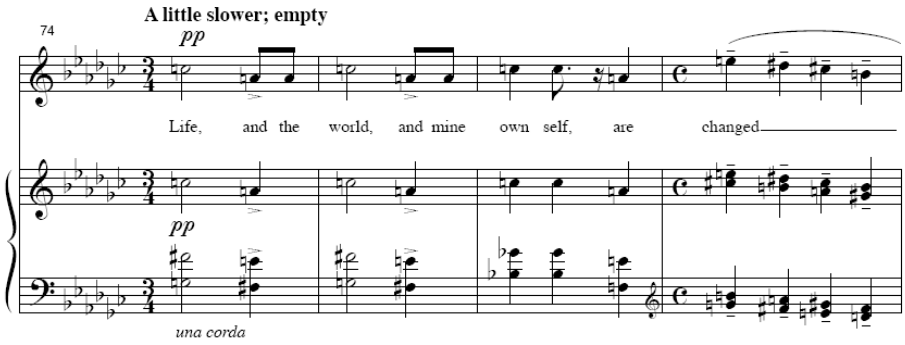
In m. 47, when the voice re-enters after a brief piano interlude, there is a palpable change in mood and text. The constantly-weaving 'scalar' motives instantly cease, the tonality changes, and the tempo is left to the discretion of the singer. Also, instead of the hazy impression of a dream, more specific words and ideas are highlighted through the music. For example, beneath the phrase, "I hang my harp upon a tree" (mm. 47-49), Thomas wrote flourishes in the piano part (mm. 48 and 49), which aurally portray the harp. Furthermore, there is a rolled chord in m. 50, which effectively illustrates the strumming of a harp. There is also a florid, arpeggiated vocal melisma on the word "willow," from the phrase, "A weeping willow in a lake," (mm. 50-53), that depicts the

239Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 8.

waving fronds. A few measures later, the voice sings the words, “wrung and snapped” (mm. 56-57) in reference to the harp. In the very next measure, the piano quickly rolls a dissonant chord, creating an aural picture of a broken, out-of-tune harp. This section ends with the phrase, “For a dream’s sake” (mm. 59-63). Once again, on “dream’s,” the voice hits a $G^{b}5$ before descending in a scalar fashion to an F4.

One of the most poignant sections of this piece comes in mm. 65-73 with the text, “Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;/My silent heart, lie still and break.” The opening words are helplessly sung on a repeated F4. With the words, “my breaking heart;/My silent heart,” the singer attempts to recover by breaking free from the static F4. Finally, the voice makes one last effort by jumping up to an F5 in the last phrase on “still” (m. 71), only to conclude the phrase by descending to a $G^{b}4$.

Thomas marked the next section “A little slower; empty.”The hopeless state of the singer is so vivid as she softly and lifelessly articulates the words, “Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed” (mm. 74-78) (Ex. 10.7) One last time, she cries out in desperation, “For a dream’s sake” (mm. 78-84), leaping up to an $F^{\#}5$ on “dream’s” and descending to an F4. Thus, in the end, all three stanzas conclude with a descending melisma that ends on F4, showing that there is no escape from the dreary hopelessness.



Example 10.7: Note the dramatic change in mood and texture here, prompted by Thomas' marking "A little slower; empty," as well as the chromatic scales in the voice and piano; *Mirage*, mm. 74-77[240]

At this point, there is a brief postlude. Though the piece appears to be back in the original tonic of e^b minor or F Phrygian, the very last 'chord', which is played very high in the piano's range, is a tone cluster (D^b5-C^b6-B^b7). There really is no conclusive ending for someone who has lost everything to an illusion.

The third and final piece in this cycle is *Song*. In this dirge-like, through-composed piece, the singer tells her beloved not to mourn her loss. See the poem/text below:

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight

240Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 14.

That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.[may forget.]
[Sing no sad songs for me;][241,242]

Each of the voices in this piece has a specific role; together they create an incredibly moving soliloquy from a dying woman to her beloved. In the piano prelude, the left hand, marked "cantando," introduces a recurring melodic motive (mm. 1-4), as well as the theme of the piece (mm. 5-8). When the voice enters and takes over the melody, the left hand continues to remind listeners of the opening motive, as well as accompany the voice with a lyrical line that contains fragments of the main melody. Meanwhile, the right hand serves as the consistent pulse of the piece, as well as often subtly doubling or echoing the vocal line.

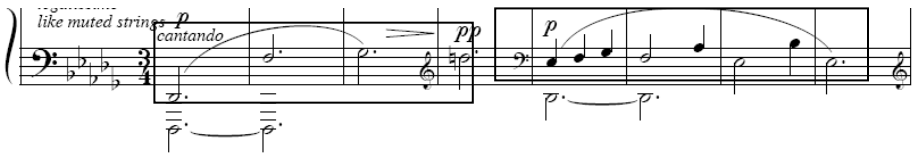
In addition to the three main voices mentioned above—voice, left hand, right hand—it should be noted that throughout most of this piece, there are either two distinct lines in the right hand or in the left hand or in both hands at the same time. Usually, the top notes in the right hand double the voice, while the bottom note or notes keep the consistent quarter-note rhythm. Meanwhile, the top note or notes in the left hand are usually lyrical, while the bottom note (the bass) serves as a pedal tone. Though most of Thomas' piano parts are quite difficult, this piece is especially so, due to the distinct lines in both hands of the piano, as well as Thomas' stylistic instructions on how he wanted these lines to be played.

This piece begins in D^{b} major. It is set in ¾ time; however, Thomas indicated the tempo in terms of the dotted-half note, suggesting that the piece be felt 'in 1' instead of

241Christina Georgina Rossetti, "When I am dead, my dearest," poemhunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/christina-georgina-rossetti/when-i-am-dead-my-dearest/ (accessed January 7, 2011).

242Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 15-22.

'3'. As mentioned above, the motive introduced in the left hand in mm.1-4 appears in the left hand throughout the piece: mm.11-14, 15-19, 32-35 and 68-71. However, in subsequent versions the first note is an E^b or A^b instead of a D^b, and in the very last occurrence, the ending D-natural is in the voice. The first phrase of text that occurs with this motive is, "When I am dead," (mm. 11-14), therefore this motive will be known as the 'When I am dead' motive. The dissonance of the D-natural that keeps recurring in this pattern has a certain bittersweet quality, much like the dying wishes of the singer. (Ex. 10.8) In mm. 5-8, the left hand introduces the melodic theme of the piece. (Ex. 10.9) The last part of this theme is immediately echoed up an octave by the piano in mm. 9-10.



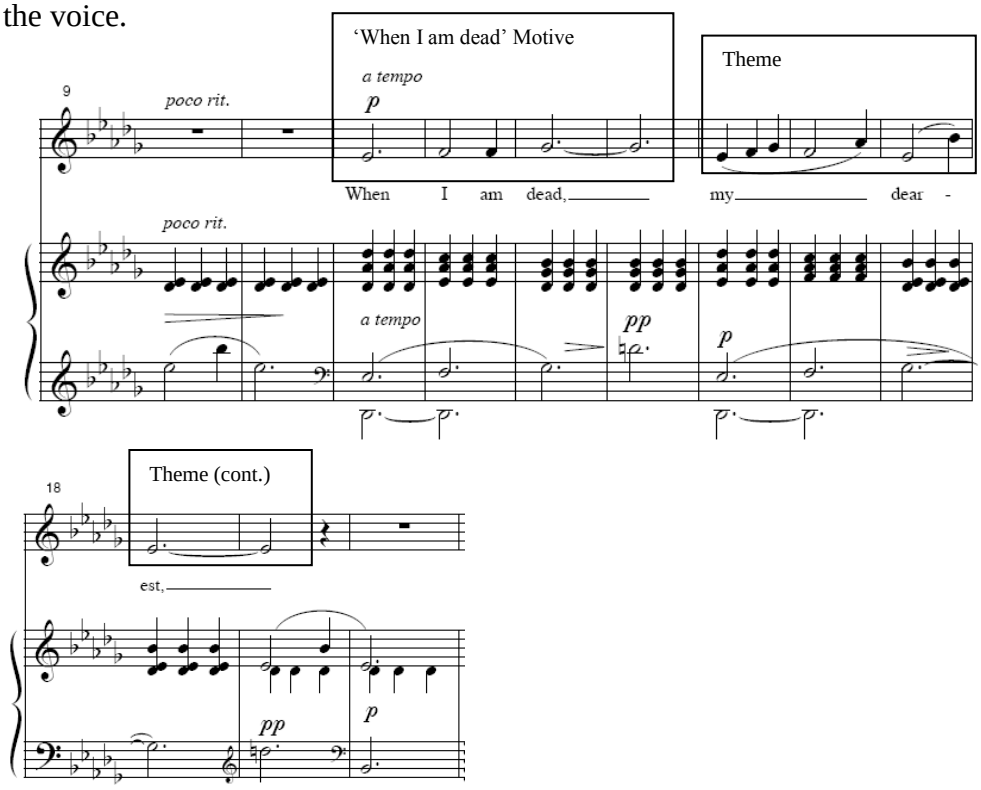
Example 10.8: Note the original 'When I am dead' motive, as well as the melodic theme in the left hand of the piano; *Song*, mm. 1-4[243] and 4-8[244]

Meanwhile, the right hand accompanies the left-hand melody with repeated quarter-note chords. Thomas instructed the pianist regarding these chords: "*legatissimo*, like muted strings," to create a beautifully-subdued and reverent atmosphere. The steady quarter-notes continue through most of the piece, many of them built on open-5^{ths} or 4^{ths}.

The voice finally enters in m.11 and sings, "When I am dead, my dearest" (mm. 11-19), first over the 'When I am dead' motive with the corresponding words and then to the theme as she addresses her beloved. (Ex. 10.9) At the same time, beneath the voice, the left hand repeats the 'When I am dead' motive twice. From this point forward, whenever the left hand is not playing the 'When I am dead' motive, it accompanies the

243Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 15.
244Ibid.

voice, usually with long, sustained lines. However, not all of these lines support the tonality or the melody; the notes in the left hand often clash with the right hand and with the voice.



Example 10.9: Note the 'When I am dead' motive, followed by the theme in the opening vocal phrase; *Song*, mm. 9-20[245]

Shortly after this, when the voice comes to the phrase, "Sing no sad songs" (mm. 21-29), the voice descends in a melismatic, dissonant scalar pattern, which emphasizes the word "sad." At the same time, while maintaining the pulse with quarter-notes, the right hand begins to double the vocal line. This continues through most of the rest of the piece.

In m. 57, when the voice re-enters after a brief piano interlude (mm. 50-56), the vocal line divides the three beats into two equal dotted-quarter notes, while the piano plays straight quarter notes. This hemiola effect continues through m. 74. The

245Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs on Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 15.

corresponding text is, “Be the green grass above me/With showers and dewdrops wet;/And if thou wilt, remember/And if thou wilt, forget” (mm. 57-78). This section is also marked, “A shade faster.” This faster tempo, along with the rhythmic variation highlights the emotional freedom the woman gives her lover.

Right after this, the voice rises above the staff for the first time in the piece, with the phrases, “I shall not see the shadows/I shall not feel the rain;” (mm. 79-91). Also, in this section, for the first time in this piece, Thomas wrote some eighth-note flourishes in the left hand of the piano (mm. 80, 86 and 89). The most poignant part of this piece for the voice comes in this section in mm. 85-91, with the text, “I shall not feel the rain.” The way that Thomas wrote the line with a sudden leap up to G5 and its neighboring A5, makes this moment truly memorable. It is a bittersweet cry of anguish that simultaneously gives hope to the singer and her beloved.

The climax of the piece arrives with the ending of the next phrase, “I shall not hear the nightingale/Sing on, as if in pain” (mm. 94-106). The texture of the piece has been building up to this point, along with the dynamics. Finally, all of the raw emotion is let loose as the voice articulates a *fortissimo* “pain” on an E5. As the voice sustains this explosive word, there is a gradual decrescendo. Though this is not the highest tessitura in the piece, the harmonic shift in mm. 102-103, along with the text and the *fortissimo* dynamics, make it climactic.

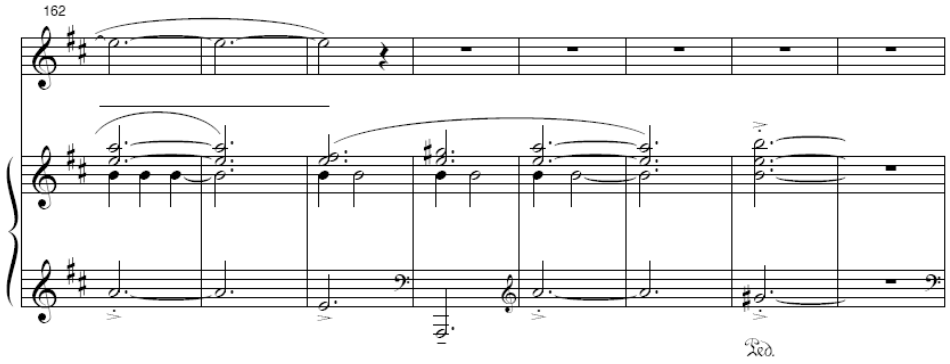
Next, for the first time in this piece and in the cycle as a whole, the title of the cycle is heard, as the voice reflectively sings the phrase, “And dreaming through the twilight” (mm. 108-112). With “dreaming,” a slow vocal descent on an E^{b}-major scale begins, continuing through the next few phrases. It does not end until mm. 129-131 on a

D-natural. Though D-natural is not diatonic to the nominal key of the piece (D^b major), it was introduced into the tonality of this piece from the very beginning with the 'When I am dead' motive. Perhaps the D-natural in this piece is a personification of death, and Thomas used it here to indicate death's impending arrival. However, in this instance, it does not seem quite as ominous as it did at the beginning of the piece, so perhaps the lovers are now more at peace with the inevitable.

The fact that the last phrase, "Sing no sad songs for me" (mm. 146-164) is relatively uneventful seems strange considering that Thomas chose to repeat the phrase (it is not repeated in the original poem). Furthermore, he stretched it out over nearly 20 measures. Similar to the first time this phrase was sung, there is a dissonant scalar descent. Previously, the scalar descent was on "sad" (mm. 23-24). This time it falls on the word "Sing" (mm. 150-151) and is a half-step higher. Beneath this chromatic descent, Thomas once again included an eighth-note flourish. Here, it likely serves to celebrate the act of singing. Besides that, the only other significant moment comes when the voice leaps up and sustains a G5 on "sad" (mm. 154-155). This may cause listeners to think that Thomas erred by re-iterating the last phrase and extending the piece for so many measures. The climax and the measures leading up to it were so glorious, it is hard to understand why he extended the piece by repeating the text.

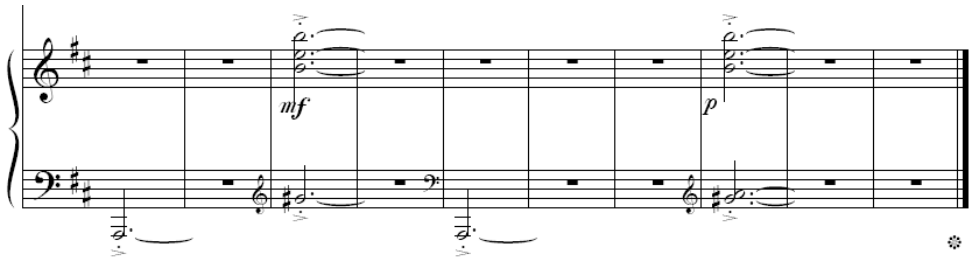
At the same time, the repetition does provide one of the most beautiful pianistic moments of the entire piece. As the voice sustains the last word, "me" (mm. 160-164), the tonal center shifts to A major, and the texture becomes very sparse. Beginning in m. 164, the top note in the right hand slowly starts climbing up from an $F^{\#}4$ to a B5 (m. 168). The B5 in the right hand is part of a quintal-quartal chord: B4-E5-B5. The left hand

contributes a G#4 beneath the chord in m. 168, creating an E-major chord in first inversion—a gorgeous effect. (Ex. 10.10)



Example 10.10: Note here a particularly exquisite section of the beautiful piano postlude; *Song*, mm. 162-169[246]

From there, the texture becomes even sparser: an A in the bass alternates with the E-major chord, separated by blank measures. The final chord comes after two measures of rest. We expect another E-major chord. Instead, Thomas combined the A with the E-major sonority, resulting in more tonal ambiguity that leaves listeners in an unresolved state, perhaps with lingering questions. (Ex. 10.11)



Example 10.11: Note the sparse texture of the last few measures, as well as the last intriguing chord; *Song*, mm. 170-179[247]

Thus, like much of the piece, the ending is bittersweet and inconclusive, yet strangely captivating. Furthermore, it makes sense that the piano was given the privilege of creating the thought-provoking ending, as the piano has been at the forefront of not

246Thomas, *Twilight: Three Songs from Poems by Christina Rossetti for High Voice*, 22.
247Ibid.

only this piece, but the entire cycle. This piece is truly beautiful and moving. Its only fault might be its length. With its moderate tempo and 179 measures, it dominates the cycle.

