



Judith Carman

ABBREVIATION KEY: Diff = difficulty level; **V** = voice; **P** = piano; **E** = easy; **mE** = moderately easy; **M** = medium; **mD** = moderately difficult; **D** = difficult; **DD** = very difficult; **Tess** = tessitura; **LL** = very low; **L** = low; **mL** = moderately low; **M** = medium; **mH** = moderately high; **H** = high; **HH** = very high; **CR** = covers range; **CS** = covers staff; **X** = no clear key center.

NEW VOICES IN ART SONG

ABEL, MARK (b. 1948). FIVE POEMS OF RAINER MARIA RILKE. Soprano and Piano. Oceangoing Music (ASCAP), 2012. Tonal; G_3-A_5 ; Tess: CR, M, mL; regular and irregular changing meters; changing tempos; V/M–mD, P/M–mD; 20 pages. Soprano [with accessible low chest tones].

1. “In This Town the Last House Stands.” Minor tonalities; G_3-A_5 ; Tess: CR; 5/4, 6/4, 4/4, 7/4, 2/4, ♩ = 76 with changes; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.
2. “My Life Is Not This Steeply Sloping Hour.” Major tonalities; G_3-G_5 ; Tess: CR; 7/4, 9/4, 4/4, 6/4, ♩ = 94

with changes; V/M–mD, P/M–mD; 4 pages.

3. “All of You Undisturbed Cities.” Minor tonalities; A_3-A_5 ; Tess: CR; 4/4, 9/4, 6/4, 5/4, ♩ = 82 with changes; V/M–mD, P/M–mD; 6 pages.
4. “You Darkness, That I Come From.” X; $A_3-G_5^{\#}$; Tess: M, mL; 6/4, 4/4, 3/4, 5/4, Slow, dramatic—♩ = 90 with changes; V/mD, P/M–mD; 5 pages.
5. “I Live My Life in Growing Orbits.” X–major tonalities; G_3-A_5 ; Tess: CR; 4/4, 6/4, 5/4, ♩ = 66 with changes; V/mD, P/mD; 5 pages.

Mark Abel, son of the distinguished reporter Elie Abel, grew up with a wide variety of influences from living in Europe and Asia as well as in America. Classical music was his artistic focus until he discovered modern jazz and then rock in his early teen years. He spent the 70s and 80s in the popular music scene before turning away from the compositional limits of popular song and back toward classical composers. After building a career in journalism (until 2004), he has returned to composition.

Since 2005, he has written his own lyrics on a number of contemporary topics, and three of his song cycles for soprano and piano, including the Rilke songs reviewed here, are available on a Delos label CD titled *Terrain of the Heart. Five Poems of Rainer Maria Rilke* is a song cycle from the period when the composer was setting preexisting poems. These five poems all contain imagery, either direct or indirect, concerning death, the spiritual path, and meditation in the search for God. [See the review of the CD on p. 271.]

The setting of “In This Town the Last House Stands” is both stark and full of motion as the poet speculates on the meaning of the last house standing

“as lonely as if it were the last house in the world” on the edge of a tiny town that “is only a passing over place.” It exists between two huge spaces, and those who leave “wander a long way off and many perhaps die on the road.” This metaphor of the individual life existing between the vast spaces before birth and after death opens *starkly* with the piano doubling the vocal line an octave below until the first interlude, where more movement begins. The long phrased and wide ranged vocal lines reflect both loneliness and distance, often over piano figuration that intensifies the mood. The song ends with two slow chords that have no resolution.

“My Life Is Not This Steeply Sloping Hour” describes a life that often seems on the brink of extinction (“I am the rest between two notes,/ which are somehow always in discord/ because death’s note wants to climb over . . .”) but that somehow clings to life through the dark places (“they stay there trembling/ And the song goes on—beautiful”). A rather hurried first section in irregular meter and moving figuration in the piano reflects the agitation of the present as the voice declaims the text. Gradually slowing tempos and more somber harmonic structures underlie the text as it moves toward “death’s note,” where moving figuration returns to agitation before floating gently, with ascending trills, to the closing measures. The vocal line again covers a wide range with several chest tones in the last section preceding the final high phrase.

