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Words, music, memory: An exploration of four soprano song cycles by Lori Laitman based on poetry by victims of the Holocaust

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WORDS, MUSIC, MEMORY:

An Exploration of Four Soprano Song Cycles by Lori Laitman

Based on Poetry from Victims of the Holocaust

Sheena Ramirez

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Dedication

To my family and teachers who have supported me on my artistic and academic journeys.

Acknowledgments

Many people have been involved in making this project a reality. I would first like to acknowledge Lori Laitman, who has been so generous with her time and commentary. It has been humbling to delve into your incredible music and commemorative tributes.

To my advisor, Kevin McMillan, and the members of my committee – Sonya Baker, Jason Haney, and Jo-Anne van der Vat-Chromy – your insights and wisdom have been tremendous. Dr. Jeanette Zyko, a friend and excellent musician, has gone above and beyond as a collaborative artist, learning four song cycles for the accompanying recitals, three of which were new arrangements. Jeremiah Padilla's contribution on piano has also been tremendous. I owe both of them a great debt as musical collaborators and have truly enjoyed learning this repertoire with them. In addition, the School of Music and the College of Visual and Performing Arts at James Madison University have supported me as both a DMA student and staff member; I am profoundly grateful.

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Finally, this project never would have come to life if not for my dear friend Adina Langer, curator for the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. Who would have guessed that almost twenty years after we first started analyzing the poetry of art song for my recitals at Oberlin that it would culminate in this

collaborative analysis of words, music, and memory? Your daily work, and the work of the entire Kennesaw team, particularly Dr. Laurence Sherr, have helped me realize the power of our voices to commemorate those lost in the Holocaust. To each of you, my deepest thanks.

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Abstract

This Doctor of Musical Arts document is an exploration of the four soprano song cycles by Lori Laitman based on text settings from victims of the Holocaust, with a specific focus on the compositional and performance devices that both underpin the power of words to bear witness to lived experience and ensure the process of musical commemoration as an act of historical preservation. Lori Laitman (b. 1955) has composed ten distinct song cycles commemorating victims of the Holocaust, of which four are included in this study – *I Never Saw Another Butterfly, In Sleep the World is Yours, The Ocean of Eternity,* and *The Secret Exit.*

Following the introduction and purpose (where the need for the study, guiding questions, project design, and delimitations are explored), this document undertakes an in-depth review of existing English language song cycles for solo voice based on poetry, prose, or witness experiences from the Holocaust. The study continues with the life history and the origins of the poetry of the witnesses Laitman honors in these four song cycles (Hana Volavková and the children of the Terezín ghetto, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, Anne Ranasinghe, and Nelly Sachs) and reviews the background, musical style, and other Holocaust works of Lori Laitman. This document analyzes Laitman's use of four specific musical devices (tessitura and range, instrumentation, use of text, and use of dissonance) to memorialize the witnesses and demonstrate why she selected the soprano voice versus another voice type.

The research was conducted by examining existing scholarly work on both Laitman and the Holocaust victims and personal interviews with the composer and the

musicians involved in the origin of the pieces. By interviewing the composer and many of the premiere artists, this document seeks to understand the role of artists in the commemorative process, particularly how art songs can honor Holocaust victims. An accompanying traveling museum exhibit, “Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust,” opened with the lecture-recital.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Need for the Study: Music as Commemoration and Historical Preservation

In the introduction to the 2021 traveling exhibit, *Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices from the Holocaust*, curator Adina Langer wrote,

> Commemoration is a process that involves witness, preservation, interpretation, and performance. Each part of this process is essential and calls upon human creativity, commitment, emotional connection, and contemporary context. Literature, music, and performance work together to provide a window across space and time for generations to connect with one another. This generational connection is essential for preserving the memory and emphasizing the significance of the Holocaust.[1]

Lori Laitman (b. 1955) is one such artist who uses her musical creativity to commemorate marginalized voices for new audiences in the 21st century. Lori Laitman's prosodic prowess has garnered international acclaim among contemporary art song composers. Her expansive catalog of vocal works includes over 300 songs and continues to grow. Special attention to the poetry is a defining feature of her music, "with settings that seek to retain the integrity of each poem while deploying the fullest resources of the voice."[2] While her numerous vocal and instrumental works explore many topics, Holocaust narratives are a particular focus. As of 2021, Laitman has penned ten solo

[1] Adina Langer, *Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust*, Kennesaw State University: Museum of History and Holocaust Education, 2021, Exhibition catalog.

[2] Paul André Bempéchat, "Laitman, Lori," Grove Music Online, updated September 2015, accessed May 21, 2021, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic.

vocal works, one oratorio, incidental music, and one opera on the subject.[3] Four of the solo vocal works are scored for soprano – *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (1996), *In Sleep the World is Yours* (2013), *The Secret Exit* (2017), and *The Ocean of Eternity* (2017). While some of these authors survived the ravages of the Holocaust (Anne Ranasinghe, Nelly Sachs), others did not (Pavel Friedmann, Miroslav Košek, Bachner, Hanus Löwy, Franta Bass, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, and one anonymous child). In each song cycle, the soprano voice is paired with a woodwind instrument, sometimes accompanied by piano. This document will shed light on the role of the writer/witness, composer, and performer in enabling the commemoration and representation of voices that would otherwise have been silenced.

Guiding Questions

As Laurence Langer posits in his anthology, *Art from Ashes*, "The question we need to address, dispensing with excessive solemnity, is how words help us to imagine what reason rejects – a reality that makes the frail spirit cringe."[4] This question is expanded upon when the words of Holocaust survivors are translated for a new audience and further disambiguated when those translated words are set to music. This document explores Laitman's purpose in composing works related to the Holocaust, how she views the role of the composer as a part of the commemorative process, and what specific

[3] "Music about the Holocaust," www.artsongs.com, copyright 2000-2012, Lori Laitman, accessed Summer 2021.

[4] Laurence Langer, "On Writing and Reading Holocaust Literature," in *Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press), 4.

musical devices she uses to serve as a conduit for expression when honoring the words of Holocaust victims. The chapters detailing each song cycle will study how Laitman's music bridges the past and the present and how her specific musical interpretation creates additional layers of meaning in the context of commemoration. This is achieved through interviews with the composer and careful musical and poetic analysis of these four song cycles. Similarly, by interviewing the musical collaborators of these works, the role of the performer and commissioner comes to light. Finally, the document showcases how their musical interpretation fulfills the author's legacy through commemorative catharsis.

Purpose Statement

This document is an exploration of the four soprano song cycles by Lori Laitman based on text settings from victims of the Holocaust, with a specific focus on the compositional and performance devices that both underpin the power of words to bear witness to lived experience and ensure the process of musical commemoration as an act of historical preservation.

Project Design

Lori Laitman and the collaborative artists and commissioners who agreed to participate submitted written or video answers to interview questions to begin the project. The following is a list of questions posed to Lori Laitman and the collaborative artists:

Interview Questions: Lori Laitman

1. What has drawn you to composing vocal music on the subject of the Holocaust, and how do you select the specific poets you choose to set?
2. What is your role in interpreting the words of Holocaust victims, and what compositional devices do you use to most truly and meaningfully communicate and give voice to the poets and writers of your chosen texts?
3. Can you share the story of composing *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, including your favorite musical moments?
4. Can you share the story of composing *In Sleep the World is Yours*, including your favorite musical moments?
5. Can you share the story of composing *The Secret Exit*, including your favorite musical moments?
6. Can you share the story of composing *The Ocean of Eternity*, including your favorite musical moments?
7. What is your musical significance when repeating a line of text in a song?
8. How do the poetry and the translation influence your selection of instrumentation and range?
9. What do you view as the role of klezmer or Jewish sacred music in your Holocaust compositions?

Interview Questions: Commissioners and Premiere Performance Artists

1. Can you share the story of your involvement in the premier of Laitman's work?

2. Through your involvement in that premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?
3. Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

The next step is a literature review of commemorative English Holocaust song cycles and referencing applicable dissertations and reference texts that sought to catalog said works. Finally, English translations of the poetry anthologies that Lori Laitman used to set her works were acquired, and other books, articles, and websites dedicated to these specific Holocaust victims were referenced.

Several books and articles have been written on the two surviving Holocaust authors, Nelly Sachs and Anne Ranasinghe. The artistic output of the Terezín ghetto, including the poetry collected in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, has been well documented. Less has been written on Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, but the detailed forward written by her surviving relatives in the English translation volume *Harvest of Blossoms* provides invaluable information.

The lecture-recital accompanying this document includes selections from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, *The Secret Exit*, *In Sleep the World is Yours*, and a full presentation of *The Ocean of Eternity*. This program was presented at James Madison University and Kennesaw State University in collaboration with the Museum of History and Holocaust Education. In addition, Adina Langer, curator for the museum, created an accompanying 10-panel exhibit entitled *Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust*.

Compositional Devices

Available interviews with Lori Laitman, whether in program or album notes, dissertation interviews, or pre-performance lectures, served as the first reference point when analyzing the music. Fourteen other doctoral documents describe Lori Laitman's works to date. There are also several important articles, including "The Songs of Lori Laitman" and "Bright is the Ring of Words," in the *Journal of Singing* published by the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

A point of consensus among Laitman scholars is the importance of depicting the meaning of the text through such tools as word-painting and rhythmic details in her compositional style. Carol Lines in *The Journal of Singing* discusses Laitman's musical style, "Listeners variously have compared Laitman's songs to those of Barber, Strauss, and Rorem. She attributes the similarities to the gifted vocal composer's intuitive ability to make the best choice for setting a phrase. Of her dedication to text, she states, 'every word in every poem is bound inextricably to the music?'."[5] Serdar Ilban, in his document "Songs from the Ashes," discusses Laitman's gifts as a melodist, sensitivity to text, and lyricism as defining features of her music, "In contrast to the mathematical, and often vocally inaccessible qualities of atonality, twelve-tone, and serialist techniques, Laitman presents the antidote of generous, sweeping melodies… Laitman's songs will hold their place in American art song literature as timeless, lyrical, and beautiful additions."[6]

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[5] Carol Lines, "The Songs of Lori Laitman," *Journal of Singing* vol. 64, no. 1 (September/October 2007): 32.

[6] Serdar Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes: An Examination of Three Holocaust-Themed Song Cycles by Lori Laitman," (DMA Diss., University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2008), 90.

From these sources, conversations with Laitman, and an examination of the song cycles covered in this document, the following four musical elements form the focus of this thesis:

1. Tessitura and range: Laitman's selection of the soprano voice embodies the youth and innocence of the chosen author through tessitura, range, and setting.
2. Accompanying instrumentation: Laitman's use of woodwind instruments incorporates Jewish sacred and secular klezmer music into the fabric of the song cycles.
3. Use of text: Laitman's decision to repeat selections from the source text creates additional layers of meaning for the commemorative process.
4. Use of dissonance: In the selected repertoire and in comparison/contrast to Laitman's harmonic language in other compositions.

Not every song follows each of these principles – for example, there are many moments when the accompanying woodwind instrument plays a countermelody that creates an aural portrait through word-painting rather than being reminiscent of klezmer music. In addition, some songs rely more heavily on one principle, which means not every one of the four principles is used in each song. Nevertheless, a comprehensive summary of these musical elements taken together is present in all four song cycles. Moreover, it constitutes a pattern in Laitman's style across soprano vocal works on the Holocaust that are not necessarily present in her other works.