This cycle works well for many reasons. Beyond the obvious similarity of Christina Rossetti's poetic style, there are other similarities that help unite these pieces, as well as many differences which provide necessary contrast. First of all, with regard to the *harmonic aspect*, each piece has Impressionistic elements. The major tonal centers for all three pieces are ambiguous, and sonorities are coloristic rather than functional. In addition, Thomas employed whole-tone, pentatonic and modal scales, color chords, non-functional harmony, static sections and chromaticism—all hallmarks of musical Impressionism.

As for *form*, all three of the pieces are through-composed, but they feature recurring motives which serve to unite each piece within itself. One weakness with regard to the *form* is the inconclusive endings of the last two pieces in this cycle. With regard to the structure of the cycle, *Song* clearly dominates in terms of length. This is not the first time this has occurred in the cycles considered in this document. *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* from the *Millay* cycle and *Fever 103* deg from *Three Kisses* are also significantly longer than all of their counterparts combined.

The vocal *range* and *tessitura* are similar throughout the cycle. In fact, the vocal range for the second and third pieces is enharmonically the same: $C^{\#}4/D^{b}4$-A5, and the highest note in all three pieces is a high A. The melodic lines are generally lyric, with mostly syllabic text-setting. The *melodies* are not very predictable, but the piano, particularly the right hand, doubles the voice quite often in these pieces. Despite this

doubling, the piano part is dominant in this cycle, carrying much of the musical and emotional weight. Though the piano parts in almost all of the pieces considered in this paper are quite extensive and difficult, it is also worth noting the *range* of the piano in *Mirage*, which spans from a B^b0 to a B^b7, the largest span of any of the songs considered in this document.

With regard to the *rhythmic aspect*, the first piece, *A Birthday*, is in a fast 'cut-time' for the majority of the piece. In contrast, *Mirage* is not in any one meter for very long, and many of its meters are uneven. Finally, *Song* is written in ¾ time throughout. However, Thomas gave the tempo in terms of the dotted half-note, so it can be thought of in a 'moderate 3' or a 'slow 1.' Of the three, *Mirage* is the most difficult rhythmically-speaking, because of its ever-changing meters. However, *Song* has a hemiolic section (between voice and piano), which poses a potential coordination problem.

As for the overall *sound* of these pieces, they all have the same basic *timbre* of piano and voice, though the piano is the more dynamic partner. The prominence of the piano also creates generally dense *textures* in all three pieces, with the primary exceptions to this statement being the postludes. Finally, while the specific *dynamics* of each piece vary from section to section, in general, *A Birthday* is extroverted and exclamatory, while *Mirage* and *Song* are more intimate.

Thematically, these pieces work well together because all three are about love. A story could be written which would tie all of these pieces together into a long saga of love in celebration, disillusionment and illness. In the first piece, the love between the singer and her beloved is fresh, exciting and new, much like a 'birthday' celebration. In the second piece, the singer has discovered that her lover and their love for each other is not

all that she had imagined. She is overcome with despair at having discovered that in fact their love or their experience of love was more of a ‘mirage’ than a reality. Finally, after working through those initial issues and facing reality, the singer is ill and now shows the depth of her love by urging her lover to go on with his life after her death.

In one cycle, the performers and audience see the beginning (or ‘birthday’) of a relationship through to its ‘twilight’ hours. Cycles that can speak to audiences with real emotion, beyond the notes, rhythms and words are priceless. This is one of those cycles.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSIONS

Given the need for new American song repertoire for sopranos in the studio and recital hall, it seemed very fitting and timely to consider a still relatively unknown American composer, Richard Pearson Thomas. To date, he has completed eight song cycles for the soprano voice, in addition to many other vocal and instrumental works.[248] The purpose of this document was to unveil the unique qualities of these cycles and their worth to the soprano community, by closely examining each of them, in addition to speaking with Thomas and soprano Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, who commissioned and premiered his most well-known cycle, *Race for the Sky*.[249,250] The LaRue method[251] was used in the analysis of these cycles.

Chapter II began with a discussion of Thomas' education and career, followed by a summary of his compositional style. Given his background as an accomplished pianist, it was not surprising to discover the very large and important role of the piano in his songs. Furthermore, many of the piano parts are quite difficult—an aspect that is very inspiring, but which may initially prevent some singers from choosing his repertoire because of the need for a skilled pianist. Thomas, on the other hand, suggests that the world of art song would be a great venue for accomplished pianists. At the same time, he

248Thomas, "Curriculum Vitae," 2011.
249 Holsberg, *Appendix B.*
250Thomas, *Appendix A*, 225-228, 235.
251LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*.

acknowledges that it may be necessary, particularly for less-accomplished pianists, to omit non-essential notes from especially-difficult passages.[252]

With regard to *harmony*, the compositions discussed in this document are generally tonal, but not always in terms of traditional tonality. One of the characteristics of Thomas' writing that creates some of this tonal ambiguity is his abundant use of open-5^{ths}. While these sonorities provide a unique open aural quality to Thomas' music, they also make the tonality more difficult to determine because of the missing 3rd. These and other tonally-unclear sections of Thomas' pieces are best labeled neo-tonal because they have a key center, but not necessarily one that is defined by the rules of traditional harmony.[253] Some examples of these types of passages are found in *The Look* and *Fever 103 deg* (*Three Kisses*) and *Old Tunes* (*Spring Rain*). There are other sections of pieces or entire pieces that are atonal or polytonal. *There's a certain Slant of light* (*At last, to be identified!*) is an example of an atonal piece, and *Thursday* (*A Wicked Girl*) is an example of a polytonal piece. Finally, the last cycle considered in this document—*Twilight*—is neo-Impressionistic. Whether this choice is specific to this cycle or denotes a new direction in Thomas' compositional style, only time will tell.

Next to the major role of the piano in his pieces, Thomas' use of *melody* is his most defining characteristic. Most of the melodies in these cycles feature recurring melodic motives or fragments, perfect-5th and perfect-4th intervals and syllabic text-setting. However, some notable exceptions to the syllabic text-setting include the several melismas found in *The Owl and the Pussycat* (*A Little Nonsense*), *At last, to be identified!*

252Thomas, *Appendix A*, 233-234.
253Ibid., 219-220, 236-237.

(*At last, to be identified!*) and *How My Life Has Changed* (*Race for the Sky*). With regard to the vocal ranges of the cycles considered in this document, they all fall within soprano parameters: A3 to B5. However, the vocal tessitura of some of the pieces often sits low in the soprano voice. This is especially true of the songs in the cycle *At last, to be identified!* Finally, while many of Thomas' melodies are beautiful and memorable, they are rarely predictable. This characteristic ties in closely with the discussion of harmony: though mostly tonal, the melodies often take unexpected turns.

With the exception of a few of the pieces discussed in this document, the *rhythms* in the vocal lines are not particularly difficult. There are only a few pieces (*The Pobble Who Has No Toes* and *The Owl and the Pussycat* from *A Little Nonsense* and *Mirage* from *Twilight*, for instance) that feature several meter or tempo changes and only one piece (*Fever 103 deg* from *Three Kisses*) and a few other sections of some pieces that especially feature rhythm. For the most part, the rhythm serves the texts in a natural and meaningful way.

With regard to *sound*, most of these pieces are for voice and piano. However, three of the cycles feature a stringed-instrument in addition to voice and piano: *Three Kisses* (viola), *Race for the Sky* (violin) and *A Wicked Girl* (cello). As for dynamics, no two pieces or cycles are the same, which makes specific categorization difficult. However, Thomas' pieces fall into three basic categories: intimate, exclamatory and a mixture of both. *don't look for me anymore* (*Race for the Sky*) is an example of an intimate piece, *At last, to be identified!* (*At last, to be identified!*) is an example of an exclamatory piece, and *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* (*A Little Nonsense*) is a mixture of both styles. Among all of the cycles considered in this document, there is an expansive

dynamic range: *pppp* to *fff*. The density also varies between pieces. Though there are a few sections of some pieces that might be considered fairly dense or very sparse, for the most part, Thomas' songs fall in the center of that range. Finally, Thomas' use of open-5^{ths}, creating a more open sonority in many of his pieces, was mentioned earlier with regard to his harmonic style characteristics.

With regard to the *growth aspect* of Thomas' songs, the most common structural form is through-composed, but there are some modified-strophic pieces as well. Each of Thomas' songs has a beginning, middle or climax and ending, as do good stories. Often, his pieces begin with a piano introduction or prelude that sets up the story. From there, the performers tell the story through words and music, until a disastrous or triumphant moment is reached—the climax. Shortly after this moment or after the final climax, if there is more than one, the piece ends, usually with a piano postlude. Overall, Thomas is an effective storyteller. First of all, he sets the texts with very natural speech-like rhythms. Secondly, he often beautifully paints aural pictures of the text. Finally, he creates very poignant and moving climaxes through rises in the tessitura and dynamics and through harmonic shifts. If Thomas falls short at any point, it would be in his endings. Many of his endings are harmonically inconclusive, leaving performers and listeners with no real sense of resolution. When asked about this aspect of his songs, Thomas could not recall any particular reasons why he ended pieces in this way. He simply suggested that such endings must be part of his overall style of composition.[254]

Each of the soprano song cycles of Richard Pearson Thomas was discussed individually in Chapters III through X, according to the LaRue method[255] outlined in the

254Thomas, *Appendix A*, 236.
255LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*.

first chapter. Each chapter began with a brief background of the history of each cycle. After this, each song was examined in terms of the level of technique required to negotiate the various challenges presented. This was followed by a basic sequential analysis of each piece, with particular attention to unique and memorable moments that contributed to and that helped to define its growth. Finally, the songs and cycles were summarized in terms of their defining harmonic, structural, melodic, rhythmic and sonic characteristics.

In Chapter III, Thomas' first song cycle was discussed: *A Little Nonsense,* featuring texts by Edward Lear. The songs in this cycle are *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, *Calico Pie*, and Thomas' first art song, *The Owl and the Pussycat*.[256] In this cycle, the singer assumes the role of a children's storyteller. Though the stories are for children, the music is not simple. Moreover, due to the fairy-tale nature of the texts, the music especially needs to sound effortless, so that the audience can be fully drawn in to the imaginative world of these stories. In this cycle, Thomas has created something truly delightful for both performers and audiences. Moreover, each of these pieces has its own distinct identity, which allows them to be easily excerpted from the cycle.

In Chapter IV, Thomas' cycle of Emily Dickinson poems was discussed. The poems in this cycle are *Doubt me! My Dim Companion!*, *What if I say I shall not wait!*, *Wild Nights!---Wild Nights!*, *I never saw a Moor*, *There's a certain Slant of light* and *At last, to be identified!*. Thomas' arrangement of the poems in this order for this setting creates an emotionally-compelling and empowering story of self-discovery.[257] Musically, this cycle is no less powerful. Each piece brings forth a style and mood completely

256Thomas, *Appendix A*, 222.
257Ibid., 222-224.

different than the one before it, requiring adaptable, capable performers, who are technically-skilled and highly expressive. Having said that, most of the pieces in this cycle can be excerpted, opening up the opportunity for younger singers to enjoy pieces like *Wild Nights!---Wild Nights!* and *I never saw a Moor*. The exceptions to this are *What if I say I shall not wait!* and *There's a certain Slant of light* which are meant to proceed directly into the pieces after them.[258]

Thomas' setting of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poems, *The Road to Avrillé*, *To a Young Poet*, *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* and *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* was discussed in Chapter V. The first two pieces are short and simple, and the last piece is very long and fairly difficult. *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* falls somewhere in-between these extremes. Because these pieces were not originally intended to be sung or published together, there is very little textually that ties these pieces together.[259] However, after taking a closer look at the pieces, the major themes of love, loss and death appeared. Still, these pieces can easily be excerpted, which offers singers a variety of performance options.

In Chapter VI, the cycle *Three Kisses* was discussed. This cycle features two settings of Sara Teasdale poems (*The Look* and *The Kiss*) and one setting of a Sylvia Plath poem (*Fever 103 deg*). This is the first of the song cycles discussed in this document to be entirely commissioned.[260,261] Another defining characteristic of this cycle is the addition of another instrument—the viola. The viola enhances the disillusioned melancholy that pervades the atmosphere and attitude of the woman in these pieces. It

258Thomas, *At last, to be identified!: Songs to Poems of Emily Dickinson* , 11, 23.
259Thomas, *Appendix A*, 224-225.
260Ibid., 221.
261Thomas, e-mail message to author, March 28, 2011.

would be possible to excerpt *Fever 103 deg*, but the first two pieces do not end conclusively enough to warrant separation from the cycle.

The next cycle, *Race for the Sky*, discussed in Chapter VII, is Thomas' most popular cycle.[262] In it, he set the poems *How My Life Has Changed* and *don't look for me anymore* by Hilary North and Alicia Vasquez, respectively, in addition to a poem titled *To The Towers Themselves* which remains anonymous. All three poems were written in reaction to the tragedy of September 11, 2001. The idea for this cycle and its commission came from soprano Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, after her discovery of these poems at a display by *City Lore* in New York City in 2002. In the midst of setting the poems, Thomas added the violin, as well as a fourth piece (*Meditation*, placed third in the cycle) for the violin and piano alone.[263,264] Two particularly important performances of this cycle include one that took place a year after the tragedy at the *New York Historical Society* in New York City and one in 2004 at the *National Association of Teachers of Singing's* National Convention in New Orleans.[265] Excerption of pieces from this cycle is not recommended.

The cycle discussed in Chapter VIII—*A Wicked Girl*—was commissioned by the *New York State Music Teachers Association*.[266] In this cycle, Thomas set three short poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay: *The Penitent*, *Thursday* and *The Betrothal*. This cycle includes the cello, in addition to voice and piano. Also, of particular note is the continuous music, which also suggests that these pieces should be performed together as

262Thomas, *Appendix A*, 235.
263Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 247-248.
264Thomas, *Appendix A*, 226.
265Holsberg, *Appendix B*, 242-248, 250-251.
266Thomas, *Appendix A*, 221-222.

written.[267] In this cycle, the singer, as "the wicked girl," relays her trials via a monologue and two one-sided conversations.

The cycle *Spring Rain* was discussed in Chapter IX. This cycle of four Sara Teasdale poems (*Old Tunes*; *The Ghost*; *Child, Child*; and *Spring Rain*) was commissioned by soprano Hope Hudson.[268] The theme of this cycle is regret, and through his compositional prowess, Thomas poignantly highlights the woman's bittersweet memories from her past. The last song, *Spring Rain*, is worth particular mention, because of its dramatic beauty. One of its particularly moving passages is an extended piano interlude where Thomas captures all of the emotion that has been building up inside the woman's heart. Any of these songs could be excerpted from the cycle.

Finally, in Chapter X, the last cycle in this document—*Twilight*—was discussed. It was commissioned by Dr. Karen Eckenroth and Otterbein College of Ohio.[269] This neo-Impressionist cycle features Thomas' settings of three of Christina Rossetti's poems (*A Birthday*, *Mirage* and *Song*) and traces a love story from its beginning to its end. Because of this thematic through-line, these pieces are more powerful in the context of the cycle, but there is no fundamental reason why they could not be excerpted.

Having considered Thomas' compositional style and these soprano song cycles in the order in which they were written, over a time span of about 26 years, a few general conclusions can be drawn regarding the evolution of Thomas' compositional style. First, it is clear that *The Owl and the Pussycat* (*A Little Nonsense*) is one of Thomas' earlier art songs because of the way in which he set Lear's text. While one of Thomas' strengths is natural text-setting, *The Owl and the Pussycat* is somewhat of an exception. There are

267Richard Pearson Thomas, e-mail message to author, October 5, 2009.
268Thomas, *Appendix A*, 221, 225.
269Ibid., 221, 223-224.

several melismas throughout the piece that do not serve the text well. In fact, they interrupt the line, distracting both the performers and listeners from the text and making the piece more difficult to sing. With the exception of the somewhat awkward melismas in *How My Life Has Changed* (*Race for the Sky)*, this type of cumbersome text-setting is not seen again in the cycles discussed in this document.

Secondly, as noted in the biography in Chapter II, Thomas' first vocal compositions were in the musical theatre genre. As such, it is not surprising to see some of Thomas' musical theatre background transfer over into his art song compositions. For instance, in *The Owl and the Pussycat*, the pianist is made into a character, with a spoken line. Then, in *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, Thomas included character instructions for the singer. While the texts of these fairytale-like pieces lend themselves to specific characters more than the texts of some of Thomas' other pieces, it is still worth noting these instances because these were two of Thomas' early art songs. Moreover, character cues do not occur in any of the other cycles examined in this document, including *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*, which is somewhat similar to those pieces.

Next, another musical theatre aspect that is found in many of Thomas' pieces are recitative-like sections. Some examples of these types of sections are found in mm. 38-39 and 82-89 in *The Owl and the Pussycat* (*A Little Nonsense*) discussed above, as well as in mm. 99-117 of *Fever 103 deg* (*Three Kisses*), mm. 49-53 of *To The Towers Themselves* (*Race for the Sky*) and mm. 238-245 of *How My Life Has Changed* (*Race for the Sky*).