“All of You Undisturbed Cities” is another allusion to the work of the spiritual journey. The poet asks all those who are complacent and self-satisfied whether they have ever “longed for the enemy.” He would like to see these souls

“besieged by him” who “lies outside the walls like a countryside,” who knows how to endure, who “sends no one into the city to threaten or promise, and no one to negotiate,” but simply breaks down the walls, working in silence. In a long agitated prelude the piano sets the scene of urgency with repeated F[#]5s against syncopated countermelodies that lead to a repeated chord pattern. The voice declaims the text in a strong melodic line with many ascending intervals. A bass ostinato introduces the section that describes the character of him who waits outside the walls. The song ends “Dramatically slow” and quietly, framing the words, “He is the one who breaks down the walls,/ and when he works he works in silence.”

“You Darkness, That I Come From” proclaims the poet’s love of the darkness that “pulls in everything,” more than “all the fires that fence in the world,” because those circles of light become exclusive. In the darkness that contains everything and everyone, “it is possible a great energy is moving near me.” The song opens with a short two-voice dramatic introduction in the piano that leads to the entrance of the vocal line in a *quasi* slow waltz meter that continues in various other meters, following the phrasing of the text. A six-measure piano interlude at a faster tempo, leading to the last section of the poem, creates the sense of surrounding energy the poet feels in the darkness. The song ends slowly and quietly, low in the voice—“I have faith in nights.”

“I Live My Life in Growing Orbits” describes the poet’s long spiritual journey—“I live my life in growing orbits/ which move out over the things of the world.” Rilke is “circling around God”—“and I have been circling for a thousand years/ and I still don’t know if I am a falcon or a storm,/ or a great

song.” The piano begins the song with a circling figure in the right hand over a gently syncopated left hand melody, which then takes over the role of the circling figure while the right hand joins the voice in its melody for a few measures. Various circular tone painting figures in the piano accelerate the tempo gradually to the climax of the song before returning to a slower tempo for the intense last page. The vocal line soars in sustained phrases over the tone painting of the piano.

This cycle would be a very effective work for the soprano for whom these poems have meaning. It might also work well for a tenor who has strong low tones. The composer’s style contains elements and colorings from different musical genres, and presents us with something fresh and imaginative.

HAGEN, JOCELYN (b. 1980). LOVE. SONGS (e. e. cummings) for baritone and piano. Graphite Publishing, 2010. CD available from the composer.

- I. “burn.” A major; B^b₂–F₄; Tess: CR; 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, 5/4, *with a little rubato* ♩ = 66; V/M–mD, P/M–mD; 5+ pages.
- II. “your little voice.” X; C₃–F₄; Tess: M; 4/4, 2/4, 5/8, 5/4, 3/4, *Joyously* ♩ = 100–104; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.
- III. “so quite new.” Tonal; C₃–F[#]₄; Tess: mH; 4/4, 3/4, 5/4, 6/4, *sensuously, with rubato* ♩ = 63–69; V/M, P/M–mD; 6 pages.
- IV. “i love you much (most beautiful darling).” G major; B₃–F[#]₄; Tess: M–mH; 4/4, 5/4, 3/4, 2/4, *Joyful* ♩ = 84; V/M–mD, P/M; 4 pages.
- V. “i carry your heart with me.” D major; C₃–F[#]₄; Tess: mH; 4/4, 3/4, 5/4, 2/4, *humble & honest* ♩ = 63–66; V/M–mD, P/M; 5 pages.

Currently Artist-in-Residence at North Dakota State University School of Music, Jocelyn Hagen is a native of Valley City, North Dakota. She was a professional accompanist at age 15 and holds degrees in composition from St. Olaf College and the University of Minnesota. To date, she has received over 40 commissions, and her works have had 50 premiers and 100 performances. These three song cycles are representative of her song composition.