Delimitations

Whether written in concentration camps, ghettos, or after the war by survivors and composers seeking to commemorate Holocaust victims, the opus of music, including instrumental, vocal, and chamber works focused on the Holocaust, is extensive. Further, there are victims of many other atrocious acts in human history that have been memorialized in music. While an entire genre of commemorative vocal works could exist, this document focuses solely on Lori Laitman's soprano art songs with text sources from Holocaust victims.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview of English Song Cycles with Poetry/Prose from Holocaust Victims

Does the mere act of setting poetry from a victim of the Holocaust make the song cycle a work of commemoration? Many composers in the latter half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have felt drawn to the poetry of victims of the Holocaust. This act of Holocaust commemoration is a guiding philosophy for Lori Laitman. Another such composer, Larry Zimmerman, describes his connection in the following way, "I felt it was important to capture the feeling of those who lived through the event. Writing the music and performing the music was painful, yet it captured, in an expressionist manner, the fear, loss, and eventual hope that occurred during this time."[7]

Does the text need to be written by a witness to commemorate, or can another source be the inspiration? If the poet is a witness to the atrocities of the Holocaust, how far removed can the text be and still be considered a work of Holocaust commemoration? Gene Scheer, who wrote the text for Jake Heggie's *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope* and *Another Sunrise,* describes the challenge of prose,

> The past is thus clouded not by a lack of willingness to define what happened, but rather by the limits of language itself. Like the uncertainty principle that governs the quantum heart of the world, history seems to be ruled by immutable paradoxes. If you measure something, you change it. If you describe something, you change it as well—even the past.[8]

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[7] Larry Zimmerman, "Larry Zimmerman and the Song Cycle, *Windsongs*," interviewed by Leesa Levy in *Specific Poetry Written by Children Incarcerated in the Terezin Concentration Camp from 1942-1944*, DMA diss, North Dakota State University, 2009.

[8] Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, *Out of Darkness: An Opera of Survival,* Music of Remembrance, American Classics, recorded 2014, Booklet notes, 5.

This study will include full song cycles only, where all of the text is either written by a Holocaust victim or is directly referencing the lived experience of a Holocaust victim. Some of these song cycles describe the Holocaust directly, while others focus on being a survivor and the associated challenges of language to capture these feelings.

No authoritative catalog or Library of Congress designation captures all of the solo vocal works related to the Holocaust. After eliminating opera, oratorio, cantatas, choral works, symphonies, duets, and song cycles in other languages, there are still many English solo vocal works related to the Holocaust. Michelle Levy summarized the divisions of different solo song materials rather distinctly in her DMA document "An Investigation of Solo Song Settings Written by Children Incarcerated in the Terezín Concentration Camp,"

> An investigation of solo song material created as a result of the Holocaust includes a variety of source material: songs created by ordinary prisoners of the ghettos, concentration and work camps; folk song material adapted for use by the victims incarcerated in these places; songs such as 'Dachau Lied,' composed by professional musicians within the camps and sung by the prisoners; and songs composed after the end of the war by professional musicians in a number of countries.[9]

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the ORT "Music and the Holocaust" websites include comprehensive collections of these other song categories.[10] This literature review focuses on works composed after World War II as a form of commemoration.

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[9] Leesa Michelle Levy, "An Investigation of Solo Song Settings of Specific Poetry Written by Children Incarcerated in the Terezin Concentration Camp from 1942 – 1944" (DMA diss., North Dakota State University, 2009).

[10] The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, is the United States official memorial site dedicated to the Holocaust. (https://www.ushmm.org/). ORT was founded in St Petersburg, Tsarist Russia, in 1880 to provide employable skills for Russia's impoverished Jews. The name "ORT" was coined from the acronym of the Russian words "Obshestvo Remeslennogo I zemledelcheskogo Truda", meaning "The Society for Trades and Agricultural Labour" (https://holocaustmusic.ort.org).

In addition to the applicable graduate documents, one valuable reference source is Kenneth Jaffe's *Solo Vocal Works on Jewish Themes: A Bibliography of Jewish Composers*, which documents music written by Jewish composers. Additional works were uncovered by referencing organizations, such as The Milken Archive and Music of Remembrance, which have curated and commissioned commemorative musical works on the Holocaust.[11] Finally, the individual websites of many of these composers uncovered additional commemorative Holocaust pieces.

Several dissertations analyzed Lori Laitman's works and included other vocal song cycles based on poetry from the Holocaust. Levy's "An Investigation of Solo Song Settings of Specific Poetry Written by Children Incarcerated in the Terezín Concentration Camp from 1942-1944" identifies the following English song cycles that fit this study's criteria (the song cycle composers are listed in parentheses): *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (Srul Irving Glick), *Windsongs* (Larry Zimmerman), *Three Songs from the Ghetto* (Gershon Kingsley), *Songs of Remembrance* (Ruth Lomon), and *To the Child Poets of Terezín* (Gayther Myers). Joy Burdette's dissertation, "Thomas Pasatieri's *Letter to Warsaw*: An Examination of Style for Performance Preparation," discusses several English Holocaust solo song cycle settings (the majority of which are also cited by Levy). Additional dissertations that analyze song cycles related to the Holocaust include Brian Nedvin's "Holocaust Song Literature: Expressing Human Experience and Emotion of the Holocaust through the Song Literature of Hirsh Glick, Mordechai Gebirtig, and Simon A.

[11] Founded in 1990, The Milken Archive of Jewish Music seeks to document, preserve, and disseminate music that pertains to the American Jewish experience. (www.milkenarchive.org). Music of Remembrance is a chamber music organization in Seattle, WA that seeks to commemorate victims of the Holocaust and others who have been excluded or persecuted for their faith, ethnicity, gender or sexuality (www.musicofremembrance.org).

Sargon," and Bora Kim's "A Guide to Performing Two Twentieth-Century Song Cycles by Lori Laitman and Lowell Liebermann." The chapter in Jaffe's *Solo Vocal Works on Jewish Themes* dedicated to the Holocaust includes: *So Many Corners* (*Even the Stars Will Wonder)* (Elizabeth Alexander), *From the Diary of Anne Frank* (Oskar Morawetz), *Terezín* (Robert Stern), and *Voices from Terezín* (Max Stern). The following English Holocaust song cycles were found by cross-referencing several online databases and websites dedicated to Holocaust Music (The Milken Archive of Jewish Music, Music of Remembrance, Israeli Music Institute): *The Heavenly Feast* (Robert Beaser), *For a Look or Touch* (Jake Heggie), *Another Sunrise* (Jake Heggie), *Letter to Warsaw* (Thomas Pasatieri), and *Camp Songs* (Paul Schoenfield).[12] Many of these composers have written other vocal works (such as operas, cantatas, or choral pieces) commemorating the Holocaust. Still, the following additional pieces fit this study's criteria: *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope* (Jake Heggie) and *We Are Children Just the Same* (Srul Irving Glick).

The following chart lists the song cycles mentioned above with information regarding composer, poet/text source, voice type, instrumentation, date of composition, and individual song titles. When certain information is not verifiable, the approximate date or name is listed with a question mark. Similarly, performance times vary by artists, so the average cycle duration is listed. Bibliographic records are in alphabetical order by composer's last name.

[12] Founded in 1961, the Israel Music Institute is the first publicly-owned music publishing house in Israel (www.imi.org.il).

TABLE 1: English Art Song Cycles by Composers other than Lori Laitman Commemorating Victims of the Holocaust

Song Cycle Title:	*So Many Corners (Even The Stars Will Wonder)*
Composer:	Elizabeth Alexander (b.1962)
Poet/Text Source:	Rose Ausländer (1901-1988), English translation by Ingeborg Wald
Ensemble:	Soprano, piano (orchestra)
Individual Song Titles:	1. So Many Corners 2. An Ark of Stars 3. Even the Stars Will Wonder* 4. So Many Corners* 5. Our Unforgettable Earth* 6. Almost White 7. So Many Corners
Date of Composition:	1998 (orchestrated version 1999/2000)
Cycle Duration:	20’00”
Notes:	*So Many Corners* are seven songs of longing, loss, and love. The stark and compelling words of Rose Ausländer, who spent the Second World War in the Czernowitz ghetto, are set to music with delicacy, ferocity, and compassion. * The three central movements may be performed as the set *Even the Stars will Wonder*, in the order of movement 3, 5, 4.

Song Cycle Title:	*The Heavenly Feast*
Composer:	Robert Beaser (b.1954)
Poet/Text Source:	From *The Heavenly Feast* Simone Weil (1909-1943), words from *The Lamplit Answer* by Gjertrud Schnackenberg (b 1953)
Ensemble:	Soprano, orchestra
Individual Song Titles:	N/A
Date of Composition:	1999
Cycle Duration:	22’00”
Notes:	Robert Beaser describes *The Heavenly Feast* as “essentially an interior monologue at the gravesite of Simone Weil,” the eccentric and enigmatic French philosopher, theosophist, anti-Fascist activist, and mystic who in 1943, at the age of thirty-four, starved herself to death in a sanitarium in Kent, England, under the delusion (or so she claimed) that the food she rejected could be provided instead to her comrades in the French Resistance behind enemy lines in German-occupied France.

Song Cycle Title:	*The Seven Deadly Sins*
Composer:	Robert Beaser (b. 1954)
Poet/Text Source:	Anthony Hecht (1923-2004)
Ensemble:	Tenor or Baritone and Piano
Individual Song Titles:	I. Pride II. Envy III. Wrath IV. Sloth V. Avarice VI. Gluttony

	VII. Lust
Date of Composition:	1979
Cycle Duration:	23’00”
Notes:	Anthony Hecht was an American soldier who helped liberate the Flossenburg concentration camp during WWII. Song cycle adapted from Hecht’s *The Hard Hours*, Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry in 1968. The core of the music springs directly and viscerally from the dense power of Hecht’s words.

Song Cycle Title:	*I Never Saw Another Butterfly*
Composer:	Srul Irving Glick (1934-2002)
Poet/Text Source:	Children’s poems from the Terezín concentration camp, 1942-44, Eng. trans.
Ensemble:	Mezzo-soprano/Contralto, orchestra (piano)
Individual Song Titles:	To Olga. Yes, that's the way things are. The little house. On a sunny evening. The narrative. The butterfly.
Date of Composition:	1972
Cycle Duration:	20’00”
Notes:	

Song Cycle Title:	*We Are Children Just the Same*
Composer:	Srul Irving Glick
Poet/Text Source:	Children’s poems from the Terezín concentration camp, 1942-44, Eng. trans.
Ensemble:	Soprano (Tenor), cello, and piano
Individual Song Titles:	No.1, The Thaw No. 2, Would You Care for Dessert? No. 3, My Country No. 4, View from the Coffee House No. 5, With You, Mother
Date of Composition:	1999
Cycle Duration	19’00”
Notes:	

Song Cycle Title:	*Another Sunrise*
Composer:	Jake Heggie (b. 1961)
Poet/Text Source:	Gene Scheer (b.1958), Krystyna Zywulska (1914-1992)
Ensemble:	Soprano and chamber ensemble - clarinet, violin, cello, double bass, piano
Individual Song Titles:	N/A
Date of Composition:	2012
Cycle Duration	28’30”
Notes:	Based on the life and work of Holocaust survivor Krystyna Zywulska, *Another Sunrise* is about the struggle to describe

	unimaginable situations to people who were not there. Commissioned by Music Remembrance.