Finally, two of Thomas' early pieces, *The Pobble Who Has No Toes* and *Calico Pie* are in modified-strophic form, while only one of the pieces in the next cycle (*At last, to be identified!*) is in that form. Five out of the six pieces are through-composed instead.

Based on this small sample of pieces and cycles, it would be easy to incorrectly conclude that Thomas only used the modified-strophic form early on. However, later cycles, such as *Race for the Sky* and *Spring Rain* each have a modified-strophic piece. Therefore, the form of any given piece does not appear to be a reliable indicator of the evolution of Thomas' compositional style.

In addition to the fact that these cycles were written for women (specifically, the soprano *fach*) and most of them were commissioned by women (by sopranos or for sopranos), almost all of the texts of these cycles were written by women, with the exception of *A Little Nonsense* (Edward Lear) and possibly the author of the anonymous poem, *To The Towers Themselves* (*Race for the Sky*). As such, these cycles are extremely appropriate and fitting for women to learn and perform.

When asked about his thoughts on other *fachs* singing these cycles, Thomas was not opposed to the idea, but he did readily point out that the texts of some of these cycles lend themselves more to women than they do to men. Two cycles, in particular, that he pointed out in this regard were *A Wicked Girl* and *A Little Nonsense*. On the other hand, he thought that the cycle *At last, to be identified!* could be sung by male voices, without there being any particular gender inconsistencies. Furthermore, he thought that the piece *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* (*Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*) might actually be more appropriate if sung by a male voice because it is narrated by a boy.[270] Based on this reasoning, it would also make sense for the other pieces in the cycle *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay* to also be sung by a male because *To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* is also written from a male perspective, and the other two pieces in that cycle, *The Road to Avrillé* and *To A Young Poet*, are gender neutral.

270Thomas, *Appendix A*, 231-233.

Another gender neutral cycle is the last cycle *Twilight*. On the other hand, *Three Kisses* and *Spring Rain* are clearly from the perspective of a woman.

Because three of the cycles considered in this document also include a stringed-instrument (*Three Kisses*, *Race for the Sky* and *A Wicked Girl*), there was also a question of whether or not there might be timbre or voicing issues if male voices sang these particular cycles. On this point, Thomas did not think that there would necessarily be any issues. He went on to point out that *Race for the Sky*, which includes the violin, would actually probably be better for male voices. The violin in *Race for the Sky* is often in the soprano range, if not on the very same notes as the soprano throughout the cycle. Male voices would be in their own distinct range, with their own distinct timbre and would not have to deal with the possibility of not being able to be distinguished from the violin. [271]

Finally, as was noted earlier in the discussion of the vocal tessitura of the songs in these cycles, *At last, to be identified!* lies particularly low in the soprano range. Because of this, it seemed that perhaps that cycle might be more appropriate for mezzo-sopranos than for sopranos. In an interview with Thomas, this idea was suggested. While Thomas was not opposed to mezzo-sopranos singing the cycle, he did make a note of the fact that when he wrote the cycle, he envisioned the color of the soprano voice.[272] Thus, while these cycles were originally intended for the sopranos and in most cases, may still work better for them, these cycles are not exclusive to the soprano *fach*, which further enhances the value of these cycles in the world of art song.

This document examined eight song cycles for soprano written by contemporary American composer and pianist, Richard Pearson Thomas. In the near future, Thomas

271Thomas, *Appendix A*, 231-233.
272Ibid.

will be completing yet another cycle for the soprano voice which was commissioned by soprano Hope Hudson. This cycle will include three songs—settings of poems by Elsa Lasker-Schüler which have been translated by Janine Canan.[273]

At their core, these cycles have much in common. The essential characteristics of harmony, melody, rhythm, sound and growth were outlined in the discussions of Thomas' overall compositional style. Each cycle also brings something fresh and exciting not only to this small sample of Thomas' repertoire, but also to the palette of American soprano repertoire. These cycles range from playful to heart-wrenching, from timelessly-beautiful to raw and gutsy. Performers and audiences will be enriched through these cycles—they are treasures that are just waiting to be explored further.

273Richard Pearson Thomas, e-mail message to author, September 23, 2011.

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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTIONS OF RICHARD PEARSON THOMAS PHONE INTERVIEWS

October 16, 2009:

Richard Pearson Thomas (RPT): Hello?
Laura Bateman (LB): Hi. Is this Mr. Thomas?
RPT: Yes, it is.
LB: Do you mind if I put you on speaker phone?
RPT: No, that's fine.
LB: Hi. How are you doing?
RPT: I'm fine. How are you?
LB: Well, it's been a bit rainy today, but otherwise good.
RPT: I'm sure. Well I imagine that it's not as cold as it is up here.
LB: No, definitely not.
RPT: Well, where would you like to begin?
LB: Well, I would like to start talking a little bit about your childhood, whether you came from a musical family, when you first started thinking about composition, all that kind of stuff.
RPT: Okay…I did not really come from a musical family. My parents…were…they listened to music, but not really classical music. So, there was music around the house…but…they themselves were not musicians…or players. I did have an aunt who was a cocktail pianist, but she was in California, so there was no influence there. I had a, I guess, would have been my great-grandfather was supposedly quite musical…but he died well before I was born, so…there were no real musical influences directly…
LB: Growing up?
RPT: …when I was a kid…but I always listened to music. I was always interested and…it was mostly musical theater at that point. But I always, I was a big listener even from a pretty early age, so I think that was how my original musical interest and talent was, was manifesting itself.
LB: Okay. Did you, when did you start playing an instrument or singing? Was that later then?
RPT: Let's see, I really started…when I was about seven years old, I think…was when I started taking piano lessons. I was…yeah before then, I would listen to things and I'd dance to them or whatever, but…it was…I think I was probably seven years old when I really started taking lessons.
LB: Okay. Are you there?
RPT: Yes?
LB: Oh, sorry, it, it beeped here, and I wasn't sure if I had lost you or not.
RPT: Oh, no I'm still here.
LB: Oh, okay. Did you have siblings too that, that were interested in music at all, or was it pretty much just you?
RPT: Yeah, it was pretty much just me. My, my sister did also take piano lessons…but she didn't have the same sort of interest…as I did.
LB: Okay, and you just had the one sister?
RPT: Yes.
LB: Okay. Did you take other instruments when you were younger?
RPT: No, I didn't. I mean I took clarinet for two weeks because my friend was playing in the band, and then I was like "Ew" I don't like this. And I did play the string bass, in high

school, badly, but that was because in order to play in, in festival, you had to be playing in one of the groups…In order to play piano in festival, so they gave me a string bass, and I faked it for awhile. So, yes, yeah, that was the extent of my, my non-piano sort-of work.
LB: Okay. Did you, where, where did you grow up?
RPT: I grew up in Great Falls, Montana.
LB: Oh, okay. Does your family still live there? Is that why you go back and visit?
RPT: Yeah…my parents are still alive…and they still live there. Yes that's where I did all my…
LB: Now, that's Grey Falls? Is that Great Falls or Grey Falls?
RPT: Great.
LB: Great Falls.
RPT: At one time they were very big.
LB: Oh, okay. (laughter)
RPT: A lot of dams on the river.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: Yep.
LB: And then, I assume you went to high school there as well?
RPT: Yes.
LB: Okay. And then when did you leave the state? Was that when you went to college?
RPT: Well, I actually went to college for two years at University of Montana.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: So I went there for two years and then I transferred to the Eastman School of Music.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: So, off…officially, I got my degree from Eastman.
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: …but I started in Montana.
LB: Okay. Did you ever do any kind of compo…composing when you were a child…playing around on the piano or anything or was that mainly once you went away to college and started…?
RPT: No, I was doing that from a very early age. I was writing my first pieces when I was ten years old. And then like all through junior high school and high school I was writing lots of piano music and…
LB: Oh, okay. So is that, is that when you kind of decided that that is what you wanted to do or was that something just a hobby at that point?
RPT: No, no, it was, it was more than a hobby.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah.
LB: …but you said it was mostly piano music, you said, right?
RPT: Yeah, I was mostly writing piano music.
LB: Sure, okay. So would you say that, at that point you had ambitions to be a composer or…?
RPT: Yes, I did.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Definitely.

LB: Were there any particular composers or people that influenced you during your childhood that you would say "Oh, yeah, I can point to that," or, or was it pretty much ….You said there weren't a lot of musical influences from your family…but, was there anyone, what, did your piano teacher influence you quite a bit or…?
RPT: Well…yes. I mean my piano teacher…the, the thing with my piano teacher is that she, you know she had to tame me in a way because when I came to her, I didn't have any technique or any interest in practicing, like most kids, right?
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: So…what I got from her, was a foundation of…technique and not just, not just playing the piano, but also with me in being able to read music and to understand it…that sort of thing.
LB: Sure.
RPT: But I wouldn't say that she influenced me deeply in terms of what I was listening to…when I was a kid, because…especially starting in, in junior high school. I was an averation listener. I mean I wanted to hear everything. I was…I was desperate to hear all the classical music, so I was buying records all the time…because I was, was just very, very curious. I wanted to hear it all. So…and, and you know, at that point, it was really classical, but I…I just listened to everything that I could get my hands on.
LB: Sure. So you didn't have any particular composers in…that you really wanted to hear, just everything, you wanted to hear everything?
RPT: Yeah, I wanted to hear everything, but I mean, I certainly had my favorites, and I had ones that didn't speak to me as much….I was a big Beethoven fan, because…Beethoven wrote for the piano and…and…great piano music and…I mean I loved Mahler when I was a kid. And, and…I didn't listen to opera though, and this is interesting. I didn't really listen to opera or vocal music.…and I mean this is mainly what you're writing about.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: I did, I did…once I got to high school, and I started maybe doing a little accompanying…and I, I definitely played for the musical theatre productions and what have you, but I wasn't that interested in classical singing….And in fact, you know, I would listen to Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, and he put those voices in it and it was going so well and "Oh…", all of a sudden there was all that catterwalling from the soprano. It, it took me awhile. It, it wasn't really until I got to college that, that I, you know, found my way into classical vocal music. I was, musical theatre, yes…I was totally into that…all through, through high school, but not…not…
LB: Opera.
RPT: …opera.
LB: Okay, so then at Eastman…did you have, did you study with a particular composition professor there that really influenced you, or was it, was it a wide array of teachers there?
RPT: Probably the person that I would mention first would be, probably the teacher who had the most influence on me overall…in all my years of studying, was my piano professor at the University of Montana.…and that was a man named George Hummel…and he was…he was very, very…what's the best word? I want to say ecumenical. (laughter) He, what I was studying with him, was not just piano music or playing the piano. He was very…encouraging to me or telling me constantly to go listen

to music and to see the connections between what…what piano composers were writing and what other people were writing…at the same time, and so there was a certain amount of historical perspective…and that, it would be at that point when I started to listen to opera because he would say things like, "Oh, if you look at this section in Chopin here…he's doing an harmonic progression that predates Wagner by 20 years, 20/30 years,"…so, he would say, "You better get across the hall to the music library and listen to *Tristan und Isolde* because you need to know what that is."And like I said, I was still very curious and I wanted to hear everything and all that, so…he had a huge influence on me because he was so passionate and specific about having me listen…so he had the greatest impact on me of any of my college professors.
LB: Okay, and how do you spell "Hummel", is that "H-U-M-M-E-L"?
RPT: That's right.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah. J. George Hummel. That was…his name.
LB: J. George Hummel.
RPT: At Eastman, I studied with two, because I was only there for two years, because I was a transfer student…I studied with Samuel Adler…and I think he still teaches at Juilliard, and he's famous for his orchestration book…and a man named Warren Benson. So those were my two composition teachers at Eastman.
LB: Okay, so you didn't, did you continue to study piano at Eastman or not…?
RPT: I did. I did study piano, except I transferred to Eastman as a…I transferred to Eastman as a composition major…I was of course, they gave, I was given a secondary piano teacher…which was not really acceptable for me…cause…I mean I had been active in playing concertos and all that stuff like that too…so actually my senior year, I…I studied with a teacher named Frank Glaser, who was one of the main piano teachers and in terms of actual scoring and all that, I actually graduated with a double degree. But…I was officially a composition major…none of those, none of the teachers at Eastman had the impact on me that…Professor Hummel had.…the, the, the one professor who I would say had an influence on me at Eastman was Robert Spillman. Do you know Bob Spillman, that name at all?
LB: I know the name. I don't know him…
RPT: You know, he was at Aspen for years, he taught in…Colorado at, at…Fort Collins? No, Boulder…
LB: Boulder? That would make sense.
RPT:…and he was my accompanying teacher because I took, my senior year I took his class and studied with him and that opened up a whole world to me and that's when I started to be, be more interested in classical vocal music.
LB: Sure, okay…why did you decide to transfer? If…I know you really liked your piano professor at Montana, was it mainly to get a, a little wider education at Eastman or…?
RPT: Yeah, what happened was, I was, I was studying composition with a man named Donald Johnston who was an Eastman graduate…and he didn't feel that he had enough to offer me. He felt that I needed to be in a bigger place…where…where I could be challenged, and so he encouraged me to go to Eastman, and, and Mr. Hummel was actually retiring at that time anyway…So, the timing was…in fact, he stayed on an extra year because I was his student…And so, you know, he was really going to be retiring and, and…also, I was itching to get out…to get into the, into a bigger pond.

LB: Sure, sure. So, overall, would you say that you really…you loved Eastman and the education you got there?
RPT: No, but I would say that, and you know, I don't want you to write that, " Oh, he…"
LB: Oh, no.
RPT: What Eastman gave me were professional contacts, which serve me to this day.
LB: Sorry, my phone just beeped again, you said that Eastman gave you…?
RPT: Professional contacts.
LB: Professional contacts, sure.
RPT: Yeah…cause…it's just, you're, it's an, it's on another level and…I have met people that have had a really major impact on my career…as a result of going to Eastman that I just would not have gotten if I had stayed at, in Montana.
LB: Sure, sure. So, then once you graduated…did you immediately just start getting commissions for compositions, or how…
RPT: No.
LB: …did you get into that?
RPT: Yeah, that's a good question. I didn't get any, well that's not true…what happened, I, I took a year off, and I travelled…and then went back to Eastman…where the opera department staged a cabaret show of my, of my cabaret songs?
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: And, then, I went to the Aspen Music Festival, so that would have been 1980…and I was going to move to New York, and I did move to New York…but right away, the Banff Center in Canada. Have you heard of the Banff Center?
LB: Uh-huh. I've heard of it.
RPT: Yeah, it's a great place, and at that time, they were starting a musical theatre program.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: So…I, because I had just gone to Eastman and done, they'd done this show of mine…like I said, these professional contacts, that's what it's all about…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: Richard Pearlman, who was then the director of Eastman Opera, recommended me to these people in Canada, and so I ended up going up, and they also hired me as a coach because they needed another set of hands there at work…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: And so, my first professional commission came from the Banff Center. Over several years, I wrote several shows….they actually commissioned…musical theatre pieces.
LB: Okay, okay.
RPT: And so those were my first commissions right out of college. So, I was lucky, I mean, to be completely honest, to get…that sort of attention right away.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: It was also good for me because I was young and, and it was far from the public eye, really, you know, um, it wasn't like putting something on in New York City that was going to be torn apart by the critics…
LB: Right, right…
RPT: So it was a good place to learn and to get paid for it…that was very good. And in terms of my songs and what have you, that was a process because what ended up

happening was, I would play recitals for people…and then eventually I would say, "Will you sing a song of mine?" and then eventually it sort of turned into, "Yes, I will play your recital, if you sing a song of mine."…which, then that eventually morphed into people commissioning me to write music. Because it got to a point where you know, I didn't, and once, once you're on that level, you know, I just don't…people just don't just say, "Will you write me a song?" anymore…it's on commission basis at this point…but that's a process over years…It takes years to get there.
LB: Did you find that you were…did you work odd jobs to support yourself during that time or were you were able to…?
RPT: As, as a pianist…as a pianist. So I was still a musician, I was working as a musician, but, I wasn't really making much money from composing.
LB: Okay. Did you find that…so basically you started off with musical theatre and then it sort of became more song compositions. When did you write all of your other instrumental pieces? Was that, was that kind of the same? Did that work out the same way as your…?
RPT: Yeah, my instrumental music, I have actually been writing more of that in recent years.
LB: Okay.
RPT: For years, I was really only writing theatre or vocal music.
LB: Okay.
RPT: And then…I needed to challenge myself, and I was getting tired of only setting text…so now, I am writing more instrumental music, and I am really enjoying it. And I, I, I'm hoping to have more opportunities…
LB: Great.
RPT: …to do that.
LB: Do you have…particular instruments that you like composing for?
RPT: Not necessarily.
LB: Just anything?
RPT: You know, I'm working on an orchestra piece now…I mean, I love writing for strings. It's hard to get things played by strings though because there is so much great music already.
LB: Sure.
RPT: I have a commission on my plate right now for saxophone. They'll play anything….You're more likely to get some commissions for these other instruments, but, I'll write for anything.
LB: Sure. How would you describe your compositional style? Do you have a particular overall style or would it, does it vary from piece to piece?
RPT: I think it varies from piece to piece, but I would say that my music, is…tonal-centered music….I'm writing in that tradition of tonal linear music.
LB: Sure.
RPT:…And at Eastman, oh my gosh, I was told I had to write in this other way…and I did, but I just don't think that any of that music was very good. (laughter)
LB: (laughter)
RPT:…Like my, my atonal, tear-it-apart…so quote-on-quote modern music, which really isn't modern anymore…because it's been written that way for 60 years now…but, it wasn't, it wasn't good. So, I thought…that, that, that was actually very interesting, Laura,