Love. songs presents some of the many aspects of love in the poetry of e. e. cummings. In the first song, “burn,” desire is illuminated in the poet’s characteristic syntax of irregular line lengths that place the word “burn” in various positions of emphasis. The composer solves the problem of this irregularity by composing a piano part that simply flows along, either in a smooth arpeggiated line with occasional melodic fragments, rising two-voice lines, or sustained chords, under the vocal line, which is free to articulate the text in irregular melodic phrases that carry the poetic lines in their original lengths. The often ascending vocal lines evoke the feeling of desire, while the rhythmic divisions fit the word rhythms perfectly.

“your little voice” opens with a leaping figure in the right hand of the piano over staccato left hand notes to introduce the first line—“your little voice/ Over the wires came leaping . . .” This joyous mood continues with a vocal line that also has some leaps up to the lines “into delicious dancing,” where the meter changes to a waltz pattern. The lines before the end are sung *a cappella* until the short coda with a return of the leaping figure in the piano at “leaping/ Sweetly/ your voice.”

“so quite new” describes physical love and begins *sensuously, with rubato*

with a sinuous melody in the right hand over open fifths in the left in the piano introduction. At the vocal entrance—"i like my body when it is with your/ body . . ."—the open fifths in the bass continue with a countermelody in the right hand under the smooth vocal line. As the pace of emotion builds in the poem, the music changes, first to arpeggiation under "and which i will/ again and again and again/ kiss," and then *with reckless abandon* to a repeated triplet pattern that pushes forward throughout the song until the last lines. The song ends quietly.

"i love you much (most beautiful darling)" is marked *Joyful* and opens with a bell tone chord that drops immediately into rising triplet patterns in the piano under the triplet-filled vocal line. The music becomes more somber at "although winter may be everywhere" with a slower tempo and fuller chords leading to sustained chords at a phrase sung *slowly, out of time*. The first tempo returns and continues with rising figures and bell-like rolled chords in the piano under the vocal line that carries the joyful text to its soft conclusion—"believe in nothing but love."

"i carry your heart with me" is a quiet and intimate setting of this well known poem. The piano opens with a melodic motive in the right hand of the piano that will pervade the first few lines of the poem. The vocal line rides over this figuration in melodic irregular phrase lengths of the text with impeccable word rhythms. From "i want/ no world" to "and whatever a sun will always sing is you" the voice is very free over sustained rolled chords. Gentle trills and then a repeated sextuplet pattern carry the text "here is the deepest secret nobody knows." From "and this is the wonder that's keeping the

stars apart" the music moves quietly upward, ending softly on a repeated-note vocal line ("i carry your heart/ i carry it in my heart") over sustained open intervals in the piano.

This cycle would be an excellent choice for a baritone who loves the poetry of e. e. cummings. Although not especially difficult, the cycle requires accomplished performers.

SONGS OF FIELDS AND PRAIRIES for soprano and piano.

Graphite Publishing, 2006. CD available from the composer.

- I. "Call of the Open" (Laura E. Bradshaw). X-C major; C₄-A^b₅; Tess: CR; 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, *Andante* ♩ = 92-96; V/M-mD, P/M-mD; 10 pages.
- II. "Fall Fields" (Richard Eugene Burton). D major; F[#]₄-A₅; Tess: M; 4/4, 6/4, 3/4, 5/4, *Tranquil* ♩ = 58-66; V/M, P/mD; 4 pages.

III. "Silent Noon" (Dante Gabriel Rosetti). F major; C₄-C₆; Tess: M; 7/8, 4/8, 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, 9/8, 2/8, 5/4, *Smoothly* ♩ = 126-138; V/M-mD, P/mD; 8 pages.