Song Cycle Title:	*For a Look or Touch*
Composer:	Jake Heggie (b. 1961)
Poet/Text Source:	Manfred Lewin (1922-1942), Gene Scheer (b.1958)
Ensemble:	Baritone, piano (flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano)
Individual Song Titles:	The Voice Golden Years A Hundred Thousand Stars The Story of Joe Silence
Date of Composition:	2013 (2007)
Cycle Duration:	20'00"
Notes:	*For A Look Or A Touch* is a story about the persecution of gay men during the Holocaust. Librettist Gene Scheer based his text on true stories told in the documentary film *Paragraph 175* and the journal of Manfred Lewin from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. This work also exists in two other versions: a stage work with actors, a choral stage work with actors, and a men's chorus. The song cycle is a collection of 5 songs from the staged work (40'00"). Commissioned by Music of Remembrance.

Song Cycle Title:	*Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*
Composer:	Jake Heggie (b. 1961)
Poet/Text Source:	Gene Scheer (b. 1958), James Grymes (b.1973?)
Ensemble:	Mezzo-Soprano, solo violin, string quartet, and youth solo violin
Individual Song Titles:	1. Ashes 2. Exile 3. Concert 4. Motel 5. Feivel 6. Lament 7. Liberation
Date of Composition:	2020
Cycle Duration:	40'00"
Notes:	Texts by Gene Scheer based on stories about violins played by Jews in concentration camps during the Holocaust; inspired by James Grymes' book *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust – Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*. Commissioned by Music at Kohl Mansion.

Song Cycle Title:	*Three Songs from the Ghetto*
Composer:	Gershon Kingsley (1922-2019), Mordechai Gebirtig (1877-1942)
Poet/Text Source:	Children's poems from the Terezín concentration camp, 1942-44, translation by S. Katsherginsky, poetry by Mordechai Gebirtig
Ensemble:	Voice and Piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. The Last Butterfly

	2. Lullaby at Ponar 3. It Burns (S'Brennt)
Date of Composition:	1988?
Cycle Duration:	14 pages
Notes:	Kingsley was born in Germany and fled to Palestine in 1938. Of the three songs, only "The Last Butterfly" has a newly composed melody. "Lullaby at Ponar" was part of the Jewish oral tradition in Western Europe at the time of WWII, and "S'brennt" (It Burns) comes from a melody composed by Mordechai Gebirtig.

Song Cycle Title:	*To the Children Poets of Terezín*
Composer:	Gayther Myers (b.?)
Poet/Text Source:	Children's poems from the Terezín concentration camp, 1942-44, Eng. trans.
Ensemble:	Soprano, bassoon
Individual Song Titles:	Introduction At Terezín To Olga Terezín Poor Things
Date of Composition:	1999
Cycle Duration:	14'30"
Notes:	In addition to selected poetry from "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," Myers wrote an introduction he set to music "Children of misfortune whose voices carry down the year's greetings of foreshortened lives caution toward more caution. Yet, in sadness that is beyond tears their message of hope survives. That they did not cry in vain we will hear, we remember ..."

Song Cycle Title:	*From the Diary of Anne Frank*
Composer:	Oskar Morawetz (1917-2007)
Poet/Text Source:	Anne Frank, Eng. trans. By B.M. Mooyaart-Doubleday
Ensemble:	Mezzo-soprano, orchestra
Individual Song Titles:	N/A
Date of Composition:	1970
Cycle Duration:	18'00"
Notes:	Oskar Morawetz, a Canadian composer, fled Europe shortly before WWII. In securing copyright permission for the text, Morawetz began a correspondence with Otto Frank, which led to a friendship that lasted until Frank died in 1980.

Song Cycle Title:	*Letter to Warsaw*
Composer:	Thomas Pasatieri (b.1945)
Poet/Text Source:	Pola Braun (1910-1943)
Ensemble:	Soprano, piano
Individual Song Titles:	Jew Allegro mesto Tsurik a heym Allegro Andante

	Moderato martiale Mother Allegro molto Letter to Warsaw Allegro matriale Lento An Ordinary Day – Moving Day – Kaddish
Date of Composition:	2003
Cycle Duration:	70’30”
Notes:	Poet/cabaret artist Pola Braun wrote these unpublished texts in the Warsaw ghetto and the Majdanek concentration camp, where she perished in 1943. Two of the texts were originally set to music that no longer exists. Commissioned by Music of Remembrance.

Song Cycle Title:	*Camp Songs*
Composer:	Paul Schoenfield (b.1947)
Poet/Text Source:	Jerzak Kulisiewicz (1918-1982), English translation by Katarzyna Jerzak
Ensemble:	Mezzo-soprano, clarinet, piano, violin, cello, and double bass
Individual Song Titles:	No. 1. Black Boehm No. 2. The Corpse Carrier’s Tango No. 3. Heil, Sachsenhausen! No. 4. Mister C. No. 5. Adolf’s Farewell to the World
Date of Composition:	2001
Cycle Duration:	26’00”
Notes:	Text from Soviet journalist and musician Jerzak Aleksander Kulisiewicz about his Sachsenhausen internment. Schoenfield extensively used Kulisiewicz’s original melodies set to the author’s texts, especially in the first and last songs. Commissioned by Music of Remembrance.

Song Cycle Title:	*Terezín Songs*
Composer:	Max Stern (b. 1947)
Poet/Text Source:	Children’s poems from the Terezín concentration camp, 1942-44, Eng. trans.
Ensemble:	Soprano, flute, oboe, guitar, cello
Individual Song Titles:	Tomorrow Birdsong Alone
Date of Composition:	1969 (rev. 2000)
Cycle Duration:	12’30”
Notes:	The poems set in Terezín Songs appear *in Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature* by Albert Friedlander and the collection *I Never Saw Another Butterfly.* The previous edition was entitled *Three Songs* with slightly altered song titles.

Song Cycle Title:	*Voices from Terezín*
Composer:	Robert Stern (1934-2008)

Poet/Text Source:	Gertrud Kantorowicz (1876-1945), Ilse Blumenthal-Weiss (1899-1987)
Ensemble:	Soprano, string quartet (string orchestra)
Individual Song Titles:	I. Daughter of the day II. Interlude III. To Take the Roads
Date of Composition:	1990 (1993)
Cycle Duration:	10’00”
Notes:	In *Voices from Terezín*, Stern addresses the work of two adult poets: Gertrud Kantorowicz (Holocaust victim) and Ilse Blumenthal-Weiss (Holocaust survivor).

Song Cycle Title:	*Windsongs*
Composer:	Larry Zimmerman (?)
Poet/Text Source:	Children’s poems from the Terezín concentration camp, 1942-44, Eng. trans.
Ensemble:	Soprano, piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. Ruined People 2. To Olga 3. The Garden 4. Birdsong 5. Waiting
Date of Composition:	1988
Cycle Duration:	23 pages
Notes:	

Witness History and Source Poetry

The following section discusses the history of the authors Lori Laitman set for her song-cycles discussed herein, examining how the poetry entered into publication, the literary qualities of the pieces, and brief biographical information for the authors: the children of the Terezín ghetto included in Hana Volavková's collection *I Never Saw Another Butterfly… Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezín Concentration Camp 1942-1944,* Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, Nelly Sachs, and Anne Ranasinghe. All of these poets, except Nelly Sachs, were young people when they witnessed the horrors of Nazi Germany. Their innocence and youth set them apart from some of the other subjects in Laitman's Holocaust commemoration music, which is one of the primary factors in selecting the soprano voice for these tributes. The original poems and, if applicable, the English translations Laitman set in the four song cycles are included in the appendix.

Hana Volavková and The Children of the Terezín Ghetto (1942-1944)

Terezín is a town in the Czech Republic with an infamous history. Located just 70 kilometers outside of Prague, Emperor Joseph II of Austria founded the garrison in 1784, naming the town Theresienstadt to honor his mother, Maria Theresa. During World War II, the Schutzstaffel (SS) established a ghetto there as a waylay station for Jews led to Auschwitz and other concentration camps further east. The fortified status of the city, with high barrack walls in the shape of a star, made escape impossible. The city was built to hold a little over 5,600 in peacetime. Jewish prisoners were first brought in 1941. In

the final months of the war, a wide variety of people from all over Europe inhabited the city, containing on average 45,000 people at any given time. Of the 144,000 inmates who passed through Terezín, 88,000 were transported to other concentration camps, and 33,000 died within the city walls. There were only 17,247 survivors when the camp was liberated in 1945.

The Nazis showcased Terezín as a model ghetto, even hosting a Red Cross visit in 1944 (nearly everyone involved in that visit, and the subsequent documentary film, was immediately sent to the concentration camps afterward). Many high profile and elderly Jews from across Europe were moved to Terezín, fed a lie that for those too infirm or respected to provide manual labor, Terezín would serve as a retirement community of sorts. The puppet Jewish council had permission to sponsor cultural events, even holding instrumental and operatic performances, but were also faced with extraditing denizens to the concentration camps further east. Terezín incarcerated many Jewish scholars, professionals, musicians, and artists, in addition to over 15,000 children.

Children under the age of fourteen were housed in separate barracks. A ramshackle group of adult prisoners desperately sought to provide some sense of normalcy by clandestinely teaching them traditional school subjects. Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, a Jewish artist and educator, collected over 4,500 works of poetry and art from the children in two suitcases before she was deported to Auschwitz. Those artifacts survived - 550 of its 660 authors did not.

> Perhaps the most precious legacy of Theresienstadt is the collection of children's paintings and poetry—artwork which, beyond its own intrinsic value—is testimony to the courage of the children and their teachers, who continued to live, to teach, to paint, to

> learn, and to hope, despite the constant fear of violent death, a fear based on a realistic assessment of the situation in which they found themselves.[13]

After World War II, Hana Volavková, the only surviving curator from the Jewish Museum of Prague, compiled the collection into the book *…I never saw another butterfly… Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezín Concentration Camp 1942-1944*. The paradoxical observations of these innocents and the fact that any of these relics survived the war makes the volume a valuable historical document.

> They saw reality, but they still maintained their childlike outlook, an outlook of truth which distinguishes between night and day and cannot be confused with false hopes and the shadow-play of an imaginary life… This was their world, a world of color and shadow, of hunger and of hope… But the children saw too what the grown-ups didn't want to see - the beauties beyond the village gates, the green meadows and the bluish hills, the ribbon of highway reaching off into the distance and the imagined road marker pointing toward Prague, the animals, the birds, the butterflies – all this was beyond the village walls and they could look at it only from afar, from the barracks, windows, and from the ramparts of the fort.[14]

Pavel Friedman wrote the signature poem of the collection, "The Butterfly," dated June 4, 1942. Pavel was deported to Terezín in 1942 and died in Auschwitz on September 29, 1944. While Friedman was 21 when the poem was written, Volavková included the poem because the style and subject closely match the other selections. "Birdsong," written in 1941, has not been attributed to any of the known children.

Two poems included in Laitman's cycle, "Yes, That's the way things are" and "Man Proposes, God Disposes," were written by a trio of children signing under the moniker Koleba – Košek, Löwy, and Bachner. Miroslav Košek, who also penned "It All

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[13] "Theresienstadt Cultural Life," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed Summer 2021, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt-cultural-life.

[14] Jíří Weil, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezín Concentration Camp 1942-1944* (Prague: Schocken Books, 1978), 68.

Depends on How You Look At It" in the collection, was sent to Terezín in 1942 and died in Auschwitz on October 4, 1944. Hanus Löwy was deported to Terezín in 1942 and died in Auschwitz on October 4, 1944. No additional information has been found for the final child, Bachner.