like…at Eastman, of course at the time, it was the late seventies, and we were expected to write in this atonal, jagged sort of way. And like I said, I wasn't good and so that's why when I moved to New York, I was going to go into musical theatre. I just thought, I'm going to go totally away from classical music…because the way I write classical music is not what they want to hear now…I certainly never won any awards for…because I wasn't writing in the prevailing style.
LB: Sure.
RPT:…it is sort of ironic that in fact, I've had more success writing concert music than I have writing, than I have writing musical theatre. You can never predict.
LB: Right, right….Is there any particular composer…I guess in the last…when you first started composing to today that you particularly…admire or emulate? Or, do you, do you just…?
RPT: I wouldn't say that I emulate any of them, but I mean, I mean I'm certainly an admirer of John Corigliano. I mean you're talking about living composers…that are still writing?
LB: Sure, I mean it could be people that are no longer here.... but John Corigliano you said?
RPT: Yeah, yeah I mean, he's just the real thing…but I liked a lot of John Adams music. I'm getting a little tired of it. I think, it seems to be a lot of the same thing over and over again. But, I really liked his early music a lot…of the living guys, but it's hard to say of the dead composers, there is something that can be taken from virtually all of them.
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: And in terms of musical theatre, Stephen Sondheim…
LB: Oh, right.
RPT: …the, the "Holy Grail", you know, and I've always been a huge fan of Leonard Bernstein, because of that, sort of going between the worlds…which I was kind of doing and am still kind of doing in a way.
LB: Sure, sure. Now, it looks like…you've written a number of pieces for soprano. Did this happen because a lot of sopranos have been commissioning pieces or do you particularly like writing for the soprano voice? Or how does that work?
RPT: It's…it's…it's a, those are mostly commissions.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…not that I…don't like sopranos, absolutely…
LB: Sure.
RPT: …but you know, most singers are sopranos.
LB: True…
RPT: Did you, I mean if you look at the list, there have been a number of commissions from the same people or the same group.
LB: Sure…
RPT: That's the way it works. But I'm, I'm happy to write for any voice type. I like them all.
LB: Sure…I wanted, I just wanted to go backwards just a little bit before we move on to the…song cycles that I am looking at…
RPT: Sure.
LB: Would you say that you had a first composition that you would really say that was my first big composition? Would it, would it have been as a child or even later? That you

would say "that was my first composition, my major," maybe not even published, but something that you really felt good about?
RPT:…I don't know, I would have to think about that question…because I think it's a moving target, quite frankly.
LB: Okay.
RPT: You know, I might have felt great about the piece that I wrote…
LB: At the time…(laughter)
RPT: …called "The Bridge" the first thing I really wrote down…but was that a life-changing moment? I mean, again, I guess I can't really answer that one.
LB: Okay. How about, what was the first composition that, that actually got published?
RPT:…what was my first piece to get published, was probably "Aids Anxiety".
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: Yeah, I think that was probably the first.
LB: Is that something that you would consider one of your favorite compositions too, or do you have any favorites?
RPT: No, I don't have favorites.
LB: You don't have favorites. Okay. (laughter)
RPT: I have some pieces that I would now wish were not out there…that are not favorites, but…no, I, I was very happy with that piece, I was very happy, it was part of the "Aids Quilt Song Book." The original performance was a big success, and…I have very happy feelings about it, in spite of the dark subject matter, but…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: It's…no, it's not a favorite.
LB: Okay. Moving on to the, the song cycles that I am going to be looking at…I noticed that most of them, you set the poetry of women…is that, did that specifically have to do with the fact that you were writing for women or was that, you just really enjoyed, enjoyed their poetry?
RPT: Well, that's not necessarily my choice.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT:…I mean at first, you know, like *Edna St. Vincent Millay*, those were my choices…those…but the…I'm not sure what all you have on your list there, but like the settings of *Three Kisses* for, with viola…? Those were all women poets. That was very specifically Diana Tash who commissioned…the cycle. Those were her…choices….Same with the Christina Rossetti pieces, that I wrote for…Karen Eckenroth.
LB: Sure, okay…
RPT: It's called…
LB: *Twilight*?
RPT: *Twilight*….That was her….What else is there?
LB:…*Spring Rain*, Sara Teasdale?
RPT: *Spring Rain*…that was Hope Hudson.
LB: Hope Hudson…okay.
RPT: A colleague of mine and friend of mine who…she definitely wanted Sara Teasdale.
LB:…So you're saying *A Wicked Girl* which was the…
RPT: *A Wicked Girl*, yeah, that would be my choice too. But, ironically, it was either going to be her or Dorothy Parker….So, it would have been another woman.

LB: Sure.
RPT: But…you see that was a commission where they wanted something that was going to be funnyish or upbeat…and…then they were pushing Dorothy Parker, but I just don't, I don't find her amusing, so…I wouldn't say *A Wicked Girl* is funny, but it's a…it's…it was light….
LB: Sure, sure. Now, how about um, *A Little Nonsense*, Edward Lear…? Is that…that wasn't commissioned by anyone in particular? I didn't…
RPT: Well, that was, that was a, a case where this was when I was on the cusp of being commissioned…And it was a singer who came to me and basically….I had written, several years ago, before that, a setting of *The Owl and the Pussycat*. And I would almost say that *The Owl and the Pussycat* was one of the first real art songs that I wrote…and…that stuff really worked….that was when I started to find my, my voice…and so, the singer, her name was Phyllis Fay Farmer, oh, now Etzo…she brought the poem, *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*…she loved it. And she was doing a recital so then I ended up writing a third piece *Calico Pie*…that…to make, make a real cycle.
LB: Sure. And sorry, could you, what was her name…Phyllis…?
RPT: Her name was Phyllis Fay Farmer.
LB: Farmer, okay.
RPT: Yep.
LB: And did…so basically she chose one of the poems and the other two you chose…?
RPT: Yeah, exactly.
LB: Okay. And then on…*At last, to be identified*!, did you choose the Emily Dickinson poetry?
RPT: I did.
LB: Okay.
RPT: I chose those.
LB: Okay…and did you write that for a specific soprano? Or…?
RPT: Yes.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Oh, for…did I write that for a specific soprano?
LB: Yes, I was wondering. I didn't see anything about it…
RPT: No.
LB: It wasn't commissioned by anyone.
RPT: No, it was not.
LB: Okay, yep.
RPT: I did not.
LB: Do you know who first premiered that?
RPT:…the New York premier was by Hope Hudson…many years after it was written…did you see that, my song *I never saw a Moor* is in that cycle and everybody does that…
LB: Right, right.
RPT:…but I think there was actually a premier at Wachata Baptist University, some years ago…but it was one of those things that, whoever that woman was, she, she did it down there…and I don't remember her name.
LB: Okay. So when you wrote the, the cycle, um, *At last, to be identified!*, did you just like these poems, and you decided to set them or did you have this music and it just fit

with this poetry?...How…I don't understand how the composition process, I was wondering how that all works.
RPT:…yeah…that was a, that was a process that, that…the creation of that cycle was not…how can I say this…it went a little bit in fits and starts. It wasn't like I sat down and decided okay these are the seven poems that I'm going to set. I sort of, I would, I was going to the book and finding poems that spoke to me and, and…making a list of them and setting some things and then, when I went back, I, I figured out how to put them together, and then like what else was needed…or…contrast….Also, I had to really put together a…a cycle and so what ended up happening there was as I got into it, I, I started to see what was appealing to me…and…what was working for me. And, and so in terms of that cycle, I started to see the poems that I kept being attracted to had this sort of sense of "transcendental"…like Dickinson either striving to go beyond her, her world…or actually…or actually achieving that. So I think that, that…like when I perform the piece and I, I talk about it…I see how that emerged as a theme…for the entire cycle….and the one piece that doesn't fit into that, which I deliberately chose for contrast was…*There is a certain slant of light*. It's, it's one of the few of her poems with it's almost a sense of despair, or of…it's not a very hopeful poem…and I, I specifically set that in the place I did so that there would be this incredible contrast.…with, with the last piece…*At last, to be identified!*, where the music really soars, and it's like she really is achieving transcendence. So…it, it, it the piece ended up having a flow to it…that maybe is not what I started out thinking I was going to have.
LB: Sure, sure. It just kind of…molded together like that?
RPT: Yeah, and that happened through the process of writing it.
LB: Sure. Now when you compose are you…are you very particular about what you write down, that you will throw away things if you don't, you really don't like it, or do you…?
RPT: No, no.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Sure.
LB: And um, do you often go back and revise works later?
RPT:…yeah some things I do…I mean I've, I mean a piece comes to mind of *Piano Trio* for piano, violin and cello that years later I went back and I took and really revised it and I finally turned it into something that I'm really happy with.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: But a lot of the vocal music, I will make some revisions and especially, well what I like to do, especially with the commissions is…to get together with the singer and go through it and, and have them learn it to some degree and then I'll make some changes.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT:…I like to make changes…
LB: Based on their voices or…?
RPT: Yeah, based on the voice and what works…and what doesn't work or…maybe what I was sort of hearing in my head, it's like, "Oh no, this doesn't really work here,"…and I definitely made changes, I mean that, that was definitely the case with *Twilight*. Well, in fact, in that commission…we built that into our process…so that she, Dr. Eckenroth…she came, she learned a version of the pieces…not so much that they were really engrained…And came and sang and I was like "Oh, you know, I, the ending

needs to soar more and like your…your F# is a great note for you, I, I need to exploit that, so…I made revisions.
LB: Sure, okay.
RPT: Yeah, not the same as totally rewriting. I didn't totally start again.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: I have had that case though, once, once in a blue moon, like, write something and show it to somebody, and go, "You know what? This just doesn't work." I'll try again.
LB: Okay…
RPT: But you know what I would say de-describing how the Dickinson fit together…*At last, to be identified!*? The absolute opposite of that would be *A Wicked Girl*….Where I, I found those poems, I plotted them out very specifically, I did the, I knew I wanted them to be in that order, I knew the subject matter…no mystery….I knew what the structure was going to be before I knew I wanted the cello interlude…and we were writing it in chamber music and…and then I just wrote it.
LB: Okay, and with that, you were happy with what you wrote the first time and pretty much just left it.
RPT: Yeah, I think, I think the soprano wanted a high note. I think she wanted it to end on a high note that I had not originally written…and so that was kind of a little revision, nothing major.
LB:…Okay, now on the *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay*…I noticed that *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* is dedicated or commissioned by Karen Beardsley…was the whole cycle for her or not?
RPT: It was not a commission. It was dedicated to her because she's the first person who sang it.
LB: To sing it, okay.
RPT: Yep, we used to do that on community concert tour.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: Yep.
LB: Now, did you, did you think about…her voice when you were writing it or was it just…?
RPT: Nmmhm (no).
LB: Okay.
RPT: I didn't, no I didn't. It was more like she came over, and I played through it for her, and she was like "I have to sing this!"
LB: (laughter)
RPT: So…
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah, she sang the whole cycle, I mean she did premier the whole cycle at…Carnegie Hall.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Although we had done, we had done…you see, well actually we had done some of them, yeah…on community concerts, like I said, around the country.
LB: When you're writing cycles do you aim for a specific, general, amount of time that you…for each cycle or…?
RPT: You mean the length of it?
LB: Yes, the length.

RPT:…no, I don't usually think about that.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Although, unless, unless there's a specific…requirement. I mean *Spring Rain*, for instance, Hope Hudson commissioned that because she wanted to submit it for the NATS Award…so it had to be between 13 and 15 minutes or what have you…
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: …and so we had to bear that in mind and in fact, there is sort of an extended piano postlude in the, at, towards the end of the last song, which, quite honestly, I had to put in there in order to meet the time requirements.
LB: Sure, okay.
RPT: If I were writing it now and in fact, before I published it, I maybe should have thought about taking it out, but whatever.
LB: Okay.
RPT: It's there…but generally, no.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Generally, but you know what, the music needs to be as long as it needs to be.
LB: Right, right. I was just wondering with the, ending the Millay cycle with *The Ballad*, I was wondering if that was common for composers to have a, include a ballad in a cycle? I didn't know if that's…?
RPT: Yeah, it's funny, I don't think of that as a cycle.
LB: Oh, you don't?
RPT: That's, you know, four songs, you know songs based on poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay.
LB: Oh, okay, so you think of it more as a grouping?
RPT: It's been sung as a cycle, you know, all four of them together, but *April Again in Avrillé* is probably the one that is done the most because it's short and lyrical…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…*Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* is almost an opera, you know…like virtually an opera for one person…
LB: Right.
RPT:…so…that's not, I didn't, I didn't conceive of that like Schumann *Liederkriess* or what…
LB: Sure. So, it's more something that has come through the performance has kind of shaped how it's viewed by the public, is that more…?
RPT: Exactly.
LB: Okay….on *Race for the Sky* then…you said the poets were a little hesitant to…have their poetry published in your composition, is…?
RPT: Not.
LB: …is that…?
RPT: No.
LB: How did you come across their poems in the first place?
RPT:…the story is Lisa Holsberg…saw these poems in an exhibit at the *New York Historical Society*…and because what, a group called *City Lore*…went to these make-shift shrines that people had left on the street…because they thought that they were of historical value…and the sanitation department was going to come and cart them all away…

LB: Sure.
RPT: …and the group came, and they saved and they categorized them and then they put them in an exhibit at the *Historical Society*…which coincided with, well it was in the spring, uh, of 2002.
LB: 2002, okay.
RPT: And she saw them there, and it was her idea. She gets total credit.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…and she saw all, all of those poems were featured in that exhibit…in some form or another, which is how she found them….then she…had a hard time tracking down…Alicia Vasquez, but she finally did and then of course, anonymous, we have no idea who anonymous is…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT:…and so that's, that's how that project came about.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…and the violin, I chose to put the violin in there over Lisa's original objections….
LB: Oh, she wanted it to be…just a soprano piece?
RPT: Yeah, she wanted just soprano and piano, which is fine and that's what we originally started out as…but there was a, also in the same exhibit there was a letter from a violinist, named William Harvey, who and he had gone down to the armory, and he was playing in, for the rescue workers and…as a morale-boosting thing and he wrote this letter about it, and this letter culminates with something to the effect of "at a certain point, words no longer work and you have to have music."…and that's why I thought I wanted that other voice…violin in there, so that's how that came about….but in terms of their reluctance with, with…neither Hilary nor Alicia wanted to be seen as capitalizing or profiting from the events that day or, or their writings from…so it was a little bit…there was some negotiation involved in…they were originally fine having the pieces set to music and performed, but when it came to publication, there, there was a little bit of negotiation…because they, they were concerned about that, and so we were very, very sensitive and I, we said this is classical music so, you know, the amount of money that you might make from this is very small…
LB: Right…
RPT: …so it's not like you're really going to be profiting from this, but I, I made sure that they registered themselves with ASCAP so that they would get performance royalties…
LB: Right…
RPT: …and what little royalties we got from the selling of the music. Although Alicia's last check was returned to me because she changed her address and didn't let me know, so…it's clearly not important to her, but the, the, the agreement of it was.
LB: Right.
RPT: You know, they didn't want Bruce Springsteen recording it and making tons of money.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: And like with Hilary, you know, she's writing about all of her friends. She, she went to vote that day in the primary election which is why she wasn't in her office…otherwise she would have been gone too, so it's…I think she's sort of happy it's out there and it's, and it's fine with it being out there, but she doesn't really want to talk

about it a lot…so…and I haven't had a chance to email her yet, but I will…about you talking to her…
LB: Oh, sure, yeah, and I, I completely understand if she doesn't want to, but I thought if it was possible…since she and Alicia I think are really…I think they are the only living poets probably?
RPT: That could be, that could be…yeah, I think you're right. I mean some of the things that we chose like the Sara Teasdale, partially and the Rossetti, because they're public domain.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: Especially with poets.
LB:…Did you find as you were writing *Race for the Sky*, did you find any personal connection, were you personally affected by the…?
RPT: Well, I was here, so yes, I was affected, but I did not lose anybody close to me…certainly people once-removed and actually, I would go down right by there, yeah and…if you were living in New York City at the time it was just horrible. Yes, I certainly have a personal connection to it.
LB: I think the last questions that I just had, were mainly about…your compositions, when you compose, could you just walk me through your analytical process. Are you a very organized person or do you kind of wait to be inspired or how do you, how do you…?
RPT: Well…I will make these comments somewhat generally because…obviously it's going to be different for different pieces.
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: But…usually what I do is I'll start at the piano and if it's a poem of course I've read through it a lot to get some sense of how it works rhythmically, for me, or what sort of meter it might suggest, the colors it might suggest, that sort of thing. But usually, I will just sort of sit down at the piano and I, I just improvise, I, I just go for it….and sometimes it takes several tries at that, or it might before I think "Ah ha that works," and so then once I have sort an idea, a general idea…then I will sketch something out, very, very loosely….then, my process is once I have a very loose sketch for part or all of it, then I go back and I start filling in. I…probably the way some painters work, an analogy I give a lot when I am talking about my composing….you have a blank canvas and then you might, a general idea of what you want, and then you might fill in the colors and then you take something away and then I add something else and I take something away…that just, just takes time especially the process….so then at a certain point I will go to my computer and you know, I'll sort of draft up a score…start printing out new versions....then I will go back to the piano because I find that there's…I would never compose anything just in front of the computer because there's a certain machine-like quality that…the computer will play anything. Whereas if I go, even if I'm talking about an orchestral piece, I'm going to, I'm going to be like "Where does my energy take it?" So, it's that kind of going back and forth between the two.
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: A little bit of thinking about things. But…I sort of trust my instincts, my inner, whatever that inner energy…
LB: Sure, sure.