IV. "The Prairie-Grass Dividing" (Walt Whitman). Tonal; F₄-A₅; Tess: M; 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, 5/4, *Military* ♩ = 72-76; V/M, P/M; 6 pages.

V. "The Endless Root" (Witter Bynner). G minor; D₄-F₅; Tess: M; unmetred, for voice alone, *Soloistic and folk-like* ♩ = 92-96; V/M; 1 page.

VI. "The Flower of the Field" (Isaiah 40:6-8). G major; G₄-A₅; Tess: M; 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, *Reverent, with much rubato* ♩ = 92-108; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.

VII. "Lullaby" (Anne Crichton Boise). X-E major; B₃-B₅; Tess: M; 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, *Very freely* ♩ = 56-60; V/M, P/M; 6+ pages.

These songs celebrate the allure of the great open spaces of fields and prairies, what they offer, what they

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teach, and what they cover. All give a sense of great space, and most have a quality of stillness and silence.

“Call of the Open” sets the tone with a very widely spaced and fairly long piano introduction that contrasts in spacing to the opening vocal line—“Away from the din of the city/ . . . Out where the wind blows free./ Trees and rivers and lakes and hills/ Are calling, calling me.” This rather long song contains much tone painting in the piano and in the vocal line for various aspects of nature. The quiet ending prepares for the next song, “Fall Fields,” a tone poem that describes how the “sober golden fields lie soaked in light.” Again beginning with widely spaced sustained chords, the piano continues with slowly moving figuration under the static vocal line that is mostly repeated notes in a small conjunct melodic line. The silence of the fields is palpable in the ending of the song.

“Silent Noon” begins directly, *attaca*, from “Fall Fields” with a smooth two-voice piano introduction in con-

trary motion in 7/8 meter with some polyrhythms leading to sustained chords. The floating quality established gives way to regular motion in 3/4 meter to accommodate the regular lines of the well known poem. The effect of the stillness of the poem is conveyed through floating motion in the piano under a sustained vocal line. A rather long piano interlude after the C₆ climax at “Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass” leads to a static section of widely spaced sustained chords under a quiet vocal line. From “So this winged hour is dropt to us from above” on, the music increases in intensity with greater piano motion and a high vocal phrase at “Oh! We clasp our hearts, . . .” [*sic*] only to return to slower, softer chordal figuration to the end.

“The Prairie-Grass Dividing” is a somewhat odd poem by Whitman about the independence the prairie teaches its inhabitants—“Those of the open atmosphere . . . / Those that go their own gait . . . / Those with a never-quell’d audacity . . . /

Those of earth-born passion, simple, neverconstrain’d, never obedient,/ Those of inland America.” The composer chooses a march-like dotted-rhythm figure to anchor the music, marked *Military*, that will underlie the speech-like vocal line throughout the song. The attitude is one of defiance, born of the hard demands of life on the prairie.

“The Endless Root,” for voice alone, is a simple statement of the resilience of the deep roots of both the natural world and the world of humans. The vocal line is somewhat like a long forgotten folksong in its simplicity and power.

“The Flower of the Field” is a hymn-like setting of the familiar “All flesh is grass,/ And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.” A central section has more movement in the piano, but the vocal line is slow and sustained.

“Lullaby” is a poignant description of the farewell at the grave of a young man, a son who loved the hills and prairies. This cycle would be of interest to a soprano with a warm, lyric voice who has lived in the “fields and prairies” the texts describe.

. THE TIME OF SINGING HAS COME for soprano, tenor, and piano. Graphite Publishing, 2010. CD available from the composer.

- I. “Arise, My Love” (Song of Solomon 2:10–13). Major tonalities; D₄–A^b₅/D₃–A^b₄; Tess: CR; 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, 5/4, 6/8, 12/8, 9/8, *Adagio* ♩ = ca.66; V/M, P/M; 7+ pages.
- II. “To-night” (Sara Teasdale). X–F major; E₄–A^b₅/E₃–A₄; Tess: M; 4/4, 3/4, *Slowly* ♩ = 60—*with movement* ♩ = ca.72; V/M, P/M; 3 pages.