František Bass was the author of "The Garden" and "The Old House," which form Laitman's cycle's fourth and last songs. His seven poems were preserved in a manuscript with the signature "Franta Bass" on the right side. He was born in 1930, transported to Terezín in 1942, and died in Auschwitz on October 28, 1944.

Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924-1942)

"It was amazing that her poetry survived at all," Laitman remarks in her interview.[15] While so many people know the story of Anne Frank, and her diary has been read the world over, many other young victims chronicled their experience during World War II. *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries* catalogs excerpts from 23 diaries of both children and teenagers, and even this is not an exhaustive list. Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, a Jewish Romanian poet, died of typhus on December 17, 1942, when she was only 18 years old. She started writing poetry when she was fifteen, and a collection of her poems written before she was deported to a Nazi SS Labor camp survived the Holocaust.

[15] Lori Laitman, composer, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

Meerbaum-Eisinger's legacy, an original book of poems entitled *Blütenlese,* survived against all odds, making its way from the young woman's home in Czernowitz to Israel. She dedicated the book to her sweetheart, Leiser Feichman, who survived a Romanian labor camp only to die in a shipwreck while escaping to Palestine. The book of poems found its way into the hands of a dear friend, Renée Abramovici-Michaeli, who herself made a perilous four-year journey to immigrate to Israel. She held onto the book for over thirty years, eventually working with other friends and admirers of Meerbaum-Eisinger to publish the book in 1976. The work gained prominence when Paul Celan, Meerbaum-Eisinger's first cousin and renowned Holocaust survivor poet, published one of her poems alongside his own. Today, Meerbaum-Eisinger's original poetry is housed at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial. Her volume includes 52 handwritten German poems and five German translations of Paul Verlaine, Itzik Manger, H. Leivick, and Discipol Mihnea.

There is a romantic lushness to Meerbaum-Eisinger's poems, simple yet evocative. "Selma's poetry weeps with yearning: for a rejected love, yes, but also for the wonders of spring, for happiness, for 'freedom in all things,' for the chance to live an ordinary life in a decent world."[16] As Irene and Helene Silverblatt, Meerbaum-Eisinger's next-generation cousins, emphasize, "Writing with piercing words and lavish musicality, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger is our guide to sensuous, joyous, and devastating first love, to the soaring beauty of the Bukovina landscape, and to the shadows of nationalist hatreds

[16] Editor's introduction, Ilene and Helen Silverblatt, *Harvest of Blossoms – Poems from a Life Cut Short* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1995), xii.

that stalked her and her poetry until they strangled both."[17] Her poems change tone throughout the short volume, moving from sublime illustrations of landscapes to utter dejectedness, frustrated with life's hollow futility. The last poem, "Tragic," which Laitman set as the final song in her cycle *In Sleep the World is Yours,* is perhaps the most haunting in the volume:

> This is the hardest: to give yourself away
> and then to see that no one needs you,
> to give all of yourself and realize
> you'll fade like smoke and leave no trace.[18]

Anne Ranasinghe (1925-2016)

Born Anneliese Katz in Essen, Germany, in 1925, Anne Ranasinghe's path from Holocaust victim to Sri Lankan poet took many unexpected turns. Hitler came to power when she was seven years old. However, as a child in Germany, she still participated in many Jewish activities, even attending Jawne, a Jewish secondary school 65 kilometers away in Cologne. Everything changed in November 1938, when her family witnessed the horror of Kristallnacht first-hand. At 13, Katz was sent to England to live with an aunt she had never met, giving up her native language and assimilating into English culture. She was the only member of her family to survive World War II. As Norman Simms observes, "Thus she is a poet without a real language she can feel perfectly at home in, no

[17] Editor's introduction, Ilene and Helen Silverblatt, *Harvest of Blossoms,* xxviii.

[18] Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, *Harvest of Blossoms,* 97.

language she feels she can speak perfectly."[19] Katz was studying to become a nurse when she met D. A. Ranasinghe, a Sinhalese medical resident. They married, and in 1952 she moved to what is now known as Sri Lanka. Anne Ranasinghe lived the rest of her life there, raising a family of seven children (four of her own and three from her husband's previous marriage), only turning to writing in the late sixties. Ranasinghe published twelve books of poems and short stories in her lifetime, many of them translated from English into other languages. She was awarded the Sri Lanka Arts Council Prize in 1985, 1987, and 1992, and the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the nation's highest level of recognition of excellence.[20]

Like many Holocaust survivors, Ranasinghe's creative output tries to come to terms with her past. The theme of her body of work has been described as "the thin, fragile line between the past and present, between forgetting and remembering."[21] In a 1976 article, she wrote,

> Until I started writing four or five years ago, I wasn't aware that my past was torturing me. But it is true that now I spend a great deal of my writing time re-living the years in Germany. And because I still have not resolved all the problems associated with that part of my life, these problems dominate my writing… Guilt for surviving is one. [22]

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[19] Norman Simms, "Anne Ranasinghe: Jewish Poet of Sri Lanka, Three Strands in a Literary Corpus," *Journal of South Asian Literature* vol. 23, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 1988): 99.

[20] "Obituary," *Frontpage*, accessed Summer 2021, https://frontpage.lk/in-memoriam-anne-ranasinghe/.

[21] Uditha Devapria, "Anne Ranasinghe and the Torment of Forgetting," *Medium*, August 29, 2019, accessed Summer 2021, https://udithadevapriya.medium.com/anne-ranasinghe-and-the-torment-of-forgetting-492715f01a05.

[22] Yasmine Gooneratne, "Yasmine Gooneratne Interviews Anne Ranasinghe," *Journal of South Asian Literature* vol. 12, no. 1/2 (Fall – Winter 1976): 110.

It was even more difficult for Ranasinghe to come to terms with her past living in a country so far removed from the events of World War II. She abandoned her native tongue in her formative years, lost her entire family to the Nazi war machine, and lived as "an enemy alien" in a foreign country, never actively practicing Judaism again. [23]

> Now, as I near the end of my life, this 'betrayal' of my Jewish heritage has begun to trouble me….After years of searching and researching, I was finally able to put all the pieces together and chronicle my parents' deaths. After surviving for two-and-a-half years in the Lodz Ghetto, they were gassed in a specially constructed lorry in Chelmno on July 10, 1944.[24]

As so much of Ranasinghe's work focuses on the Holocaust, it would be simplistic to ignore the influence of Sri Lanka in her poetry. She raised her children as Buddhists, following her husband's religion, and became involved in a community going through its own turmoil. She witnessed bigotry once more in Sri Lanka between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Her poetry became an outpouring of her private healing and served as a reminder to her adopted country grappling with ethnic division. "Increasingly obsessed with the question of remembering – because she knows what it means for the Germans to forget; because it is through remembering that she creatively intersperses her presence in Sri Lanka– she is very much a Jewish writer, but a Jewish writer of Sri Lanka."[25]

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[23] Anne Katz Ranasinghe, "Final Choices: 'Our Beginnings Never Know Our Ends," *Inside*, December 31, 1998, accessed Summer 2021, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/final-choices-our-beginnings-never-know-ends/docview/228245720/se-2?accountid=11667.

[24] Ranasinghe, "Final Choices."

[25] Simms, "Anne Ranasinghe: Jewish Poet of Sri Lanka," 106.

Nelly Sachs (1891-1970)

Leonie "Nelly" Sachs was born in Berlin in 1891. Her family was secular and fully assimilated into German society. Sachs grew up influenced by culture, music, and the German Romantic intellectual movement. She started writing poetry as a teenager, which supplied an outlet for her sensitive and introverted personality. Sachs never married and lived with her mother after her father died in 1930. She supported the family as a poet and translator and kept regular correspondence with Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

With the rise of Nazism across Europe, Sachs had to contemplate her Judaism, something that had never been a part of her identity growing up. "Sachs reacted to this coerced categorization by immersing herself in learning the teachings and traditions of Judaism, and was most intrigued by the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism as these were described and transmitted in the works of Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber."[26] While in Germany during the Nazi occupation, Sachs's delicate disposition left her increasingly panicked. Once, after an SS interrogation, she lost the ability to speak. "For five days I was living without a reason, as though during a witch trial. My voice was gone. It left without a care for my remaining limbs, which remained terrified. My voice vanished as it no longer had any answers and 'speaking' was forbidden."[27] She channeled these

[26] Kathrin M. Bower, "Searching for the (M)Other: The Rhetoric of Longing in Post-Holocaust Poems by Nelly Sachs and Rose Ausländer," University of Richmond UR Scholarship Repository: Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Faculty Publications (1996), 124.

[27] Anders Olsson, "Leonie (Nelly) Sachs," *Svenskt Kvinnobiografiskt Lexicon*, accessed Summer 2021, www.skbl.se/sv/artikel/NellySachs.

emotions into her poems “Leben unter Bedrohung” (Life Under Threat) and “Als der große Schrecken kam” (When the Great Terror Came).[28] *The Observer* celebrated the strength of her poetry in the face of this adversity, “Her voice, then, was an inspired, reverberating rebuke to those who would silence her.”[29]

It was Sachs’ relationship with author Selma Lagerlöf which saved her in 1940. The Swedish royal family helped secure visas for the poet and her mother. They boarded the last flight out of Nazi Germany to Sweden, a week before their concentration camp deportment date. Although Sachs became a Swedish citizen in 1952, she continued to write and publish in her native language of German. Her mother died in 1950, and Sachs struggled in the following years. While not a child during the Holocaust, the imagery of children and mothers is a critical feature of this chapter in Sachs’ life. Her frailty and innocence in the poems Laitman set suggest the soprano voice, much like the children witnesses evoke a high tessitura. Another characteristic of her poetry was mysticism, a product of her study of ancient Judaism, which offered an artistic outlet for her grief. Sachs was committed to a mental asylum for the last decade of her life, continuing to write poetry and maintain correspondence with friends.

Sachs received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1966, the first German-speaking female author to do so. Her work was translated into two English volumes, *O the Chimneys* in 1967 and *The Seeker and Other Poems* in 1970. She died that same year in

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[28] Kirsten Krick-Aigner, “Nelly Leonie Sachs,” *Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*, December 31, 1999, accessed Summer 2021, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/sachs-nelly-leonie.

[29] “Nobel-Winning Poet Nelly Sachs Is Today’s Google Doodle—Here’s Why Her Work Still Matters,” *Observer*, December 10, 2018, accessed Summer 2021, https://observer.com/2018/12/nelly-sachs-google-doodle-nobel-poet-work-still-matters/.

Stockholm, Sweden, at the age of 79. The songs from *The Secret Exit* are derived from her last volume, originally published in 1949-1959, the tumultuous years surrounding her mother's death. As a Holocaust survivor, Sachs carried immense emotional weight, quoting in her Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "I represent the tragedy of the Jewish people."[30]

[30] "Nobel-Winning Poet Nelly Sachs Is Today's Google Doodle—Here's Why Her Work Still Matters," *Observer*, December 10, 2018, accessed Summer 2021, https://observer.com/2018/12/nelly-sachs-google-doodle-nobel-poet-work-still-matters/.

CHAPTER 3: LORI LAITMAN (b. 1955) – AN "ACCIDENTAL" VOCAL COMPOSER

One hundred years hence, when critics look back at the art songs of our era, there will be many fine composers to laud and applaud, but few will deserve higher praise than Lori Laitman[31]

Gregory Berg, *Journal of Singing*.