RPT: I kind of know when it's right. And sometimes I will work on something for a long time like you were mentioning before…"Do I throw stuff away?" I'll destroy them….I'm going to try hard to make it work, it's not working.
LB: Right.
RPT: Then, sometimes I'll try another idea and I'll think, "Oh, great, that's it." Like in *Race for the Sky, How My Life Has Changed*. I can't do this. I said I could maybe set this as a choral piece, but I think for one person, I just don't see how it could work. And she was like, "Try again." She's a, she's a strong person…and I, I found my way into it and I think, I can't remember if she told me or if I just had the image of Hilary sitting there and she was waiting to hear about these people and like she was scribbling their names and I could see her tapping the notebook with her pencil and I started to find that rhythm and when I started into that rhythm. Cause like I said to Lisa, every line how "I can no longer…blah", and so we had Hilary's permission to leave out a few of those, which I did, but most of them are there. So once I hooked into the rhythmic idea of the perpetual urgency of the piece, then it started to write itself….But it took awhile to get there.
LB: Now I assume with every piece, I mean, the, the amount of time that it takes to compose varies…but is there any kind of average amount of time, like does it take a month or a couple of weeks.
RPT: What I can say is that when I have an idea of what I'm doing, and I feel good about the ideas that I have, I write quickly. I'm not…I don't agonize over…once, once I know what I'm doing, it goes.
LB: Do you…is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you feel is important as far as knowing…your history and how you got into composition, as far as they relate to the pieces that I'll be looking at…?
RPT: No, no, I think if you want to…Clay Smith wrote his dissertation on *Drum Taps* and he talked to me quite a bit about my upbringing and….that's online. You might want to use that in the reference…
LB: Okay.
RPT: He talked, he probably talked to me a little more in-depth about my childhood and…I don't remember what all he asked…
LB: Okay, sure.
RPT: But it is a possible resource for you.
LB: Okay.
RPT: And then, I would probably say that as you get into it and as you start looking at the pieces, you're probably going to have more questions.
LB: I'm sure.
RPT: More questions, and more specifically like how, cause I'm not sure what your thrust is going to be…in terms of…I mean you're looking at quite a few pieces and how you're going to focus your analysis of that. And I'm not sure how you're going to do that…
LB: Right, right.
RPT: Whether you're going to come from a theoretical viewpoint or vocal writing or poetic…I mean there are a lot of different ways you can go. I'm sure you know. So, you'll have to, you'll have to see where it leads you and then, and then, we'll talk again, and I will be able to give you more specific answers to your questions.

LB:…well, yeah, I think that…that gives me a really good start and…as I get more, further into this, I will be contacting you with more questions, I'm sure.
RPT: Okay. Did you, have you decided yet…you probably haven't, which pieces you are going to specifically focus in on?
LB: Well, I'm hoping to focus in on those eight cycles, *A Little Nonsense, At last, to be identified!...*the Millay grouping which kind of is a cycle, *Race for the Sky*, *A Wicked Girl*, *Spring Rain* and *Twilight*?
RPT:…that's a lot.
LB: Yeah, it is…my advisor wanted me to make sure that I had enough to write about.
RPT: Yeah, yeah.
LB: Yeah, so I'm planning on focusing on, on I'm calling them your eight major soprano cycles…is that a fair title?
RPT: Yeah, sure.
LB: Okay. Oh, I actually did have one question…there was a song cycle, *Portrait of an Imagined Love*, that you really don't have much to do with, is that…is that something that you don't really consider a cycle or is that something that wasn't really that…? to you or…?
RPT: I think what I wrote to you is that those were pieces that I pulled from the musical theatre pieces that I was working on.
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT: And…they're very character-pieces, and I just think that for your purposes of analysis, you would be going a little afield.
LB: Okay…
RPT: Because essentially everything that you have named…you can really call those art songs…and they're all…based on poets…living or dead….none of those are my own texts…which all of my musical theatre stuff is…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…I think this is, the direction that you're going is probably good.
LB: Okay, okay.
RPT: And like I said, that cycle, I could never even get anybody to perform it, so it's never actually even been performed.
LB: Okay.
RPT: I don't even have it in my computer, so…it's in a time when I was writing very character-driven pieces. There's a cycle called *Ladies, of their Nights and Days*, on the list which you probably saw, that's for mezzo-soprano, it's kind of in that vein. Things were very character…even, there are technically characters in the songs…
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT:…it's about poetry or bringing the poetry to life.
LB: Okay. That makes sense, that makes a lot of sense.
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Okay, well I think that's all I had for now. I appreciate you taking time to talk with me and being willing help me in this project…
RPT: Now, are you living in Florida right now?
LB: I moved here this summer. I'm teaching adjunct, as an adjunct professor at a couple of colleges down here now. I finished my classes in Colorado in the spring, and I took my exams in the summer, so…

RPT: And where exactly in Florida are you?
LB:…in Clearwater, Florida.
RPT: Okay. So, you're further north. Cause I taught…
LB: Near Tampa.
RPT:…at uh, for USF…
LB: Oh, okay…
RPT: I wrote a musical with students in their masters program.
LB: Oh, okay. Great.
RPT: Yeah it was good, yeah, it was great.
LB: Yeah, so that's where I am right now. I'm not sure how long I'm going to be here, but…
RPT: Yeah…
LB:…here for the year at least…
RPT: Are you, where are you from originally?
LB:…I'm kind of from all over, but… I grew up overseas and then I've lived in the Midwest. Went to school, did my undergrad in Illinois and then went to Colorado for my graduate work….and then I came here, so I don't really have any place that I necessarily call my home, but, I spent probably the longest amount of time in Nebraska. I went to high school there and everything.
RPT: Oh, where in Nebraska?
LB: Oh, a small town.
RPT: I've actually done a tour of Nebraska.
LB: Oh really?
RPT: Believe it, or not? But…
LB: Okay, yeah...
RPT: Yeah. Good. Well, good luck with everything.
LB: Thank you, thank you. I'm hoping this will just flow along easily and…I will keep you updated and…questions that I have.
RPT: And then definitely do check out Clay Smith's dissertation.
LB: Okay.
RPT: If you google my name with *Drum Taps*…
LB: O, okay.
RPT:…it should come up relatively quickly….it's at Louisiana State I think….and you can see how he…he has a very in-depth, theoretical…I haven't even read it all, but I'm going "What?" "I did what?" I'm thankful to him for figuring that out. I don't have to.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: But there is, there is, like I said he interviewed me about my family.
LB: Okay, sure.
RPT: It's another, potential resource.
LB: Okay, great.
RPT: Alright?
LB: Alright. Well, thank you so much.
RPT: You're welcome.
LB: I appreciate it….I'll talk to you later.
RPT: Bye-bye.
LB: Bye-bye.

August 19, 2011:

Richard Pearson Thomas (RPT): Hello!
Laura Bateman (LB): Hi.
RPT: Hi.
LB: I just put this on speaker phone, so that I can get this recorded. Can you…
RPT: Okay.
LB:…hear me alright?
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Okay.
RPT: I can hear you.
LB: Great. How are you doing?
RPT: I'm doing pretty good. How about you?
LB: I'm doing pretty well. Just getting ready for school to start…and I moved out to Kansas, so I just, I'm kind of transitioning. (laughter)
RPT: So are you going to school in Kansas now or, or?
LB:…no, I, I, got a, a position out here.
RPT: You got a job there? That's even better.
LB: Yes, I did. (giggle)
RPT: Oh, great.
LB: So…just trying to get ready with all of that, so…
RPT: Yeah, yeah, excellent.
LB: (laughter) Alright, well I know you're, you have something to get to, so I will just…get to the questions….My first question, regarding the compositions and the fact that when they've been published…in your CV, you specifically noted that these, these cycles, *A Little Nonsense, At last, to be identified!*, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay, Three Kisses, Race for the Sky, A Wicked Girl, Spring Rain* and *Twilight* were written for the soprano voice. However,…most of these cycles have been published for "high voice" instead of specifically indicating the soprano *fach*? To my current knowledge, only *At last, to be identified!* and *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay* were published for soprano. Is there a specific distinction between those two cycles and the other cycles which you have opened up to all "high voices?"
RPT:…no, and I'm not even sure I have control over that. I think that may have even been…the publisher…
LB: Oh, okay.
RPT:…who, who did that…
LB: Would that have been, is that Glendower at *Classical Vocal*?
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah, yeah, that's a good question, but I, I can't really address that…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…I mean I think, I think some pieces textually obviously work better for a certain type of voice or another…but certainly some men have sung selections from *At last, to be identified!* and oop, are we being…interference?
LB: Oh, sorry. I can hear you.
RPT: Okay.

LB: I, I can hear you….sorry.
RPT:…yeah, so…no, I don't think there's really a distinction…I mean I think something like *A Little Nonsense*, I can't imagine maybe somebody other than soprano singing it…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT:…it just has to do with the nature of the music itself ...so…
LB:…so you're not opposed to other voice types singing the cycles, it's just some of them lend themselves better to…?
RPT: Yes, exactly.
LB: Right, okay.
RPT: Exactly.
LB: Okay. Actually, regarding *At last, to be identified!*...it seemed actually that it was quite appropriate actually for mezzo-sopranos, and I'm just wondering, have you had a lot of mezzo-sopranos sing that or had, had you, had you thought about that in any…?
RPT: Not that I know of…
LB: Okay.
RPT: I, I know, the range, you know it, it, well, a good mezzo-soprano could definitely sing it because…it goes up to a B^b…and…a good mezzo-soprano should have a good B^b and it goes down to…A below the staff so…I'm not opposed to that, but I just think originally…I had in mind more of the soprano color.
LB: Oh, okay. Okay. That's interesting, because like I said it just seemed that when I looked at the range it just seemed a little bit more, assuming a good mezzo-soprano could sing that high, which good ones should be able to…
RPT: Right, right.
LB:…it is sometimes a little lower, so I was just wondering if all sopranos would be able to carry in that lower range, so that's what I was just wondering...
RPT: Yeah.
LB:…so, okay…another question. I know I, I asked you about this in the first, in the first interview, and this is just a little different twist on this question….because of the female perspective of the poets, do you think that excludes some performances by male singers or do you think that doesn't really matter? What's your take on that?
RPT: I think it depends on the poem…I don't think it depends on the poet so much as it depends on the poem….so, I mean, I don't see any reason why, you know, you, Emily Dickinson doesn't have sort of a universal appeal…the same as Walt Whitman, I don't think should be necessarily only sung by female voices, but there may be certain poems that really…makes it one gender over the other.
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT: So…
LB:…and what about when you, the three cycles that have stringed-instruments, *Race for the Sky*…*Three Kisses* and *A Wicked Girl*. Would, would it create some timbre and voicing issues…I mean, as a composer, would, would that create some issues if males, male voices sang those cycles or…?
RPT: I don't know. I can't think of…actually because I've never heard male voices sing any of them, so I can't really say… I don't, I mean if anything, it would make some things easier, certainly in *Race for the Sky* because the, the tenor voice is not going to be competing with the violin in the same way that the soprano voice is…
LB: Sure. Well, that's true.

RPT:…but I don't see why it would necessarily…I mean something like *A Wicked Girl*, I really, I, I mean, that's what I mean when I say in terms of the text…I don't see why a tenor would be drawn to singing a cycle called "A Wicked Girl." Where there's certainly other Millay poems…there's and, and, and *The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* might be a prime one, I mean, to me that's a male, that's a child, a male child's perspective…although I don't know if any male has ever sung it, I don't see why, why he couldn't.
LB: Sure.
RPT: But anyway, that's going back to your other question. No, I don't see that there would be serious timbral issues with those three instruments…in other places…
LB:…this next question is about…well, piano parts in the cycles…I mean, I am a pianist to some degree, but I'm not great, but…it just seems like a lot of the piano parts incorporated a lot of chords that spanned a 9^{th} or a 10^{th}, sometimes in parallel motion, at fast tempi and most often with other notes….are most accomplished pianists such as yourself, able to play those large intervals really easily, or do you have a particularly large finger span? My advis…advisor and I were just wondering, because it was kind of difficult for us to play through the pieces with our, with our hand spans, I guess.
RPT: I don't think I have a particularly big hand span compared to someone like Rachmaninoff…
LB: Oh, okay. (laughter)
RPT:…or you know, one of those guys who had monster hands, but whatever, whatever is on the page is what fits in my hands.
LB: Okay, okay, so…
RPT: …so…
LB:…so it was just…do you, would you have any suggestions for a pianist, pianists who maybe couldn't span that, or is that just something that as a pianist you would learn how to do?
RPT: Well, I think a pianist needs to learn how to do that. I…I was just reading an article in the *New York Times* last week about how there are all these virtuoso pianists now, and of course, now there's no oppor…there's fewer opportunities for them to perform, and I'm like, we need some more of those playing vocal music.
LB: Oh, oh, (laughter) exactly.
RPT:…let's get some more of them playing…we…those of us who write vocal music don't want to make everything so terribly simple either…but I think, like I tell them, if, if you can't get it, at least be judicious about what you leave out…don't leave something out…re-, re-orchestrate it for your hand. We all have to do that with certain pieces….that's, that's generally the advice that I give to younger pianists, at least.
LB: Sure…okay….is this, is this the first time that anyone's brought up, some aspect of, this aspect of piano, of your piano parts in your…regarding these cycles before or…?
RPT: I don't think that it's…
LB: Have you had anyone who's had any difficulty?
RPT: No, I haven't, I haven't heard that too much, I mean, I've certainly heard…some pianists that have been working on it that ask specific questions…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…I, I know that certain things in *At last, to be identified!* that are certainly in that Charles Ives' mode, where you just really have to decide what you're gonna leave

out…I'm actually doing an arrangement of that for piano trio…violin…cello and piano, so it's going to be nice because then none of those notes will have to be left out.
LB: Oh, okay. And sorry, what were you saying, which instruments besides…cello, piano…?
RPT: Piano, piano, violin and cello…which is going to be premiered this spring…
LB: Oh, wonderful.
RPT:…as chamber music…yeah, so…that should be good.
LB: And that's *At last, to be identified!*?
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Great….when you were writing the pieces in these cycles, did you find that the piano parts came more easily than the vocal lines? Like, did you write the piano parts first or did the melodies in a way shape…?
RPT: No.
LB: Okay.
RPT: No.
LB:…so, the melodies came first and then…?
RPT: Yeah, yeah.
LB:…it took that shape…?
RPT: You know, it all, it all sort of all comes together. There may be a harmonic motion that comes along the melody, but I would certainly never write a melody to go above an accompaniment.
LB: Okay, okay. Sure.
RPT: Yeah.
LB:…do you remember ever, any of these particular…the pieces in these cycles or, or any of the cycles taking a particularly long time to write? Like, like, do you remember ever getting stuck on any of these, or any of the pieces, or any of these cycles, in particular?
RPT:…I don't, I can't think of off-hand…I mean, I, certainly in my experience, sometimes I may struggle with a piece over and over and then I just throw it out, and I start again and then it, it works better…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…is, is *Spring Rain* one of your…in that group?
LB: Yes.
RPT: Are you writing on that one?
LB: Yes, I am.
RPT: That, that's one that I struggled a bit with.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…over time…but most of them came pretty quickly, like *Race for the Sky* came quite quickly…like once I get my initial idea they basically come…pretty fast.
LB: Okay. Do you have a particular…favorite piece out of the pieces in these cycles, and the cycles are: *A Little Nonsense, At last, to be identified!*, uh, *Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay, Three Kisses, Race for the Sky, A Wicked Girl, Spring Rain* and *Twilight*?
RPT:…no, I wouldn't, I don't think I would write anything down…there's… I mean…some, they're like children, right, I mean…they're all, they're all my children…