III. “The Wedding Is the Promise” (Marisha Chamberlain). F major; E₄-D₅/E₃-D₄; Tess: M; 3/4, *simply, with a lilt* ♩ = 100; V/E, P/E; 2 pages.

This short set of songs for soprano and tenor contains two songs that would be useful for singers looking for duets for a recital program. “Arise, My Love” is a challenging duet that contains some contrapuntal singing, some solo phrases, and some singing together. Arpeggiated figuration in the piano buoys up the voices, and the high ending would make this a nice last song in a group of love duets.

“To-night” is a short song that divides up Teasdale’s poem between the voices for the first few lines—“The moon is a curving flower of gold./ The sky is still and blue”—before bringing them together at “The moon is a flower without a stem.” Two-voice contrary motion figuration in the piano under the smooth vocal lines creates a stillness that evokes the stillness of the moonlit night.

“The Wedding Is the Promise,” composed for the 25th wedding anniversary of friends, is a short, very simple song in waltz time for soprano and tenor in octaves. The promise is that there will be someone late in life “to be there—to sit in the other chair.”

MITRANO, MELANIE. *PHOBIAS & INFATUATIONS* (Melanie Mitrano). A song cycle for female voice and piano. Melanie Mitrano (ASCAP), 2007. Tonal with traditional keys; G₃-B₅; Tess: CR; regular and irregular changing meters; varied tempos; V/M-mD, P/M-mD; 50 pages. Soprano with low chest tones or Mezzo Soprano with easy high tones. Excellent CD available from the composer.

1. “Your Joyful Voice.” Tonal; C₄-B₅; Tess: CR; 2/4, 6/8, 4/4, 7/8, 5/8, 3/4, 9/8, 3/8, Vivace ♩ = 152; V/mD, P/mD-D; 9 pages.
2. “Time for Tea.” Minor tonalities; A₃-A₅; Tess: CR; 4/4, 2/4, ♩ = 58; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.
3. “Prom Date.” Tonal; C₄-G₅; Tess: M; 4/4, 10/8, 12/8, 6/8, 3/4, 2/4, With tempered anxiety ♩ = 120; V/M, P/M; 8 pages.
4. “Aries & Gemini.” Tonal with a slow jazz feeling; C₄-A₅; Tess: CR; 12/8, ♩ = 92; V/M, P/M; 6 pages.
5. “Dinnertime.” F minor; C₄-A₅; Tess: CR; 2/4, Lento, ominous ♩ = 56; V/M, P/mE; 4 pages.
6. “Tether Your Sorrows.” B^b minor; B₃-B₅; Tess: CR; 3/4, 4/4, 2/4,

Wistfully yearning ♩ = 68; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.

7. “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.” D minor; A₃-A₅; Tess: CR; 4/4, 5/4, 6/8, 7/8, 5/8, 2/4, ♩ = 112; V/mD, P/M-mD; 7 pages.
8. “Bona Petite.” F minor-B^b major; G₃-B₅; Tess: CR; 4/4, 3/4, ♩ = 96; V/M-mD, P/M; 8 pages.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Melaine Mitrano holds a DMA from the New England Conservatory and is a composer-performer who sings and composes in a variety of styles and languages. Also a voice teacher, Mitrano searched many years for songs that would combine classical art song, music theater, and jazz. Not finding what she envisioned, she decided to compose some songs herself. *Phobias & Infatuations* is the result.

In the Composer’s Notes, Mitrano gives some background for her choice



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of subjects. “This cycle was born from my fascination with intense love and intense fear, seemingly disparate emotions, both having the power to consume one wholly. Thus, the juxtaposition of the two contradictory mental states is paramount.” The songs may be sung as a complete cycle or divided up in different ways. The “phobias” are “Prom Date,” “Dinnertime,” “Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder,” and “Bona Petite.” The “infatuations” are “Your Joyful Voice,” “Time for Tea,” “Aries & Gemini,” and “Tether Your Sorrows.”