Biographical Information

While Lori Laitman has always connected to music, finding her true calling as an art song composer came about indirectly and unexpectedly. Growing up in a family of musicians, Laitman was exposed to classical music from a young age. Born in Long Beach, NY, in 1955, she studied both piano and flute and dreamed of becoming a professional flutist. She credits many of her earliest musical memories to her mother, a singer, pianist, and violinist. "My mother had a remarkable memory for songs, and still remembers all the words to the songs she grew up with in the 1920s."[32] Laitman was accepted to Yale College to study music at 16, having skipped kindergarten and twelfth grade. She began dabbling in composing music in college.

> During the summers, I attended music camps and met young composers, but composing seemed 'magical' and beyond my reach. It wasn't until I attended Yale, where many of my friends were composers, that I realized composition might be something I could also

[31] Gregory Berg, "The Listener's Gallery," review of *Becoming a Redwood: Songs of Lori Laitman*, National Association of Teachers of Singing, Journal of Singing, vol. 63, no. 5 (May/June 2007): 612.

[32] Lori Laitman, interview by Serdar Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes: An Examination of Three Holocaust-Themed Song Cycles by Lori Laitman," (DMA Diss., University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2008), 1.

> try. I began studying composition my sophomore year, with the wonderful teacher Jonathan Kramer.[33]

That following summer, Laitman attended the Interlochen Academy, where she roomed with soprano Lauren Wagner.

> Although I was attending Interlochen as a flutist, I also studied composition. I wrote Lauren a crazy piece in an "avant-garde" style and required her to make all sorts of weird sounds, singing the words "yo-yo-yo-yo-yo" to some leaping intervals. A tape of this composition exists somewhere, but I will be very content if it is never unearthed.[34]

She completed her undergraduate degree *magna cum laude* in 1975. It was at Yale that she met her future husband, double-bassist Bruce Rosenblum. After graduation, he moved to Massachusetts, and once she had completed her master's degree, Laitman joined him in 1976. They formed the entire music department at The Buxton School, a private high school in Williamstown. At the same time, Laitman realized her dreams of playing the flute professionally with the Vermont Symphony. When Rosenblum accepted an offer to study Law at Columbia in New York City, Laitman found professional work as a composer for the Dick Roberts Film Company. She wrote scores for such industrial films as *Psychology Today* and *Camera Arts Magazine*.

> This was an important compositional training; due to budgetary constraints, I hired a limited number of musicians, and to ensure variety in color, I tried to use each instrument to its fullest capacity. This inventiveness, driven by economics, certainly filtered into the way I choose instruments and orchestrate.[35]

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[33] Matthew Hoch and Linda Lister, *So You Want to Sing Music by Women: A Guide for Performers*, a project of the National Association of Teachers of Singing (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), 65.

[34] Lori Laitman, "The Accidental Song Composer," Lori Laitman, http://artsongs.com/informal-biography (accessed Summer 2021).

[35] Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes," 3.

During this period, she was also teaching flute at the Turtle Bay Music School, and she composed the score for the Folger Theatre's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Washington, DC. The couple moved to Boston in 1980. "Then, I became a Mom," says Laitman, "and that was the end of that!"[36] They welcomed their first son, James, late that year. The family then moved to the DC area, where Rosenblum clerked with the Supreme Court, settling in Potomac, Maryland, where their daughter Diana was born in 1983 and her youngest son Andrew in 1986.

> I loved writing music for film and theatre, but having children changed my focus. Of course being a mother changed my life completely, and was the best thing to ever happen to me. But the realities of parenthood did not mesh well with the time pressures of composing for film or theatre. So I started to concentrate on writing chamber music.[37]

She continued to teach flute privately at the International Conservatory of Music, where she met koto player Miyuki Yoshikami. Laitman and Yoshikami performed her original compositions for flute and koto in concert regularly. However, it was not until 1991 that Laitman discovered her gift for writing vocal music. She credits this discovery to her Interlochen roommate, Lauren Wagner.

> Over the years, I had been in and out of touch with my former roommate Lauren Wagner but it was 1991 when I received an excited call from her. She had just won the Concert Artists Guild competition, and was about to make her debut CD. She asked me if I would write some songs for the CD. I was flattered she asked, but not sure of my ability to write an art song. In fact, I told her that I could not, that I had no idea how to write a song. She was insistent, however, so, I went to the library and began to read a lot of poetry.[38]

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[36] Lori Laitman, interview by Kathleen Watt, "An Acclaimed Art Song Composer Takes the Opera Stage: Kathleen Watt Speaks with Composer Lori Laitman" *US Operaweb, Online Magazine Devoted to American Opera,* accessed Summer 2021, https://www.kathleenwatt.com/feature-links.

[37] Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes," 3.

[38] Lori Laitman, "The Accidental Song Composer."

Wagner's album *American Song Recital: Works of Bernstein, Hundley, Bowles* received critical praise. Wagner subsequently included Laitman's songs in recital, including a performance in New York City's Merkin Hall. At the after-party, hobnobbing with Paul Sperry, Richard Hundley, and John Musto, Laitman discovered the art song world, and she became hooked.

> I was a grown woman, thirty-six years old, with three children; and I finally found my voice… Not as a flutist, or a composer of chamber music, but as a composer of art songs. It took a while to develop my confidence; at the beginning I was terrified to show my music to people, scared that they would find it stupid. After all, I didn't have a degree in composition, and my music was considered "beautiful," which was certainly not the style. Maybe it still isn't; but it's my style.[39]

Since making her unplanned foray into vocal music, Laitman has received numerous prestigious commissions, including from Opera America, Opera Colorado, Seattle Opera, The Grant Park Music Festival, Washington Master Chorale, The Virginia Choral Society, The Alexandria Choral Society, Music of Remembrance, The Howard Hanson Institute for American Music, The Susan B. Anthony Center for Women's Leadership, and The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Her works have been featured in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music* and Thomas Hampson's *Song of America* radio series, internet series, and website.[40] Laitman publishes her music through her website, www.artsongs.com, which includes the full catalog of her 300+ art songs, chamber operas, and oratorios.

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[39] Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes," 4.

[40] Lori Laitman, "The Accidental Song Composer."

Musical Style

Laitman's earliest musical influences came from her immediate family, where "There was always music in the house, and music at any family get-together."[41] She remembers listening to such children's classics as *Peter and the Wolf*, *Pee-Wee the Piccolo,* and *Tubby the Tuba,* saying, "In retrospect, I think this early exposure to story and song made an indelible impression on me."[42] As her musical tastes matured, the melodies and orchestrations of Mahler and Monteverdi, some of the favorites of her Yale mentors, influenced her initial preferences.[43] In her profile for *So You Want to Sing Music by Women*, Laitman remarks, "I am drawn to composers that are melodic and dramatic. Of course, I love Schubert, Schumann, Puccini, Verdi, Monteverdi, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Prokofiev, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, Barber, Bernstein, and so many other composers. I admire musicians who bring music to life with a wealth of color and imagination."[44]

During her time at Yale, she took a film scoring class with Frank Lewin, which she credits as a pivotal moment in her musical training.

> I feel it was the most important class I took at Yale and feel that everything I learned in that class I apply in my compositional process. I treat poems as baby films and I am often creating aural portraits of the words themselves, and the way that my songs are constructed is always in response to the structure of the poems and the words and the

[41] Lori Laitman, "The Accidental Song Composer."

[42] Lori Laitman, "The Accidental Song Composer."

[43] Lori Laitman, interview by Rebecca Geihsler-Chittom, "Lori Laitman: A Pedagogical Study of Selected Song Cycles for the Soprano Voice," (DA diss., The University of Mississippi, 2008), 24.

[44] Hoch and Lister, *So You Want to Sing Music by Women*, 66.

> portraits that I can make for them."[45] With only rudimentary collegiate coursework and her training as a flutist for formal training, Laitman muses that "everything I had ever heard, good and bad, has been an influence on my compositional style.[46]

Reviewers of Laitman's works often point to her connection to the text. Sharon Mabry of the *Journal of Singing* writes, "She has an innate ability to capture the essence of textual meaning, a keen perception of vocal nuance, and a lavish intellectual and musical vocabulary that she uses with a facile ease."[47] Gregory Berg, who has reviewed many of her works for the *Journal of Singing*, eloquently describes her style, "It is difficult to think of anyone before the public today who equals her exceptional gifts for embracing a poetic text and giving it new and deeper life through music. She has an unerring way of enhancing a text's beauty and meaning while not obscuring the text through artifice or excess."[48] In talking about her musical style, Laitman affirms the role of poetry as her guiding light.

> My goal is to create dramatic music to illuminate and magnify the meaning of the words. I compose the vocal line first and let the words guide me towards creating the proper structure to house the words. After figuring out which rhythms best suit the words to honor the natural stresses, I then custom craft the melody and emphasize what I believe to be the most important words in a phrase. This in turn allows the singer to most effectively communicate the words to an audience. All other aspects of the music — texture, timbre, harmonies, rhythm, etc. – are inspired by the words and are meant toward providing additional commentary on the text.[49]

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[45] Lori Laitman, interview by Jennifer Michelle Bryant, "Lori Laitman - The Influence of Prosody on Melodic Content, Accompaniment, and Form," (DMA diss., The University of Alabama, 2012), 5.

[46] Lori Laitman, interviewed by Geihsler-Chittom, "A Pedagogical Study of Selected Song Cycles," 24.

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

[48] Gregory Berg, "The Listener's Gallery," review of Becoming a Redwood: Songs of Lori Laitman, by Lori Laitman, *Journal of Singing* 63, no. 5 (May/June 2007): 612.

[49] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

Her works elude traditional theoretical analysis, with constantly varying time signatures and few key signatures. She rarely begins and ends the piece in the same key, and all of her compositions could be considered through-composed. Instead, she views each composition as an "aural portrait," and the sheet music serves to dictate the prosody of her melody and accompaniment. [50] With her expansive vocal catalog, Laitman has explored the poetry of over 80 poets, often returning to female poets such as Sara Teasdale, Anne Ranasinghe, Christina Rossetti, and Emily Dickinson. Her most recent album released in May 2021, "Are Women People?: The Songs of Lori Laitman," features works based on the words of suffragists Alice Duer Miller and Susan B. Anthony, among others.

[50] Lori Laitman, interviewed by Geihsler-Chittom, "A Pedagogical Study of Selected Song Cycles," 26.

Holocaust Works

Laitman divides her catalog into two large categories – her songs and cycles set to various poets and works written to commemorate victims of the Holocaust. In an interview, Laitman describes her connection to composing music of commemoration.

> I always thought that beauty in art would help save the world; and I continue to be driven by one piece of Jewish philosophy that I picked up: "Tikkun Olam," and that is that people on earth can repair the world. My belief is that everybody has a unique gift. It took me a while to discover what my gift was, which is to compose art songs. I am always driven by a desire to add beauty to the world. I hope my music touches people, and I feel that is my small contribution.[51]

Laitman describes why she chooses to write Holocaust remembrance music,

> I believe that it is important to honor the dead by telling their stories, and to create empathy by revealing our common humanity. As David Mason writes so poignantly at the end of our Holocaust-themed oratorio *Vedem*, 'We were no different than you.'… My role is to tell a story through music, and to share the story of those who were silenced.[52]

Much credit can also be given to Music of Remembrance and its executive director, Mina Miller. In addition to commissioning five of the ten of Laitman's song cycles on the Holocaust, she also engaged many of the other composers listed in the literature review of this document.