LB: Right. (laughter)
RPT:…but…some I like better, some moments I like better than others, but I don't think that I'd ever say…which ones those would be…but hopefully in every case I've, I've done the best job I could…of bringing those particular words to life….in every case, I try to get it to the best of my ability.
LB: Okay, so just overall, you, you feel pretty much the same about all the pieces and…?
RPT: Yeah, I don't chose favs. Can you hold on one second? I'll be right back.
(Pause)
RPT: Okay.
LB:…well, then kind of in that same vein, but I'm, I'm guessing you'll have the same answer…you don't have a least favorite piece or cycle in these…out of these eight?
RPT: No, I wouldn't and I, I again I wouldn't tell you even if I did.
LB: (laughter) Right, right.
RPT:…because I don't want to color someone else's opinion…I mean, somebody may really love a particular piece…and then I come and say "Oh, well that's not one of my better pieces"…I don't…I don't, I don't want to do that.
LB: Okay, sure, sure….is there any particular piece, I know you said *I never, I never saw a Moor* gets performed a lot, but is there any other piece that you get a lot of feedback about or any, any particular cycle?
RPT:…I would say more from my *Cabaret* songs than from the pieces you're…writing about…but of the ones that you're writing about, them and by far, *Race for the Sky* are the ones that get done the most.
LB: Okay, sorry, what was before *Race for the Sky*?
RPT: I'm sorry?
LB: What did you say, is it just *Race for the Sky* or was there something else you said before that?
RPT: Well, yeah, I was just saying some of my *Cabaret* songs…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…which…you're not writing about… but they get done quite a bit…and I hear about, but of the cycles that you're writing about…*Race for the Sky* is the one that gets the most attention.
LB: Okay, okay….this is kind of a specific question, in, it's in the…Millay cycle…do you, do you remember, and maybe this was a choice by your publisher, there being a particular reason…*To One Who Might Have Borne A Message* is a half-step higher than the key in, it's published a half-step higher than the key in which you originally wrote it…?…or at least that was the version I got…but then the published version was a half-step higher actually, and I was just wondering if there is any particular reason…?
RPT: I don't know.
LB: Okay.
RPT: I don't remember.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah.
LB:…and then, just a couple more questions…you made a point of mentioning to me that Sarah Snydaker at the University of Iowa and Hope Hudson…were discussing your works in American Art Song survey classes when I was inquiring as to whether anyone else was discussing these cycles or had written on these cycles…however, I noticed in

your CV, that actually a number of people talked about your songs in Art Song Survey and Performance classes. Is there any particular distinction between Sarah Snydaker and Hope Hudson and these other people or were you just adding them to the list? I was just wondering…
RPT: Well, I mean I think probably what's on the CV, I mean that CV is a little out of date…those were just people that I knew of that were…teaching or offering my songs in their, in their…survey courses…I wouldn't be surprised if there were others that I don't know about…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT:…but yeah, some of those are probably no longer teaching or whatever, so…that's…I just don't know because people don't tell me.
LB: Sure, okay. But they, but Sarah Snydaker and Hope Hudson would be added to that list then…?
RPT: Well, you know, I'm not sure…Sarah Snydaker is, is a graduate student. John Muriello is the instructor at, at the University of Ida…Iowa…would, would actually have taught my course, the songs in his course…I, Sarah Snydaker was one of his students.
LB: Oh, okay, and she had specifically talked to you probably or something…?
RPT: Yeah…yeah.
LB: You know that, is she, she's not, is she, she's not writing a, a dissertation, or do you know what she's…?
RPT: I don't think so. I think she just made a, a, a review, like a…I don't know what she did….but she made some sort of comprehensive review of current American Art Song or something…a compilation.
LB: Oh, okay….then this is a detail question for the biography section….do you remember which specific years you spent working in Banff, the first time when you, when you went there and that was really your opportunity to write musical theatre? Do you remember those years?
RPT: Basically that was between 1980 and 1984.
LB: Okay.
RPT: '84/'85
LB: Okay….then, there are a number of songs in the cycles that ended somewhat inconclusively…for instance, *The Pobble Who Has No Toes*, *I never saw a Moor*, *The Road to Avrillé*, *I hoped that he would love me*, *Song* and, and others…is there any particular reason you, you ended these pieces and some others in this way or…?
RPT: No, but I think, that…that may be a stylistic thing of mine.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…but it wasn't a specific choice in any of those pieces.
LB: Okay, it's just the way that you chose to write them and…?
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Okay.
RPT: Yeah, yeah.
LB:…and I know that in the last interview you said that you basically compose tonally…however, there were some sections that were somewhat difficult to classify in terms of traditional tonality, but yet, there was still a tonal center of some sort…how would describe that harmony? Would you call it neo-tonal or what would you…do you, would you have a term…?

RPT: I wouldn't describe, I wouldn't describe it. It just is what it is.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…I mean it's not, it's not, clearly, it's not functional tonality…
LB: Sure, mmhm.
RPT:…but you described it just as well as I could.
LB: Okay.
RPT:…there's, there's a tonal center, but it may be shifting and…that's just, that's just what it is…
LB: Okay.
RPT: I'm not choosing to do that on purpose.
LB: Sure, okay.
RPT: That section is…just where the music takes me.
LB: Uh-huh…Okay and then, just two more questions…do you know of any performances or recordings of any of these cycles or any pieces from these cycles that will be taking place in the near future or that have taken place recently…since we last spoke?
RPT: No, I don't…and, and I wish there would be some…but I don't know of any.
LB: Okay. There probably are, but again, they wouldn't notify you?
RPT: Yeah, yeah, they would, technically they would have to have the rights to do it.
LB: Oh, they would?
RPT: Yeah.
LB: Oh, okay, so then you would know if there were?
RPT: Yeah, yeah.
LB: Okay, okay….and then the last question and if this is, if this goes along with asking you about your favorite pieces or least favorite, you can ignore it, but it was kind of a different take on that question, as far as, you, again, I'm not sure if you want to answer this or not…I just, I'll ask it and then if you don't want to answer it…is there a particular piece…or cycle, among these, these eight cycles that you think might, should be more popular, but maybe isn't? Or if you want to answer that, I don't know…
RPT:…I, I mean I just think…I wish that, I wish that all of them were getting a little more play…because I think there's a lot, I think there's a lot there for both singers and, and pianists and audiences to really sink their teeth into and enjoy…I would have to, I would have to say, really across the board, I…it's like, I would like everything to get out there more…everything to be played and sung through and, and heard, more than it is.
LB: Mmhm. Well, I would agree, that's why I'm writing (giggle), writing this paper, so…
RPT: Yes, and, and I appreciate that…definitely.
LB: Okay, okay….well, I think that's….
RPT: And I think…
LB: Oh sorry, go ahead…
RPT: Great, and I just think this idea of recording, I mean, if, if I could just get some of these recorded.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: It would, it would just really be helpful.
LB: Right, right.
RPT: But…it has to be right. It has to be a really good recording…

LB: Right.
RPT: And…and bigger-name singers are going to sell more CDs, so…that's just, that's just a struggle.
LB: Sure, sure. Is there any…
RPT: So…
LB:…thing else that you wanted to add or do you have to run right now?
RPT: I do have to run, but if, if there's anything else, I'll send you an email or I'll call you…
LB: Okay.
RPT:…but I think, yeah, if I mull this over and something occurs to me, I'll let you know.
LB: Okay, great. And if you, thank you for taking time to talk to me and if…again, again, I hope it's fine if I come up with something else that I just want to clarify, if I just email you and …
RPT: Oh definitely, yeah, I mean I'd, I'd rather you clarify, then just sort of, shoo…you know, shoot from the hip or whatever…
LB: Sure, sure.
RPT:…I think it, I think, I think…if, if your, if what you're writing should go into print, we want to make sure that it really fits…
LB: Right.
RPT:…the right…context…so…
LB: Right. So, maybe even I'll just send you…this list of questions…I think we basically covered all of them, but if there's something more specifically that you think, "Oh, maybe I could add a little bit more to my comments," if you, if you wouldn't mind just taking a look at the list and then if you have anything…
RPT: Yeah.
LB:…to add.
RPT: Sure.
LB: Okay.
RPT: No problem.
LB: Well, then, I'll just go ahead and send that to you. I really…
RPT: Okay.
LB:…appreciate it. Alright, well, have a wonderful evening.
RPT: Alright, well thanks.
LB: Thanks. It was nice talking to you.
RPT: Good luck with everything.
LB: Thanks. Bu-bye.
RPT: Bye.

APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPTION OF LISA RADAKOVICH HOLSBERG PHONE INTERVIEW

December 19, 2009:

Laura Bateman (LB): Hi, is this Lisa?
Lisa Holsberg (LH): Laura?
LB: Yes, this is Laura Bateman.
LH: Hi, how are you?
LB: I'm doing well. How are you?
LH: Are you there?
LB: Yes, I am. I was just putting it on speaker phone. Is that okay for you?
LH: That's no problem.
LB: Oh, okay. Great. So, are things pretty crazy around the holidays right now?
LH:…yes, but my house is empty at the moment, so…
LB: Oh, good. (laughter)
LH: …so, it's great timing.
LB: Alright. Well…shall we just get started then?
LH: That sounds great.
LB: Okay. I was…My first question for you is, "How did you first become acquainted with Richard Pearson Thomas and his music?"
LH:…I don't know if I can remember the date, but a good friend of mine, Jennifer Bodenweber--she's a soprano here in the city…had…had heard some of his works. This was in the '90s. And, and had asked him to set a letter from camp that her sister had once wrote home, a very funny letter…like a, like a pre-teen…that…that she thought that Richard, when she had Richard read it could do a good setting of it. So, I first heard his music at a concert. I think it was at Trinity Church in downtown Manhattan. It was a recital Jennifer was giving and that piece was featured, and…it was wonderful and funny. I think it's called *Letter from Camp*.
LB: Okay.
LH: Are you…is it in your…is it, is it?
LB: It's probably in the CV that he sent me.
LH: Now, I think that's the title of it. And, and it was funny and wonderful, and it, it…I really enjoyed it. And then over the years, a number of my close singer friends from…from graduate school and also time at the *Music Academy of the West*…they, they were drawn more and more into Richard's circle, so I heard about him often from my friends….Bruce Rameker is one of them.
LB: Uh-huh. Okay.
LH: R-A-M-E-K-E-R, an early music guy here in the city….and Jennifer and also, Patricia Prunty, who is on a number of his recordings…
LB: Okay, mmhm…
LH: Actually Bruce and Patricia are on a number of…they work with Richard a lot.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: And a good friend of mine, Diana Tash, who's a mezzo in Los Angeles….A soprano that turned mezzo and…and she commissioned some songs of him, so, so it was kind of in the air….
LB: Sure.

LH: Richard and Richard's work. And what I knew that I liked personally about Richard's work was…my life as a singer was a classically-trained soprano who worked a lot in musical theatre.
LB: Okay, mmhm.
LH: So, I, I appreciated the accessibility of his sound…to, to that kind of, cross-over audience?
LB: Sure.
LH: I'm sure you can, you can, you know what I mean. So, so what happened was is that ….well, anyway, that's how I first met Richard and knew of him, but we had, we, we, we were friends of friends.
LB: Right, right. Okay….so then the story of how…you came up with the idea to write or to commission *Race for the Sky*…he, he, he said something about you…were looking at a display of different people's…memorabilia from the event and saw the poems or something like that…but I wasn't…is that…?
LH: Yeah, definitely…
LB: Okay.
LH:…definitely. I'll happily share that with you. And…and, and if you want those materials that go with my CD, there's a lot of this information there, and it might sort of hold steady for you.
LB: Right, that would be great.
LH: Yeah, I feel very indebted to the many people and the organizations who were a part of this development of this project...and, and so, I, I, I love talking about them. So, what happened was, I think it was in March 2002.
LB: Okay.
LH: I…I, I actually had a free afternoon, which was in my personal life was very rare at that time. My son was an infant and my daughter was about three years old I guess. No, four years old, no three years old. Anyway, and I had been reading, you know, we were all in shock here in New York City. Still reeling from the attacks of 9/11…in, in thing, in ways that still impacted our lives greatly. I mean with traffic regulations…car…mandatory carpooling laws, checkpoints, and there was an anthrax scare that happened…right after 9/11. And then, in my neighborhood, I can't remember when that plane went down…I have to revisit history, but…there was a plane that…crashed in Arockaway that had taken off from, I think, JFK. It was from the Dominican Republic, and…at the time that that crash happened, it all just seemed so familiar of 9/11 that we were constantly getting kind of rocketed back into the trauma, a lot. Those of us that live in the city. And then that particular crash was very meaningful to me because I live in a part of Manhattan that is highly Dominican…so it was, was very tragic. Anyway, I…because of this, 9/11 was always in the forefront of our consciousness. And I had read a review of an exhibit at the *New York Historical Society*, that had been mounted by a, a cultural institution of folklore, called *City Lore*. And they…had this exhibit and it was entitled, "Missing: Streetscapes of a City in Mourning." And I went to go and see this. What *City Lore* had done was that they had collected so much of the memorabilia of the shrines, the artwork, the messages, the missing posters… And it was, an amazing undertaking before weather and time destroyed these items…And they had taken these unbelievable photographs. I'm sure that there is still part of this exhibit on the web at the *City Lore* website that you should definitely look at. And again,

the title of that is "Missing: Streetscapes of a City in Mourning." And as I went through that exhibit, I was…I had a real experience, and I would say now, it was a spiritual experience, but I didn't have words for it at the time. I just knew that I was changed as a result, and I just kept going back over and over and over it again, and as I kept revisiting the photographs and the captions and all of the items, I had a realization that…what had happened on the city streets was really significant to the arts. That, when the crisis hit, people turned instinctively to the medium of the arts in order to cope with their feelings, in order to try to mediate with their lost loved ones…in order to make sense of what was insensible. And that this was a kind of a primal instinct that happened without anyone being conscious of it or asking permission of church or civic authorities or anything. They just gathered together and in their writing messages and in their drawing pictures and in their singing songs they were expressing themselves to art….in my experience of life, I feel that we live in a country where the arts are not honored in this way. That the arts have become very much an industry where, the product of art is commodified and…some people are chosen to create and the rest of us are…relegated to the position of consumers. …That's kind of my experience of. But…so, this exhibit brought this, an awareness of an everyday expression of art that rests in all people, whether they call themselves artists or not. And the idea wouldn't let go. And the three poems that are part of *Race for the Sky* were featured in this exhibit. In fact…they were all in kind of a large graphic display, among other poems and other snippets of verses too, which I have many, many more of these as well…and…what was I going to say…and also, there, there were these two enormous towers of poetry that had been part of a project that had been co-sponsored immediately after the attacks, by *City Lore* and…another organization here in New York, called *Poets' House*, a very well-known literary, literary group, and they had sent out via internet, a call for submissions of verse, of poetry…and what they did was, it was edited by this genius called Holman, is they asked anybody, I mean they sent out a kind of general posting. Anybody could submit, and they picked some of those verses to construct 110 lines of poetry for Tower 1 to, to parallel the 110 floors of the first tower. And then, they sent out invitations to poets that they knew for submissions for Tower 2. And I think that those texts are also up on the website, but I have that also in my materials. So, and these were on a huge graphic display and I was…you know…you're a singer right, I'm assuming, right, Laura?
LB: Yes.
LH: Is that correct?
LB: Oh, yes, I am. Sorry!
LH: Are you soprano, mezzo?
LB: I am a soprano.
LH: Okay, great. So, as singers you know we live in this really weird world where we're musicians, but we're also poets and storytellers…and actors and so the domain of sound and also the domain of language is just integral to our being.
LB: Exactly.
LH: Right. So, seeing these poems…deeply affected me…deeply affected me. And I, I went back for a second visit. I just couldn't…I walked away with some of the materials, and like I said, I just couldn't get it out of my mind, and I had decided to myself…that at that, at that time, that I wanted to present a concert of American song at the anniversary of this first year of the attacks. I am on adjunct faculty at Long Island University…CW

campus as LIU, and I thought, I'd, I'd, I'd like to do a concert when the, when the year-mark comes around, and what I had in mind was I really wanted to do the Charles Ives' *Songs of War* because I could already smell the winds of war…brewing towards Iraq by this point. And…I have some feelings about that. And, and this was personally very significant for me because I hadn't been singing for almost two years, with the birth of my…the pregnancy and birth of my second child it was too hard, so the idea that I was going to do this was…was a big thing for me. And what was pivotal for this happened actually probably I think, in October, maybe November of 2001, when um, a close friend of my sister's, who was a firefighter from the Bronx…he lost his life in the Marriot. So, on 9/11, and I became very close to his family on the south side of Bronx, this amazing Puerto Rican family, and they asked me to sing at their son's funeral.
LB: Right…
LH: His memorial because his body had not been found yet, and I, like I told you I hadn't been singing, but I thought, of course, if it's me you want, of course, I will sing at his memorial. And…it's a, it's quite an experience to sing for a New York firefighter's memorial….it's a big deal where…the church is packed and the people line up for blocks down the street, and they mount loudspeakers all down the street and it's full of people in uniform and of people. They have, they have helicopter flyovers and…big-rigs, with their ladders extended to the sky and bagpipers playing…whatever they're playing and trumpet players playing "Taps" and…it's a big…it's a big deal. And…and I was really, it was a moment of healing for me, it was actually a really first step of healing from the tragedy that…my husband played trumpet and a good friend of mine who is also a Broadway music director, he also played, and we did a variety of music at that funeral, which was also good. But anyway, that's part of my little personal story. So I was starting to sing again and, and these poems at the *City Lore* exhibit wouldn't leave me alone and I thought, you know I really wish that I had these poems as songs. And the more I thought about it, the more I thought well, what would I do, how, how would I do that? And…I shared the idea with Jennifer [Jennifer Bodenweber, mentioned earlier], the woman I mentioned who had commissioned Richard before, and when she read the poems, she was…she worked at Merrill Lynch, at the, at the Financial Center…and so on the day of the attacks, she walked home. And…it's a really, really, really long way here from Manhattan. And I was worried sick about her on that day. So she also, she also had her share of trauma, of dealing with the 9…of dealing with 9/11, and when she read the poems, she…she said, "You have to ask Richard and even, you know, if you don't have the money, I'll give you the money to, to set these to music. So, that was a real affirmation from a wonderful musician, and…so then I did, I contacted him, and that's how we began.
LB: Wow….and how did that, did the process…I mean, I, I assume he liked the idea as well?
LH: Yes.
LB: Was the process one, where it just, it just all fell together or were there some…?
LH: Well, as I remember saying, I went to the exhibit in March…trying to reconstruct dates. I think maybe I saw him in April or May. You know, it took awhile for this…
LB: Sure.