“Your Joyful Voice” introduces us to the high intensity of the emotions stirred up by receiving a phone call from the beloved who is far away—“Your joyful voice,/ leaping over the phone wires/ came to me,/ and I was suddenly dizzy.” The music has a leaping quality in the rising lines of both voice and piano as well as in some irregular meters in fast tempos. The vocal line soars upward to a sustained B \flat_5 at the end.

“Time for Tea” changes the mood dramatically with its slow tempo and suggestive markings—*sultry rubato, sinuoso a piacere*—reminiscent of a piano bar torch song. The rising vocal lines (with a few slow three against two in the piano patterns) over seventh chords and snatches of melody in the piano create a languid mood. In one phrase, the voice encompasses A $_3$ –A \flat_5 , *mf* to *subito p*.

“Prom Date” is the first of the “phobias” and is eminently worthy of the name. After a nervous piano introduction, the voice begins in 10/8 with the rhythmic grouping of six eighths and two quarters (or one half) per measure carrying the text “Sometimes at night in a cold sweat,/ I wake up thinking of you;/ . . . Arrogant, dumb and self

centered,/ those were your good qualities. . . .” The text goes on to describe high school as “hell on earth for me,” but things have changed over the years. Now she is the successful one, and he is the loser (“L squared!”). A slow section describes a meeting with his mother—he is now living at home, working in a pet shop. The fast ending proclaims: “Poetic justice at the finest hour!”

“Aries & Gemini” is a strong statement of the unlikely bond between the “fiery Ram” and the “enigmatic Twin” who don’t always see eye to eye. On the other hand, fire needs air to live, and so they complement each other in the end. The pianist is instructed to “create a dense wash of sound” by using the pedal freely and to use a “heavier, percussive touch . . . with much volume, so as to create the effect of a jazz trio.” The vocal line is sustained and broad above the trio-like piano score.

“Dinnertime,” another of the “phobias,” opens with the slow *Habañera* introduction associated with Carmen, an amusing reference to objects that the singer wishes to discard. In this case, the hated objects are certain foods that the speaker, now that she is “a grown woman,” will “never ever have to eat . . . again.” The vocal line delivers utter revulsion in its shapes and figuration.

“Tether Your Sorrows” is a beautiful song full of yearning—“Tether your sorrows unto my heart;/ allow the years to part.” The extremely lyric vocal line pulls deep emotion from the text in a musical context that sounds a curious mixture of baroque and contemporary patterns and harmonies. The song ends on a very long sustained B $_4$ in the voice over a melodic six-measure piano coda.

“Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder” catalogs some of the quirks of the speaker that make her think, “For many years I have suspected/ I might be borderline O. C. D.” The music is cleverly both repetitive and irregular, with repeated pitch patterns and various changing meters. The vocal line accommodates word stress nicely as it also reflects both the quirks and the drama of the text.

“Bona Petite” is the last of the “phobias,” this time the fear of a “vertically-challenged” singer being “swallowed up by a piano” with its lid up on the big stick. It is a highly amusing poem that should resonate with many singers who would prefer not to be eaten alive by a concert grand fully open! A dramatic song, it is, of course, *to be performed with piano on full stick*.

This cycle is quite different from other recent song cycles in subject matter, variety of moods, and compositional style. Although not extremely difficult, the work would be challenging in various ways for upper level students. Both performers and audiences will find the cycle accessible and interesting. The vocal lines, in particular, are extremely well written, as one would expect from a singer/composer.

TAYLOR, M. RYAN (b. 1972). *ALL HEAVEN AND IT WAS ONE HOUR OLD. A Christmas with Kathe[a]rine Tynan.* Song Cycle for Medium High Voice [also available for High Voice]. Vocal Works (ASCAP), 2006. Modal and tonal; C $_4$ –A $_5$; Tess: M; changing meters; slow and fast tempos; V/M–mD, P/M–D; ca.16 minutes (34 pages). Mezzo soprano or soprano.