According to her website, as of 2021, Laitman has composed ten song cycles for voice in memoriam of Holocaust victims. Her Holocaust works catalog includes one opera, *Come to Me In Dreams* (2004), and one oratorio, *Vedem* (2010), although both

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[51] Ilban, "Songs from the Ashes," 18.

[52] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

comprise individual songs performed as song cycles. Laitman also created incidental music for the Indianapolis Opera production *Vedem to Brundibar and Back*, which combines her oratorio *Vedem* with Czech composer Hans Krasa's children's opera *Brundibár*. *Brundibár* was staged in 1944 by the children of the Terezín concentration camp for the 1944 visit by representatives of the Red Cross. While Laitman has composed many songs in traditional piano/vocal settings, most of her Holocaust remembrance works feature unique instrumentations. The following table includes information for Laitman's other six Holocaust song cycles not discussed in individual chapters.

TABLE 2: Additional Song Cycles Composed by Lori Laitman Commemorating Victims of the Holocaust

Song Cycle Title:	*Holocaust 1944*
Poet/Text Source:	Jerzy Ficowski, David Vogel, Tadeusz Rosewicz, Karen Gershon and Anne Ranasinghe
Ensemble:	Baritone with double bass or cello
Individual Song Titles:	1. I Did Not Manage to Save 2. How Can I See You, Love 3. Both Your Mothers 4. What Luck 5. Massacre of the Boys 6. Race 7. Holocaust 1944
Date of Composition:	1996, revised 1998
Cycle Duration:	28"
Premiere Date:	November 6, 2000
Premiere Venue:	Benaroya Hall, Seattle WA (Music of Remembrance)
Premiere Performers:	Erich Parce, baritone; Gary Karr, double-bass
Notes:	Taking a darker turn to match the colors of the baritone voice and double bass, Laitman's second Holocaust song cycle sets poems from Hilda Schiff's anthology *Holocaust Poetry*.

Song Cycle Title:	*Daughters*
Poet/Text Source:	Anne Ranasinghe, Karen Gershon
Ensemble:	Mezzo-soprano, violin, cello, piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. Mascot and Symbol 2. Stella Remembered

	3. A Letter to My Daughter
Date of Composition:	1998
Cycle Duration:	18”
Premiere Date:	October 19, 1998
Premiere Venue:	Griswold Hall, Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore, MD
Premiere Performers:	Patricia Green, mezzo-soprano; Juliette Kang, violin; Thomas Kraines, cello; Kirsten Taylor, piano.
Notes:	Commissioned by pianist Kirsten Taylor, *Daughters* sets the poetry of Holocaust survivors Anna Ranasinghe and Karen Gershon. Each selection is a message from the poet to her daughter.

Song Cycle Title:	*Fathers*
Poet/Text Source:	Anne Ranasinghe, David Vogel
Ensemble:	Baritone or Mezzo-soprano, flute or violin, cello, piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. Fragment 1 2. You, Father 3. Fragment 2 4. Last Night I Dreamt 5. Fragment 3 6. I Saw My Father Drowning 7. Don’t Cry
Date of Composition:	2002, rev. 2003, rev. 2010
Cycle Duration:	15”
Premiere Date:	April 27, 2003
Premiere Venue:	Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA (Music of Remembrance)
Premiere Performers:	Angela Niederloh, mezzo-soprano; Mikhail Shmidt, violin; Walter Gray, cello; Mina Miller, piano (2010)
Notes:	A sequel to *Daughters*, these poems further explore the parent-child relationship cut short by the Holocaust. Each “Fragment” is a short excerpt from the final, hopeful song “Don’t Cry,” used to balance the work psychologically and structurally.

Song Cycle Title:	*The Seed of Dream*
Poet/Text Source:	Abraham Sutzkever
Ensemble:	Baritone or Mezzo-soprano, cello, piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. I Lie in This Coffin 2. A Loan of Shoes 3. To My Child 4. Beneath the Whiteness of Your Stars 5. No Sad Songs, Please
Date of Composition:	2004
Cycle Duration:	18”
Premiere Date:	May 9, 2005
Premiere Venue:	Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA (Music of Remembrance)

Premiere Performers:	Erich Parce, baritone; Amos Yang, cello; Mina Miller, piano
Notes:	*The Seed of Dream* was commissioned by Mina Miller for the Music of Remembrance. Abraham Sutzkever was imprisoned in the Vilna Ghetto when he wrote these poems.

Song Cycle Title:	*Todesfuge*
Poet/Text Source:	Paul Celan
Ensemble:	Baritone, cello
Individual Song Titles:	N/A
Date of Composition:	2010, rev. 2013
Cycle Duration:	6”
Premiere Date:	February 21, 2012
Premiere Venue:	Austrian Cultural Forum, New York, NY
Premiere Performers:	Wolfgang Holzmaier, baritone; Sophie Wieder-Atherton, cello
Notes:	Setting one of Paul Celan’s most famous poems depicting the horrors of the Holocaust, *Todesfuge* borrows from the concept of a musical fugue, repeating and recombining different leitmotifs. Both an English and a German version of the song exist.

Song Cycle Title:	*Vedem Songs*
Poet/Text Source:	Petr Ginz, Hanus Hachenburg, Zdenek Ornest, Josef Taussig
Ensemble:	Tenor and/or Mezzo-Soprano, clarinet or violin, piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. Memories of Prague 2. Five 3. Just a Little Warmth 4. Thoughts 5. Love In The Floodgates 6. Farewell to Summer
Date of Composition:	2010, rev. 2018
Cycle Duration:	15”30’
Premiere Date:	May 10, 2010 (oratorio version)
Premiere Venue:	Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA (Music of Remembrance)
Premiere Performers:	Angela Niederloh, Mezzo-soprano; Ross Hauck, Tenor; Laura DeLuca, clarinet; Mikhail Shmidt, violin; Mina Miller, piano (oratorio version)
Notes:	Excerpted from the oratorio *Vedem*, *Vedem Songs* selects 6 of the 15 numbers and sets them in multiple arrangements for various ensembles. *Vedem* was an underground magazine including poetry, essays, and illustrations created and circulated among the school-aged boys in the Terezín concentration camp.

CHAPTER 4: I NEVER SAW ANOTHER BUTTERFLY

Musical Analysis: Overview:

The six poems Laitman selected for the *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* song cycle were selected and ordered to create an emotional and dramatic arc. "The Butterfly," the most well-known poem from the collection, describes with breathtaking imagery the flight of a yellow butterfly over the walls of the Terezín ghetto. The poem's quality is hopeful, as the author describes what in nature has brought him joy in his current situation. However, the ending is tinged with sorrow when revealing that it was the last butterfly he saw. The second poem, "Yes, That's the Way Things Are," ironically describes the "so-called park" in Terezín, where an old man sits and eats a slice of hard bread.[53] Laitman set this song, and the fifth song in the cycle "Man Proposes, God Disposes," in the style of a Jewish folk song. "Birdsong" highlights the beauty of the natural world, and while the emotional tenor is still positive, the ending intuits the children's fate, "Then if the tears obscure your way, you'll know how wonderful it is to be alive."[54] "The Garden" and "The Old House," both poems by Franta Bass, offer hopelessness and anger to contrast the beauty and optimism of the first half of the cycle. The klezmer music for "Man Proposes, God Disposes" is harsher, as the poem describes

[53] Koleba, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, 26.

[54] Anonymous, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, 54-55.

rich, portly men sinking into their graves. The final verse is especially agonizing when describing the abandoned house, "Now it is deserted, rotting in silence."[55]

TABLE 3: Summary: *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

Song Cycle Title:	*I Never Saw Another Butterfly*
Composer:	Lori Laitman
Poet/Text Source:	Pavel Friedman, Koleba, Anonymous, Franta Bass
Ensemble:	Soprano, alto saxophone (bassoon, clarinet)
Individual Song Titles:	1. The Butterfly 2. Yes, That's the Way Things Are 3. Birdsong 4. The Garden 5. Man Proposes, God Disposes 6. The Old House
Date of Composition:	1996, revised 2018
Cycle Duration:	15'00"
Vocal Range:	C4 - A♭5
Tessitura:	F#4 - F#5
Publisher:	Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI
Premiere Date:	February 4, 1996
Premiere Venue:	Shriver Hall, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD
Premiere Performers:	Lauren Wagner, soprano; Gary Louie, alto saxophone

Musical Analysis by Movement:

"The Butterfly"

The first song in the cycle can be divided into four sections, AA'BC, as seen in the structural analysis below.

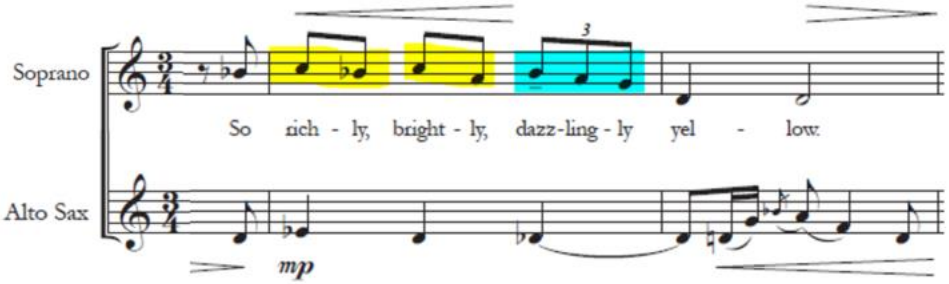
[55] Bass, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, 50.

TABLE 4: Structural Analysis: "The Butterfly"

A section	A' section	B section	C section
m. 1 – 30	m. 31 – 44	m. 45 – 63	m. 64 – 93

A melancholy saxophone motive sets the tone, conjuring the image of a floating butterfly on the wind. While invoking a butterfly, there is also a distinctly Jewish quality to the opening theme, which Laitman describes musically as "the grace note, for me, is reminiscent of the sometimes quavering quality of a cantor's voice during a Jewish service."[56] The soprano enters at m. 14 in the low range of the voice, enforcing the delicacy and vulnerability established by the saxophone. This first line, as seen in Figure 1 below, is a lovely example of word-painting. While the soprano grows in intensity, the syllables move from eighth notes to triplets based on the syllabic prosody. Word-painting is a signature trait of Laitman's oeuvre and adds to the haunting quality of this song.

FIGURE 1: Mm. 17 -19 of "The Butterfly" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



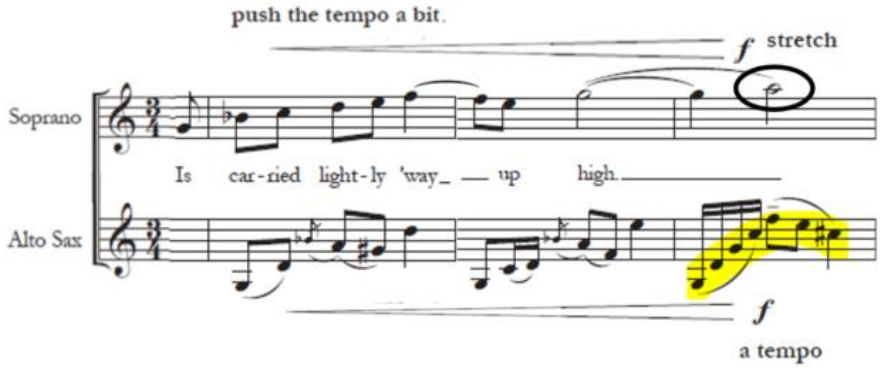
The role of the saxophone changes between solo melodic instrument and accompaniment. The distinctions are blurred in these opening lines as the saxophone material moves from principal theme to countermelody to accompaniment. Laitman

[56] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

describes this saying, “The sax is typically a solo instrument, but here, its role alternates between accompaniment and equal “vocal” partner.”[57] In a rare moment of textual repetition for this song, Laitman repeats “dazzlingly yellow” to finish the A section. The choice to repeat that text becomes a commentary on the previous emotional context of the phrase while also tying together the first and second verse.