LH:…to become real for me, and he was going to be leaving for the summer. He was working with Patty and Bruce….I think on a, on a cruise ship in Alaska. He was going to be gone all summer.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: But…and I wanted to…here's another piece…so I… when Richard said he was interested, I then, I then contacted *City Lore* because I wanted to find out where are the poets, to ask their permission to use their words. It was kind of like well how do I go about finding these poets? And also, you know, I wanted to ask *City Lore*'s permission because it was through their exhibit that I had met these poems. And so, then I began this great relationship with Steve Zeitlin of *City Lore*, and he was thrilled with this idea, and he knew that he was going to be part of this bi-annual poetry celebration later that year with *Poets' House*, and…he was hoping that maybe we could present these pieces there or maybe we could even, you know, gather some funds together to commission a choral work with orchestra…I mean, we had big dreams. We were all crazy about these texts. Not just these three poems, but those two towers that I told you about and I mean, it seems so, so, we really had these big dreams. And…in the meantime, I, I wanted to present something at my little concert, you know, at the university. And then, through Steve Zeitlin, the *New York Historical Society* was interested in having these pieces at their site on the day of the first anniversary. And Steve Zeitlin would do a little talk with some images…and I would do a little talk about how the music was developed, and then we would perform the pieces. So we knew that Richard was going to be gone all summer, but September 11th we were going to do a performance.
LB: Right…
LH: And mind, we didn't know the poets yet.
LB: Right…
LH: So, Richard took off for Alaska and just started writing and then I set about trying to find the poets. One of the poets was easy. Hilary North who wrote the second piece in the cycle. She…was already known to Steve Zeitlin because she had given him…she's a visual artist…she works at Aon Corporations…as an office person, and she had submitted some art that actually, that, doodles on bookslips that she had sort of compiled and put together and stuffed under her bed, and they were haunting her. So, she wanted a way to get it out, when she heard about the "Missing Exhibit," she contacted Steve Zeitlin and, and gave him that and then also shared with him the poem *How My Life Has Changed*. And that poem had some…had some coverage with some news outlets and things like that. I, I don't remember all…that. But…it had, it had sort of gone around. Anyway, so I was able to reach Hilary North. That was easy. The first poem…was…did not have a name attached to it, and the piece of paper was picked up somewhere in Union Square by the sanitation department, sanitation workers. So there was just like no way…how do you…how do I find this poet? That's the anonymous one, and I never did find the poet. But the third one was really challenging because it was…the poem had been found on the wailing wall at Grand Central Station, and the, the name of the poet was listed as "A. Vasquez". And…well you can imagine, how many "Vasquezes" there are in New York City. Or, or wherever, if it was at Grand Central, who knows where the person lived: "A. Vasquez". I mean, I tried going through phone books, and it was just…I, I, I didn't know what I was going to do. How, how do I get anywhere with that? So, you know, Richard, Richard was really good. He just said, "You know what. Let's

just do it. We'll go on faith. If they end up saying…if someone finds out about it and they say 'No' then we'll stop. But we, we can't let this keep us from doing this." And…we all agreed. Steve and I, all agreed. So, so, Richard was busy writing while he was in Alaska, and he was sending faxes of manuscripts as things kind of came up. And I was trying to learn things physically off of these faxed manuscripts. And then, in the meantime, the "Streetscapes Exhibit" closed.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: And then, then, I was doing a lot of you know, searching on the Internet, and I stumbled across a poem that sounded so much like the poet of "don't look for me anymore." I said, "It's not possible." And then…it was uncannily, and I don't even know how I found this poem. I was kind of combing through all sorts of sites on the web. And then I looked at the name at the end of poem, and it was "Alicia Vasquez". And I just thought, "This is not possible." My heart was pounding, and…I quickly found a link to email through that site, and I asked Alicia Vasquez if she was the author of "don't look for me anymore", and it turned out she was. And she had no idea how I knew about it, and…so that's how that all happened. And so, prior to the premier, I was busy trying to set up lunch appointments with both Hilary North and Alicia Vasquez separately, in order to speak to them about this idea I had for these songs and what that meant and to ask for their permission. It was pretty delicate and sensitive undertaking because both women…were leery that their work might be used for some kind of profit from someone, and they did not want to profit from the tragedy or have anyone else profit through their work from the tragedy…which is completely understandable. And…not knowing much about the classical musical world and who's getting rich. (laughter)….I had to do some explaining and tell what I thought and why, why a musical rendition of these poems might lend them…a chance for more people to appreciate them and a chance for them to have a different kind of life…in the world of the arts. Anyway, long story short, they agreed. And they agreed with very limited conditions. That I would perform them and that I would always keep them, you know apprised of the development of the project….that I would check with them, every step of the way. And we got it done. So…so nothing was really typical about how one goes about doing these things because the context was fraught with so much tragedy and…national, international concern….all, all these things….so anyway, the long story short was, we finally got it together, and the pieces were written, and we premiered them at the *New York Historical Society* on that day…the day. And, Hilary North was not in the audience. Hilary…Laura, are you still there?
LB: Oh yes, I'm sorry. It just kind of faded out and then I wasn't sure if you were still there.
LH: Okay, yeah, I don't know what that was about. And then…Hilary came to a dress rehearsal where she could hear the songs in private.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH:…which was maybe one of the top five performing experiences of my life…to have shared that moment with her….ah, I just can't, I can't describe what that was like for her…to watch her experience people that she had lost, alive again in time in the music. It, it was…it was, it was very moving. So, we were pretty bonded after that. She did not come to the performance. She got out of town for 9/11. And she's been getting out of town I think probably every year since. And more of her story, again is in the material…

LB: Sure.
LH:…about how almost everyone she knew was killed, but she wasn't. And…the survivor guilt connected with that is, is a intense…So, but Alicia came, and…that was great. And…and then, from there, I performed the songs in the context of an American Song recital at my university. And then, it's kind of, I've kept pushing, not so much in the last couple of years, but you know, for a good while after that, I was pushing to you know, get them performed as much as I could and…in different venues. And…then, we eventually…people wanted to sing them and so we eventually secured permission from the poets for their permission to publish the songs, so Glendower has the, has the music. And…and then we eventually scraped things together to get a recording, so that we could share that with others. And…so yeah…all of it has been done really grassroots….never involved sort of agents or a record label, or publicist or any of that…and, and part of that has really been on purpose because again, out of the respect for the sensitivity of not wanting to be seen as capitalizing on a tragedy. I don't know how to explain it exactly, but…but the reticence of the poets made a very big impact on me. And it has kept me from sort of aggressively pursuing this in a commercial kind of way.
LB: Right, right.
LH: So, I'm very pleased that it has kind of word-of-mouth spread…through respectable people and through respectable channels. So, hopefully, the next step is that I will get all of it on the web so that people…anyone can have access to it…in a way that's not putting up profit for anyone. I mean, monetary profit, but hopefully, rewarding profit in other ways.
LB: Mmhm, mmhm. So after…when you premiered it, a year later…what was the, I guess who, who came and what was the basic reaction of, of it? I mean I'm sure it was emotional for everyone. I'm just kind of curious how people responded…?
LH: Here's…one thing I've noticed about performances of *Race for the Sky* in the New York area versus performances of it elsewhere…and the first performance was no exception. New Yorkers tend to get very silent….audiences outside of New York openly sob….but New Yorkers go very inward. It's just a hard read sometimes…unless you're used to it. On that first performance…the president of the *New York Historical Society*, was it Ken Johnson?, he introduced us. And…New York on that day had a very interesting thing going on. Almost all public institutions, like museums, opened their doors free of charge to anyone to come in and out. And so…much of our audience was that kind of roaming, searching, grieving audience….there's a really well-known radio talk show here in New York on WNYC. It's called the "Brian Lehrer Show."
LB: Okay.
LH: I remember Brian, who was a real voice of hope for us through much of the aftermath of 9/11, he…I remember him saying like a day or two prior to the anniversary…announcing on the air, "You know what, New Yorkers, do yourself a favor, turn off the media on that day. Don't, don't…(his own work, right?) don't get involved in the frenzy. You, you have to heal. And this is your day to cope with it however you need to cope with it." It was, it was really wise how he said that. And I think that for much of New York that was true….all that coverage that was on the television, and I don't know that a lot of people in New York took part in that. They went quiet, and so we had a lot of those people and…a lot of invited friends, musicians, and…came. It was in the performance space of the *New York Historical Society*, which is not large…narrow stage

and…and it was well-attended and people were…people were moved and people were grateful that they had been…as a performer what I remember most besides…some serious nerves and also, the three of us who were performing, the violinist and Richard and I. We were also New Yorkers with our own share of…grief and shock at the one-year anniversary. So I felt as if we were the walking wounded, ministering to the walking wounded. And in the moment in the end of "don't look for me anymore"…where the music starts to become transcendent, and uh, let's see…"I'll rest assured you're watching my children," no wait. I haven't thought about these songs in awhile.
LB: I know what you're talking about.
LH: "Hold my sisters. Hold my brothers. Hold my children for me."…(singing), "don't look for me. I'll rest assured you're watching my children. It's late and you're tired. Go home and rest, and don't look for me anymore." That inhale before "It's late," I extended my arms towards the people and…and a, a force powered itself through me towards them of so much love and so much comfort and…so much understanding of how they were feeling of saying, "It's late and you're tired. Go home and rest."….there, I'll never forget it because, and it wasn't just a performer's experience because many, many people shared with me afterwards that something happened to them at that moment. So that was really…powerful for me, and that's what I remember most clearly about that very performance.
LB: Sure, sure, hmmm. And…remind me, who was the violinist and how did the violin become part of the project?
LH:…my understanding from Richard is that as he was in Alaska writing away, he realized that the music needed more than piano and voice, because that was the original commission. So, he just threw in the violin of his own accord. He was inspired by William Harvey. This is in the material also. William Harvey's email that went around to musician circles after 9/11. Have you happened to see that, by any chance?
LB: I haven't. Is it online?
LH: I'm not sure if it's online anymore, but William Harvey is a very interesting man, very changed by 9/11. He was a Juilliard violinist at the time and had gone down to play at the armory for the rescue workers and the military that were down there in the very early days. And he had a huge experience there, where he played and played and played until his technique was shot. His bow control was gone. I mean everything from Thais to "Turkey in the Straw,"…anything. And in that experience, and he writes about this beautifully, he ends up with the conclusion that "words can only go so far and music can only go a little farther from there."…it's, it's a famous revely and partly because following this experience…he ended up founding his own foundation, his own organization, it's called "Cultures in Harmony." They are doing the most interesting work internationally…sharing classical music with other countries, part of an international ambassador effort. It's, it's a fabulous organization, so by all means you should check that out…but he, in this email that he had written and sort of sent out to the ether, was picked up…by musicians…And so, it's the kind of thing that your professor might tape on their door of their office or something. And…and so, Richard and I had both seen it, and I had started really collecting all kinds of 9/11 material, inspired by what *City Lore* did, and so I had this kind of box of stuff here, and William's email was part of it. So, I think that served to inspire Richard, the emotional voice of the violin. And the first violinist who played was a woman named Kirsten Davis. She was…it was very hard to

track a violinist for that date because just about everyone I knew was already booked. So, all of my colleagues at the university and all of the other people that we had known from playing in Broadway orchestras and stuff like that. Everybody was booked. But Kirsten was not, and she was lovely, and she, she played that first performance. That was really good. She played that performance and the second performance at my university and then after that…there were other violinists who came into the circle.
LB: Okay, okay. And then, you said, so since that first, since the premier, you sang at your university on that American song recital. Okay, and then, do you know, how many, I mean, obviously, I'm not expecting you to remember the exact number, but do you know approximately how many times you have sung the cycle since then?
LH: Probably 10-12 times.
LB: Okay.
LH: Not a huge amount, but kind of all over the country.
LB: Sure, sure. And then when, I know you said that you have a recording along with the material you were hoping to send. When was that recording made?
LH: 2005. November 2005, we…finished it.
LB: And…just, I just had a couple of other questions. You shared how friends of yours lost their son, a firefighter, who you also knew? Is that correct?
LH: Yes.
LB: Were, were there other people that you…knew who were…?
LH: Affected by this?
LB: Yeah, or who were killed?
LH: Yes, definitely. In fact, for three years of my life following my masters' degree, I was an eclectic academic singer on a cruise ship. I sailed around the world for three years on ships. And the producer of those shows, who was one of finest human beings you will ever meet in your life, his wife was killed. She also worked for…she was, she was killed. And another uncanny, bizarre experience was a man that I knew more as a friend of a friend and…?....he was one of the voices of people calling from the top floor on the news when it was all breaking, before the collapse of the towers…that was really bizarre. So, he was, was also killed of course, but he was also one of the people informing the news media of what was going on….my sister because she was very close to this friend, because she was at the time a television producer in Los Angeles, and so after a few weeks of not being able to function…picked up and came back and staying with us for several months...to…kind of put the pieces of this all together again.
LB: Sure.
LH: So my role, my role in a funny way was sort of counselor and grief partner for a number of people who were more directly affected than I was, thankfully, but they were close to me, so I affected through them.
LB: And then…finally, have you commissioned any other pieces by Richard? Or do you plan to, or…?
LH: If I had the money I would. The funniest thing is that I just actually wrote a substantial piece of my own, and Richard came and played it because my pianist was unavailable and I remember my pianist, LeAnne, who was part of the CD and was a part of this project, getting…when she told me she couldn't come and I said, "Okay well, I finally, I got someone to sub for you, um, for that one rehearsal," and she asked who it was, and I told her it was Richard. And she said, "I don't know why you're worried about

the performance if Richard's going to be actually playing your piece." Now, that was really funny, but I'm happy to report that Richard really liked the piece and thought it was beautiful, so, so that pleased me.
LB: Oh good!
LH: But part of that is it's expensive to commission and…and, and so I gave it all a shot myself….Richard's, his, his music is really wonderful and I have sung a lot of his music besides those pieces at a number of concerts since, and I will be singing some more of his songs at a concert that I have coming up in January at…here in Manhattan.
LB: Great. Have you sung…among those other pieces that you've sung, have you sung the other soprano song cycles? Any of them?
LH:…the Emily Dickinson one.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: I've sung, not the whole cycle. No, I've sung one or two of those pieces from there. And I know that Diana early on gave me the Sylvia Plath…not the Sylvia Plath, the Sara Teasdale…cycle. And I haven't performed it, but actually that was gifted to me before it went to publication.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: That one's actually really nice, but I haven't performed it yet.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: So, I'll probably do a couple of his *Cabaret* songs at the concert in January.
LB: Okay.
LH: Are you going to talk to Patty Prunty by any chance, because she's sung a ton of his music.
LB: Oh really? Oh, no, I haven't, I will see if he can get me into contact with her.
LH: Yeah, I think if you're, depending on what the demands are for the, your paper, for this…
LB: I'm finishing my degree at the University of Northern Colorado, but I'm living in Florida right now. So, I'm just trying to get this dissertation done.
LH: Yeah, so you should definitely get in contact with Patricia Prunty and Bruce. I don't know that they've commissioned so much, but they have performed a lot of his songs. And they are both terrific human beings, and you would be well-met with them.
LB: Okay. That's good to know.
LH: You should talk to Diana Tash too, because she commissioned the Sara Teasdale. Do you have those?
LB: Yes.
LH: She commissioned those, so she would be good. She's, she's a, a powerhouse.
LB: Oh, okay. Okay…
LH: Are you just doing his song cycles or are you doing all of his solo vocal works?
LB: I'm doing just the soprano song cycles.
LH: So that's Sara Teasdale, *Race for the Sky*, Emily Dickinson…?
LB: Edna St. Vincent Millay.
LH: Oh yeah.
LB: *Wicked Girl*, *At last*… oh, well that's…I'm trying to think of them all. I can't think of them. There's…there's…*A Little Nonsense*.
LH: You should take a trip up here to meet Richard.