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1. “The Christmas Bird.” Modal on D; D $_4$ –A $_5$; Tess: M; 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, ♩ = 48; V/M–mD, P/M–mD; 10 pages.

2. "All Heaven and it was One Hour Old." Modal; D₄-G₅; Tess: M; 4/4, ♩ = 48; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.
3. "Bethlehem." Modal; E₄-A₅; Tess: M, CR; 6/8, 7/8, ♩ = 144; V/M, P/M-mD; 5 pages.
4. "Bring Him Peace." Minor tonalities; C₄-F₅; Tess: M; 5/4, 3/4, 9/8, 6/8, 4/4, ♩ = 54; V/M, P/M; 7 pages.
5. "Old Song Re-Sung." Tonal; C₄-A₅; Tess: M; 5/8, 2/4, 6/8, ♩ = 144; V/M-mD, P/mD-D. 8 pages.

M. Ryan Taylor, a native of Utah living in Salt Lake City, is a composer, conductor, and vocalist with many compositions, performances, and recordings to his credit. Most of his compositions are for voices, both solo and choral. He has composed two operas, several song cycles, children's songs, pop songs, and music theater works. The song cycle reviewed here consists of settings of five poems relating to Christmas by the Irish poet Katharine Tynan (1861-1931).

Born in Clondalkin, County Dublin, Katharine Tynan was educated in a convent school in Drogheda. Her first poems were published in 1878, and she soon became friends with such established poets as Gerard Manley Hopkins and William Butler Yeats. After her marriage to English writer and barrister, Henry Albert Hinkson, she wrote novels and poetry under the name Katharine Tynan-Hinkson. The five Christmas poems set by Taylor are reflections of her deep Catholic faith.

The poems tell the Christmas story in familiar sequence, but with unusually imaginative imagery and content. "The Christmas Bird" brings the good tidings of the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. "All Heaven and it was One Hour Old" tells of the birth and

the first lullaby. "Bethlehem" records the presence of the worshipping animals before the arrival of shepherds and kings. "Bring Him Peace" is the song of the dove as a counterpoint to the gifts of the kings, and also refers to the need to protect the child from danger. "Old Song Re-Sung" is the poet's version of "I saw three ships a-sailing" and describes the silver and ivory ship that symbolizes the cradle, the blood red ship that symbolizes the cross, and the cargo ship that symbolizes salvation. The refrain, "Oh, Jesus, Son of Mary" occurs three times.

The cycle opens with a long bird-song motive that recurs throughout the first song ("The Christmas Bird"). The vocal line begins as a folk-like melody with exotic harmonic turns and develops throughout the song into a more dramatic line over piano figurations that suggest the movement of the bird as well as its song. "All Heaven and it was One Hour Old" is a slow lullaby with repeated piano figuration under a chant-like vocal line that flows back and forth into melody. "Bethlehem" opens with an agitated pattern in the piano that sets up the first line of text: "Where man was all too marred with sin,/ The ass, the ox, were bidden in." Interestingly, the music continues in irregularity of meter and the agitated

pattern throughout the song. "Bring Him Peace" announces the coming of the kings in 5/4 meter with ponderous open fifths low in the bass and a slow melodic flourish in the right hand that leads to the entrance of the vocal line, a straightforward rendering of the text both in chant-like and melodic lines. "Old Song Re-Sung" opens quietly in 5/8 meter patterns that reflect the movement of the sailing ships. The vocal line weaves through changing meters and shifting harmonies to describe the three ships and bring the cycle to its conclusion with the text, "Oh, Jesus, Son of Mary,/ When wilt thou come for me?"

This cycle is full of unusual and beautiful imagery in the telling of the Christmas story. Its length of about sixteen minutes would make it a good centerpiece for a seasonal recital.

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