The A’ section compacts the initial statements of the theme, using a short saxophone interlude as both an introduction and coda to the repeated musical material. The climax of the soprano line is Laitman’s setting of the word “high,” as seen in Figure 2. In the upper register of the voice, the grandeur of the phrase is further accentuated by the sweeping motion of the saxophone underneath.

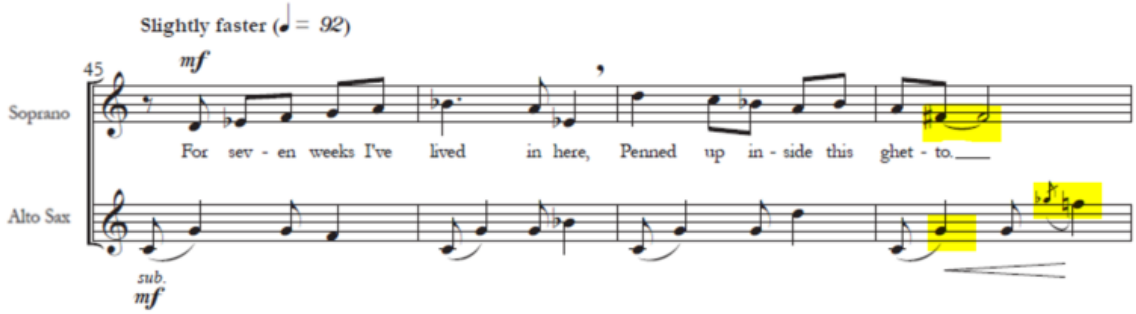
FIGURE 2: Mm. 34 – 36 of “The Butterfly” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



In the B section, the text moves from describing the butterfly’s flight to describing the Terezín ghetto. Laitman plays with dissonance in contrast to beauty, specifically by moving to E flat major from G minor and on the word “ghetto,” where Laitman contrasts an F# in the soprano line with an F natural in the saxophone (see Figure 3).

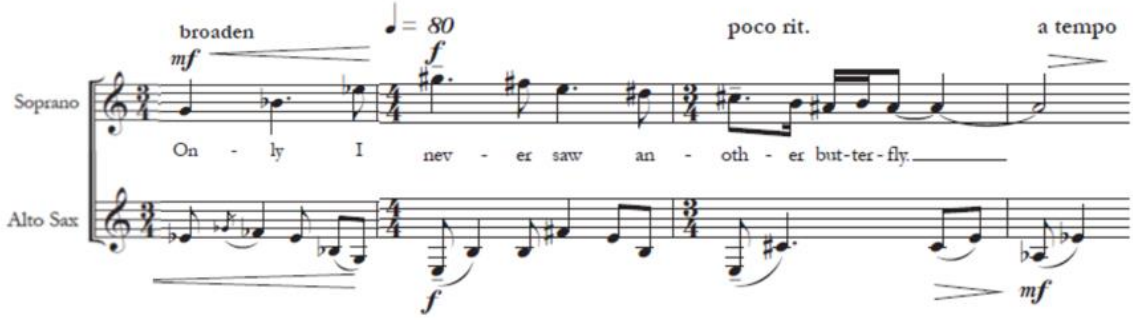
[57] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

FIGURE 3: Mm. 45 – 48 of "The Butterfly" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The poignant quality is further highlighted in words, "but I have found what I love here," where she outlines an F # major chord on the repeat of the word "love." The rest of the B section stays in major, describing achingly beautiful scenes in nature, only turning back to minor after the words "only I never saw another butterfly" in the transition into the last section (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: Mm. 61 – 65 of "The Butterfly" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The final tableau moves the saxophone away from its accompaniment role and back into the spotlight, sputtering with grace notes and quick-moving 16th note passages. The saxophone, embodying the quality of the butterfly once more, is an equal partner to the soprano in the fourth verse. As the song ends, the soprano ascends slowly by stepwise motion. At the same time, the saxophone lays into the more robust arpeggio figures as Levy describes, "The close correlation of the tonal shifts and lyricism of the melodic line with the emotional content of the poem creates an effective aural impression of the poet's

words. The saxophone weaves its magic around the voice, giving the piece a distinctively Jewish flavor."[58]

"Yes, That's the Way Things Are"

Written in a Jewish folk music style, this next song is strophic with a coda.

TABLE 5: Structural Analysis: "Yes, That's the Way Things Are"

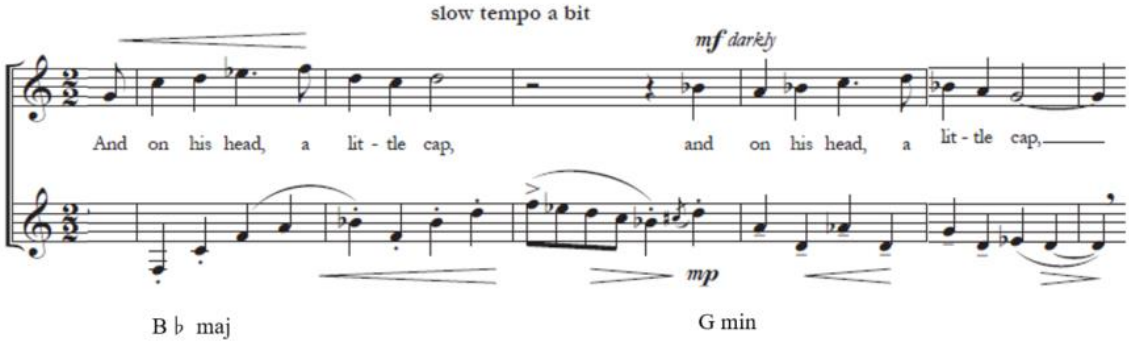
Verse 1			Verse 2			Coda
m. 1 – 41			m. 42 – 68			m. 69 – 89
A	A'	B	C	C'	B	
1-14	15-31	32-41	42-50	51-59	60-68	

Within the verse, there are clear repetitions, ending with a B section comprised of a vocalise and the text "there in the so-called park" in the soprano. The poems by Koleba have clearly defined first and second stanzas, so Laitman setting the song in two verses fits the model. The saxophone imitates both violin and clarinet from traditional klezmer music, providing rhythmic accompaniment while interspersing grace notes and flourishes. The beginning of the song is in G harmonic minor, although the key and modality change often. "Klezmer music is often composed using folk scales common to the Roma. These include harmonic minor, harmonic major, and Phrygian dominant scales. These scales are combined with folk music traditions of Eastern Europe (particularly Russia) and modal instrumentalism of Greek and Middle Eastern music to

[58] Leesa Michelle Levy, "An Investigation of Solo Song Settings of Specific Poetry Written by Children Incarcerated in the Terezin Concentration Camp from 1942 – 1944," (DMA diss., North Dakota Sate University, 2009), 65.

create a widely varied musical palette."[59] One notable example of a key change is in the A' section, where the key modulates to B♭ major and back to G harmonic minor for the repeat (Figure 5).

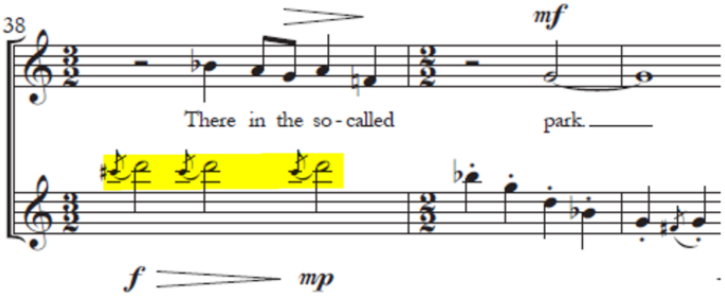
FIGURE 5: Mm. 19 – 24 of "Yes, That's The Way Things Are" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The B section allows the soprano to take on an instrumental quality with a melismatic phrase over the saxophone, ending with the repeated text "there in the so-called park" (Figure 6). The saxophone setting on high half notes breaks up the cadence, forcing the audience to contemplate these words before returning to the form. Laitman's decision to repeat this particular phrase showcases her compositional voice. The cruel irony of the text supports her choice to set it as a wicked jig.

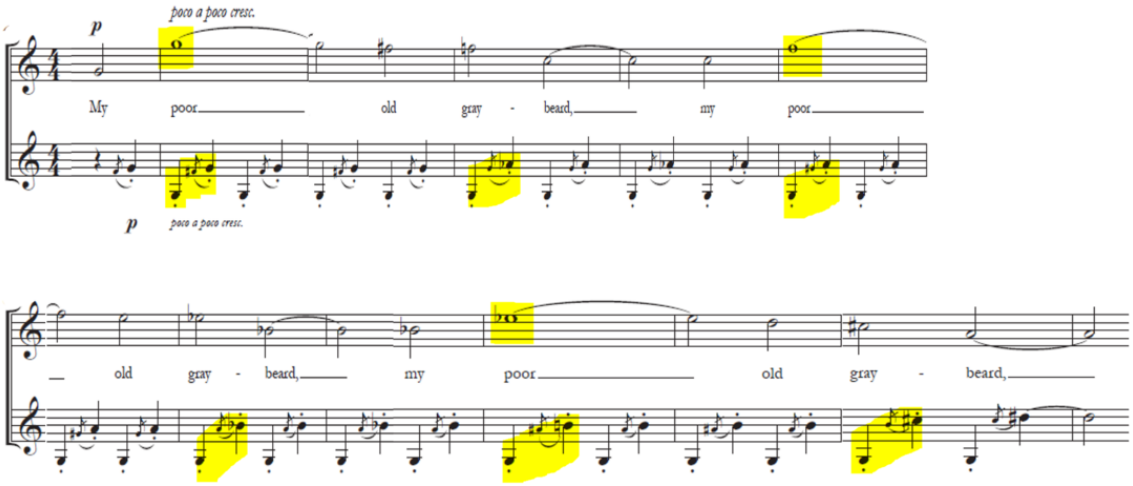
[59] "Learn about Klezmer Music: History, Style, and Musical Characteristics," *Masterclass*, last updated, September 29, 2021, accessed Summer 2021, https://www.masterclass.com/articles/learn-about-klezmer-music#what-is-klezmer-music.

FIGURE 6: Mm. 38 – 40 of "Yes, That's The Way Things Are" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The second verse modulates up to A minor and ends with the same B section as the first verse. The coda sees another repetition of text, with the soprano line "my poor old gray beard" moving down in stepwise motion for each instance (Figure 7). This is the first example of long-held notes for the soprano, heralding the climax. The saxophone part is also tense, with pulsing octaves and a G drone building the suspense.

FIGURE 7: Mm. 70 – 82 of "Yes, That's The Way Things Are" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



This tension builds into a final iteration of "there in the so-called park," made more impactful because of the elongation of the phrase. Through repetition and Jewish folk music, Laitman creates a catchy tune while also commenting on the irony of the poetry.