LB: Oh, I would love to. I'm just trying to figure out monetarily right now. Money is really tight. Maybe even if it's after the dissertation.
LH: Just to let you know, it doesn't have to be that expensive….there are lots of places to stay that are not that expensive, and I'm happy to give you that kind of information if you want some help. You should really look at when flights could be cheap and when Richard is around, because it would…it would be really invaluable.
LB: Sure, sure.
LH:…well, Bruce isn't here and neither is Patty, but you could also see other people who have commissioned.
LB: Right, right….okay, well finally, the material, would it be possible for you to send it to me and then how much did you want for that? And…
LH: It's twenty dol…twenty bucks would be great, just to cover the postage and the cost of it…so why don't you email me your address…
LB: Okay.
LH: So that I actually have that it all in writing, and then I will try and get that out to you. I can't promise before Christmas.
LB: Oh, no, no, no. I understand.
LH: Right and, and going to a New York Post Office is, is like a really long process.
LB: Oh, I'm sure. (laughter)
LH: So…but I think that the materials would be useful for you in writing about that cycle in particular.
LB: Right, right.
LH: A lot of background.
LB: Hmm hmm. Great….well, I don't really have any other specific questions unless there's something that you think that I should know that I didn't ask about…or if you think that's all covered in the material…or…?
LH: I have one question. Have you sung his songs?
LB:…I sang *Race for the Sky*, and I've sung…a couple of the Emily Dickinson and also the *Ballad of the Boy Who Went to Sea*.
LH: And when did you perform *Race for the Sky*?
LB:…it was for my first doctoral recital which was in Spring 2008.
LH: Oh, great, great. And what was the response there?
LB:…I didn't get a lot of feedback on, on that cycle. I know that people that were closer to me, like in my studio, really were like "Wow, that's really, really amazing."…after the recital it was just kind of a blur of "Congrats" and walking off and you know…really I don't think that there were probably that many people that could personally relate to that day…
LH: Uh-huh…
LB: …in the audience, so…I hope that they were internally affected. I didn't see a lot of…emotions displayed though.
LH: I'm always curious to see how it goes, how it works with…other people and as time goes by…it's one of the questions we had as…will the piece still be as effective as the event becomes more distant…? so that's, that interesting to hear… (aside to one of her children: "Look at the material. I'm on the phone.")…and what made you choose that piece? I'm just curious.

LB:…well actually my voice professor…had heard it or heard about it when it was…sung at the National NATS Convention in New Orleans.
LH: Oh, who was that, who was that professor? That was me that sang it there.
LB: Oh, you sang it there?! (laughter) Dr. Melissa Malde. I don't know if she was actually at the conference or if she read about it….but she said that it was really powerful and…
LH: Wonderful.
LB: …so she, when I was looking for a piece to, or a cycle to perform, she said, "Why don't you look at that?" and then, I started, I really, really wanted to do it once I saw it, and so…
LH: Oh wonderful.
LB: And I also play violin, so I was excited that there was a violin in it, and I mean, I didn't obviously play for, when I performed it…
LH: That would be really hard.
LB: Ha, yeah, but I liked that combination, and I, I really thought it was a goo…very powerfully written piece, and I certainly hope that I can sing it again at some point, but, but that's really what, that experience and going through that…when she suggested, "Well, maybe you could look at him for your dissertation." And I was like "Yeah, maybe…" And then, that's kind of how it all got started, so…
LH: Wow. Well, you know that NATS performance was…very important for us. I, it was, it was an experience…performing in ballroom of a hotel, hideous space…on this little postage stamp of a makeshift stage…but people were just sobbing. That was one of those occasions where outside of New York people were sobbing. And then…and we, the three of us who performed it there. It was LeAnne, myself and Katie Kresig, who's on my recording. It was the first time that the three of us had particularly performed it together…and we really bonded. That's my team. That's, that's, that's my dream team right there. And they, we loved the city, you know, we went out for dinner. We had this, this amazing experience, you know with people really responding to our songs, and then, of course, just after that, Katrina struck.
LB: Right. Hmmm…
LH: And the day that the levies broke was the day that we recorded *Race for the Sky* in the studio. And, we just couldn't, we didn't understand what was going on in New Orleans and then we heard the levies broke, and we were completely freaked out because that was the city where we had bonded…with this piece that we were recording that day. And the recording engineer, Sean Swinney, was a New Orleans native, and he had not heard from his family. So, it's, it's another link to an American tragedy and the development of this work…has left its stamp on all of us. It's, it's, the recording carries a little bit of that strain which I think is actually okay, because it's very, it's a tough experience. But, the thing, I think the thing that I would like to leave you with most about *Race for the Sky* and, and hopefully, when you got the score and the sort of little text that precedes the score…did you order it probably from Glendower?
LB: Yes, I did.
LH: So, I mean I had really had thought that it was important to include that little explanatory note at the beginning because the project didn't develop as, as a typical, "Oh, a composer decides to set some poem and this is all about the composer…". I mean, not to take anything away from Richard because he's fabulous.

LB: Right.
LH: But it was a really collaborative effort from a number of people, and, and the important thing that we wanted to stress…that I have been fighting to stress throughout was that memory of the attacks was not the point, but remembering what people did in the wake of the tragedy…that they wanted to be creators. They were expressive in the, in the domain of the arts. They were alive. And that instead of destruction, they were choosing creativity. That is what I'm trying to remember.
LB: Right.
LH: Does that make sense?
LB: Mmhm…
LH: And that's what I'm hoping is going to stand the test of time more than the fact that these buildings were hit by terrorists and all these people died.
LB: Right, right.
LH: Do you see the distinction?
LB: Mmhm, mmhm…
LH: This is for me the really important part about this project. That I wanted to remember, that when the chips were down, this is what people did in response….that was really important to me, and that's, I already knew that as time would go by all we were going to be remembering was propaganda, about Islamic fundamentalists…and who knows what else. When, when really what was so hopeful and inspiring was…people coming together and, and, and overwhelmingly writing and calling for peace. Revenge and getting them back and blowing them to smitherings was so not what you saw in the streets of the city. It was not there.
LB: Right. Well, I really appreciate you sharing all of this with me, and…
LH: It was a pleasure. I'm talking to a colleague who's sung these songs.
LB: (laughter) Yeah, and I will let you know how this all comes out, and you can…read my dissertation if you want when it gets done. (laughter)
LH: Hopefully soon. That would be great. But you should definitely reach Diana Tash because she commissioned those Sara Teasdale songs.
LB: Yeah, that would be good. I'll, I'll contact Richard and see if he can get me in touch with her.
LH: I'm sure he will. She sings with LA Opera so I'm sure you could find her yourself. You could probably contact her directly or ask Richard it doesn't really matter.
LB: Sure, okay.
LH: They're all part of the same little mafia so,
LB: (laughter) So, great and then…I'll just send you…would you like a check?
LH: That's fine, that's fine. I could…I'll just send you that information online. Just send me your address, and I'll just send it back.
LB: Oh, okay.
LH: Okay?
LB: Great. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.
LH: You're welcome. Thanks.
LB: Alright. Thanks.
LH: Bye-bye.
LB: Bye.

APPENDIX C

COMPLETE LIST OF WORKS TO DATE[274,275]

252Thomas, "Curriculum Vitae," 2011, 4-14.

253 Notes: This list does not include Thomas' collaborative works with students in the *Richard Gold Opera Life Project, Young Audiences/New York* or the like. (Thomas, "Curriculum Vitae," 2011.) Works may be listed under more than one category. Seven of the eight song cycles discussed in this document are available for purchase from *Classical Vocal Reprints*. *Three Kisses* is the only one not available. These and other pieces that are available at *Classical Vocal Reprints* have been denoted with an asterisk(*).

Choral Works:

An Elf's Life (1990)
Bring Back the World (2008)
Golden Gate (2008)
Harmonia Sacra (2001)—with orchestra and soloists
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (2003)
I never saw a Moor (2003)—with soprano soloist and oboe
It's A Wonderful Time! (2002)
Midnight Ballet (2005)
Miriam's Journey (1989)
My House (2008)
This House (1990)
What Went Wrong (2008)
With Wings Like Eagles (2002)

Concert Band Works:

Musicus Cartoonus (2004)

Film:

The Sparrow (1996)
What Became Known as…The Eleanor Affair (1996)

Incidental Music:

Camino Real (1986)
Six Degrees of Separation (1993)
Twelfth Night (1981)

Instrumental Solos and Duets:

1889 (1989)—piano
A Swiss Girl in Paris: Quasi Sonatine (2002)—flute and piano
Adagio/Presto (2006)—violin and piano
Burlesque (2005)—trumpet and piano
Hi-Line (2005)—cello and piano
Iryna (2002)—domra and bayan
Morning Light (2006)—clarinet and piano
Nightcolors (1988)—piano
Remembering the Call from the Mountains (2005)—bass flute
To be Sung at Sunset (2011)—violin
Vishnu Schist (2010)—baritone saxophone and piano
The Prairie Sonata (2008)—piano
the star to every wandering bark (2005)—piano
Wild Rose (2001)—piano

Instrumental Ensemble Works:

At last, to be identified! (2012)—violin, cello and piano
Driving at Night (1988)—violin, cello and piano

Musicals:

America: 1900 (2006)
Café Society (1988)
Close Harmony Holidays (1989)
Golden Gate (1999-2003)
Heart Songs (1995)
Jimmy (2007)
In Thinking of America (1999)
L'Amour Bleu (1994)
Ladies in a Maze (1996)
Parallel Lives (2005)
Spokesong (1984)
The Bale of Hay Saloon (1993)
The Big Apple Cabaret (1994)
The First Annual King Cole Home for the Aged Benefit Revue (1990)
What's the Crime? (1985)

Opera:

Holiday (1980)—one-act opera
The Music Theatre Machine (1982)—children's opera

Orchestral Works:

Concerto in C-E-G (2009)—with piano soloist
Electric City (2009)
Harmonia Sacra (2001)—with soloists and choir
It's A Wonderful Time! (2002)
Race for the Sky (2005)
Sonnets and Song for Orchestra (1992)
The Children's Hour (1994)—with baritone soloist
The Ghosts of Alder Gulch (2002)
The Wiregrass Symphony (2004)
Vergin, Tutt'Amor (1998)—chamber orchestra with soprano soloist

Small Vocal and Vocal-Instrumental Ensembles:

A Clear Midnight (2006)—mixed quartet and piano
**A Wicked Girl* (2003)—soprano, cello and piano
AIDS Anxiety (1992)—three baritones and piano
Andante (1986)—soprano and string quartet
Ascension (2004)—mixed quartet and piano
Beeping Sleauty (2007)—mixed quartet and piano
Camino Real Redux (2007)—tenor and two pianos
Clean Plates Don't Lie (2009)—soprano, tenor, baritone, violin, cello and piano
Fish 'n Chicks (2001)—soprano, tenor, baritone and piano
Gertie's Head (1997)—soprano, clarinet, cello and piano
Letter from Tobé (2006)—soprano, tenor, baritone and piano
**My Beloved is Mine* (2003)—soprano, flute and piano

Of Astronauts and Stars (1995)—soprano and tenor
**Queen Bee Soliloquy* (1987)—soprano, bassoon and piano
She is Overheard Singing (1994)—soprano, mezzo-soprano, violin, cello, piano
**Race for the Sky* (2002)—soprano, violin and piano
The Butterfly Tree (2005)—soprano, tenor, baritone and piano
The Flies (2002)—soprano, tenor, baritone, flute and piano
The History of the Seven Parrots (2000)—soprano, tenor, baritone and piano
The Nash Menagerie (2001)—soprano, tenor and baritone
**The Quangle Wangle's Hat* (2008)—soprano, flute, cello and piano
They Don't Speak English in Paris (1996)—soprano, tenor and singing pianist
Three Kisses (2000)—soprano, viola and piano
To Coulanges (2002)—soprano, tenor, baritone and piano
Two Victorian Ladies (2000)—soprano, mezzo-soprano and piano
Vergin, Tutt'Amor (1998)—soprano and chamber orchestra

<u>Solo Vocal Works</u> (with piano, unless otherwise noted):
**A Little Nonsense* (1988)—soprano cycle
**A Wicked Girl* (2003)—soprano (with cello and piano)
All the Wide World (2006)—baritone
Andante (1986)—soprano and string quartet
**At last, to be identified!* (1992)—soprano cycle
**Ballad of the Boy Who Went to Sea* (1993)—soprano
By Strauss (Literally!) (1999)—soprano
**Cabaret Songs* (3 volumes, 2001, 2003, 2006)
Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol: Abridged and Condensed (1997)--baritone
Consecration (2009/2010)—soprano cycle
Conversation Overheard (1995)—baritone
Droplets (2003)—baritone
**Drum Taps* (1991)—baritone cycle
**Far Off* (1991)—tenor cycle
Gertie's Head (1997)—soprano, clarinet, cello and piano
I never saw a Moor (1991)—soprano
I Will Lift My Voice (2000)—mezzo-soprano
I'm Gonna Sail Away (2003)—soprano
I'm Yours! (1990)—soprano
Ineffable Joy (2000)—baritone
It Doesn't Matter (1991)—baritone
Jordan (2000)—baritone
Just Another Hour (1997)—tenor
Letter From Camp (1998)—soprano
**My Beloved is Mine* (2003)—soprano (with flute and piano)
Move Into the Light (1990)—soprano
My German Boyfriend (1997)—soprano
Nightfall (1987)—soprano
O Night Divine! (1991)—soprano cyc
**Ossessione* (1997)—baritone

piano after war (1999)—baritone
Poison (1991)—baritone
Portraits of Imagined Love (1995)—soprano cycle
**Queen Bee Soliloquy* (1987)—soprano (with bassoon and piano)
**Spring Rain* (2006)—soprano cycle
**Race for the Sky* (2002)—soprano cycle (with violin and piano)
Seeing a Woman as in a Painting by Berthe Morisot (1996)—baritone
September Song (1989)—arrangement for baritone
**Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (1992)—soprano cycle
Sweet Like a Crow (2001)—baritone
The American Song (1998)—baritone
The Beach (2000)—soprano
**The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver* (1992)—soprano
The Letters (2005)—tenor cycle
The Little Black Boy (1993)—tenor
The Little Things You Do Together (1989)—arrangement for baritone
The Peacock Aria (1987)—soprano
The Stricken City (2006)—baritone
The Thought of Him (1997)—mezzo-soprano
Three Kisses (2000)—soprano cycle (with viola and piano)
This is New (1989)—arrangement for baritone
Tunes for Tots (2006)—soprano cycle
**Twilight* (2007)—soprano cycle
UFO (1992)—soprano
Vergin, Tutt'Amor (1998)—soprano (with chamber orchestra)
Vermilion (2000)—soprano
When I Kiss You (1994)—tenor
Why Can't I Let You Go? (1992)—baritone
Why Can't I Let You Go? (1994)—tenor
**Young Love* (2008)—cycle for young singers

Other Vocal Music for the Stage:

**Cabaret Songs* (3 volumes, 2001, 2003, 2006)
Café Vienna (1983)
**Ladies of Their Nights and Days* (1983)
Observation Deck (1998)
Style! (1984)
The Grimwood Clock (1981)
Theatre Songs for the Cynical Age (1980)

Other:

Twinkles: Vocalises and Acting Exercises for Young Singers (2000)

APPENDIX D

BRIEF REPERTOIRE GUIDE TO THE SONG CYCLES FOR SOPRANO BY RICHARD PEARSON THOMAS

Cycles	Songs	Level: Young	Level: Intermediate	Level: Advanced	Excerptable
A Little Nonsense					
	The Pobble Who Has No Toes			X	X
	Calico Pie			X	X
	The Owl and the Pussycat			X	X
At last, to be identified!					
	Doubt me! My Dim Companion!		X		X
	What if I say I shall not wait!		X		
	Wild Nights--- Wild Nights!	X			X
	I never saw a Moor	X			X
	There's a certain Slant of light			X	
	At last, to be identified!			X	X
Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay					
	The Road to Avrillé	X			X
	To A Young Poet		X		X
	To One Who Might Have Borne A Message			X	X
	The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver			X	X
Three Kisses					
	The Look		X		
	I hoped that he would love me		X		
	Fever 103 degrees			X	X

Cycles (cont.)	Songs (Cont.)	Level: Young	Level: Intermediate	Level: Advanced	Excerptable
Race for the Sky					
	To The Towers Themselves		X		
	How My Life Has Changed			X	
	Meditation		X		
	don't look for me anymore		X		
A Wicked Girl					
	The Penitent	X			
	Thursday		X		
	The Betrothal		X		
Spring Rain					
	Old Tunes		X	X	X
	The Ghost			X	X
	Child, Child			X	X
	Spring Rain			X	X
Twilight					
	A Birthday		X		X
	Mirage			X	X
	Song		X		X

[Table 1]