“Birdsong”

“Birdsong” is the last hopeful poem that Laitman sets in this cycle, and her traditionally beautiful compositional style shines with a variety of nuanced musical devices. Laitman recalls her compositional process when writing this piece, “The entire surface of my piano was covered with sheets of paper and I was despairing whether I’d be able to piece things together to create a song that wouldn’t collapse under its own weight.”[60] This song divides into two verses, which in turn can be divided into two subsections as detailed in Table 6 below:

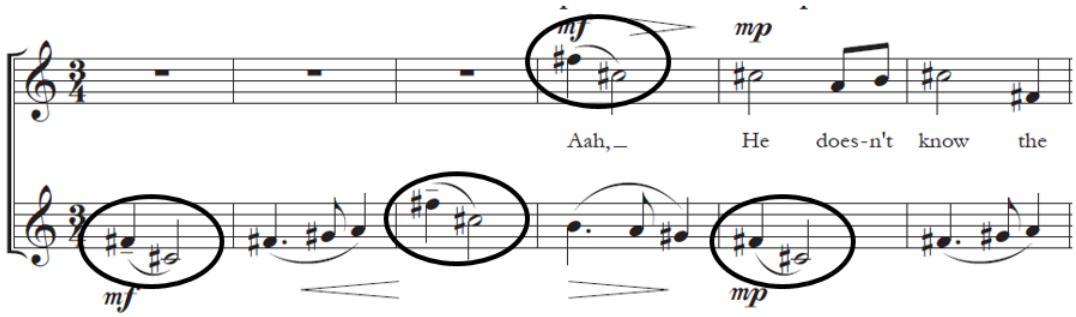
TABLE 6: Structural Analysis: “Birdsong”

Verse 1		Verse 2	
m. 1 – 71		m. 72 – 134	
A	B	A’	B’
1-57	58-71	72-118	119 - 134

The opening saxophone motive in F# major explores the tonality through leaps, focusing primarily on the root and fifth. This leaping motion is mirrored in the voice, which enters on an added “ah” syllable (see Figure 8). While not repeating a word, Laitman echoes the melodic contour of the bird’s song, elegantly phrased in fourths first in the saxophone, then moving into the voice part, and back to the saxophone again.

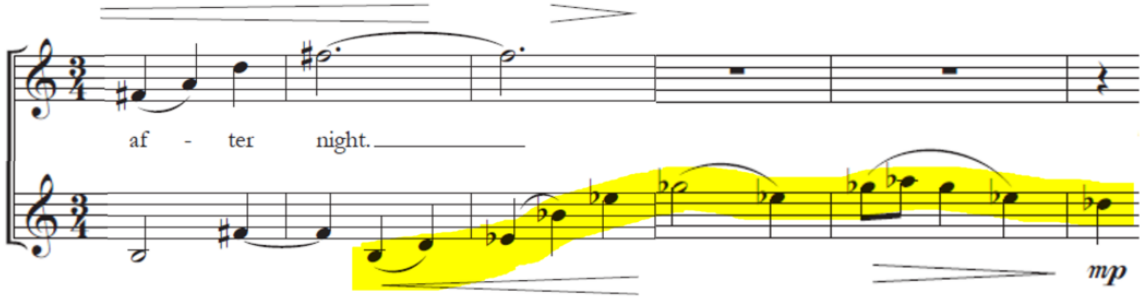
[60] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

FIGURE 8: Mm. 1 – 6 of "Birdsong" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The first key change, moving temporarily into G major, provides a moment of clarity. Laitman describes this "interplay between voice and sax" as one of her favorite moments in the song. The phrase ends with sonorous harmonic moving thirds and another leaping saxophone flourish. Lightly and delicately, the soprano paints the sparkling imagery of dewdrops and morning light before the song moves into minor for the first time. The F# in the soprano becomes the minor third in an E♭ minor chord (see Figure 9) with modulation through common tone. Finally, the tonality change lands on the word "night," as the soprano describes the blackbird's song to greet the dawn. This interplay of harmony and tonality fits with Laitman's traditionally consonant compositional style and attention to text painting.

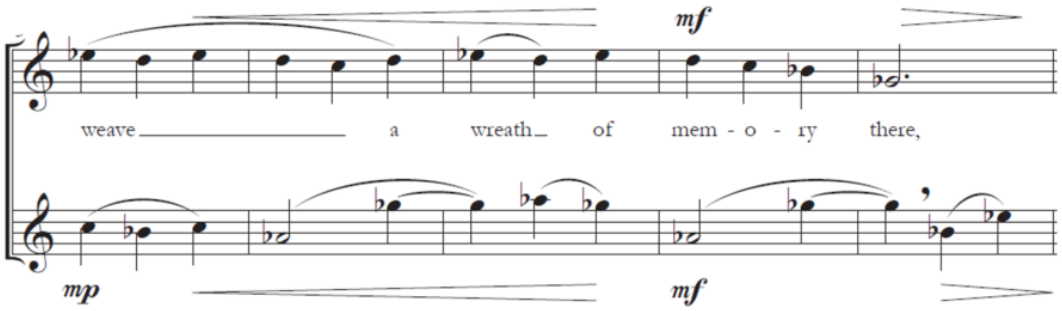
FIGURE 9: Mm. 43 – 45 of "Birdsong" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The B section of the first verse showcases the beauty and tessitura of the soprano voice in an extended vocalise while the saxophone supports with complementary arpeggios. The verse ends with the song's first repeated text, “how fine.” This final setting of the words complements the loveliness of the composition. It allows for true musical contrast against some of the more dissonant, disturbing imagery in the later songs in the cycle.

The second verse starts a half-step lower but again utilizes the leap of a fourth in both the saxophone and voice. Another beautiful moment is how Laitman sets “weave a wreath of memory there” (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: Mm. 85 – 89 of “Birdsong” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

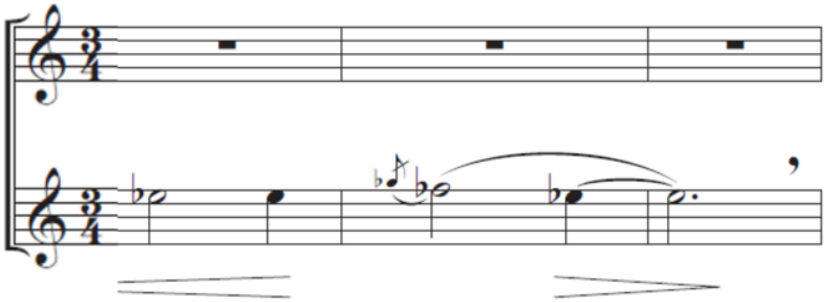


The saxophone and soprano move in parallel thirds, growing together, intertwining in overlapping registers. This borrows motivic information from the B section of the first verse. Laitman continues to explore this text, with different weaving combinations over two more iterations.

Laitman quotes the opening motive from “The Butterfly” in the instrumental interlude in the middle of the A’ section (Figure 11). While Laitman does occasionally repeat musical material between songs in a cycle (see Figure 31 in “Yes” or the Eternity

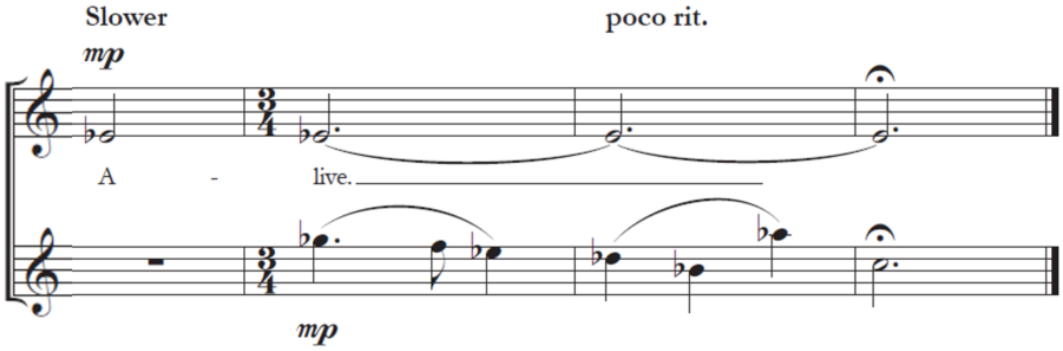
motive in “Ocean of Eternity” – Figure 39), the instances are rare enough that it bears noting. The return of this leitmotif conjures the fleeting butterfly and its tragic beauty.

FIGURE 11: Mm. 99 – 101 of “Birdsong” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The final poignant words challenge the listener as the author describes, with tearful eyes, how wonderful it is to be alive when surrounded by the beauty of nature. Finally, Laitman describes the satisfaction of the ending, where after outlining several large leaps, “the saxophone comes to rest creating an unexpected consonance” (Figure 12).

FIGURE 12: Mm. 131 – 134 of “Birdsong” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



“The Garden”

Upon reaching the halfway point in the song cycle, the thematic quality moves from hopeful to hopeless. The form of the song is in two verses, following the strophes of the

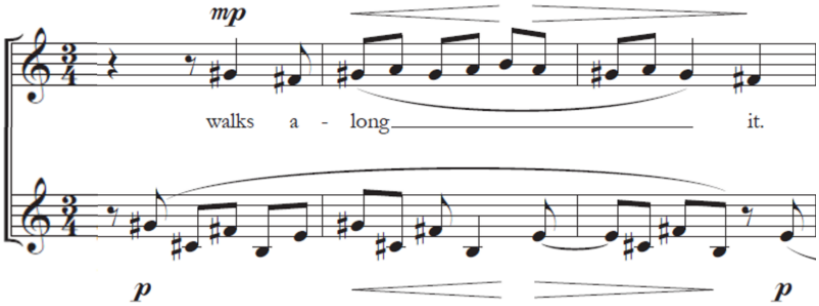
poem (see Table 7). Laitman explores tessitura and instrumentation to create the beauty and innocence portrayed in this song.

TABLE 7: Structural Analysis: "The Garden"

Verse 1	Verse 2
m. 1 – 18	m. 19 – 37

When discussing this work, Laitman comments on the instrumentation, "The work was scored for the unusual combination of soprano and alto saxophone. I was a bit concerned about the overlapping ranges and took care to make sure that the saxophone wouldn't cover the voice."[61] Of all the songs in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, "The Garden" puts the saxophone higher in the register than the soprano the most often. The choice to occasionally put the soprano on the lower note of the harmony takes advantage of the warmth and depth of the middle register. At the same time, "the reedy quality of the saxophone" creates a descant. [62] In m. 11, the overlapping tessituras showcase the harmonic color described above (Figure 13).

FIGURE 13: Mm. 11 – 13 of "The Garden" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

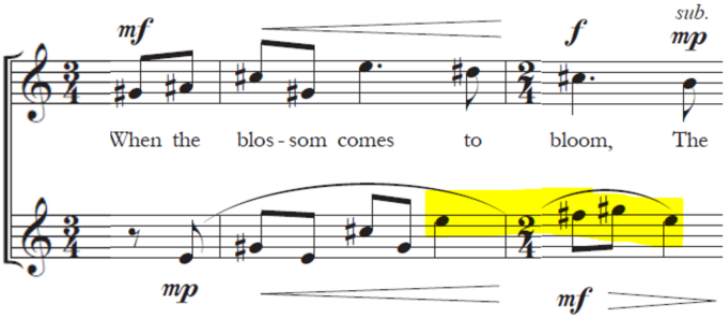


[61] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[62] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

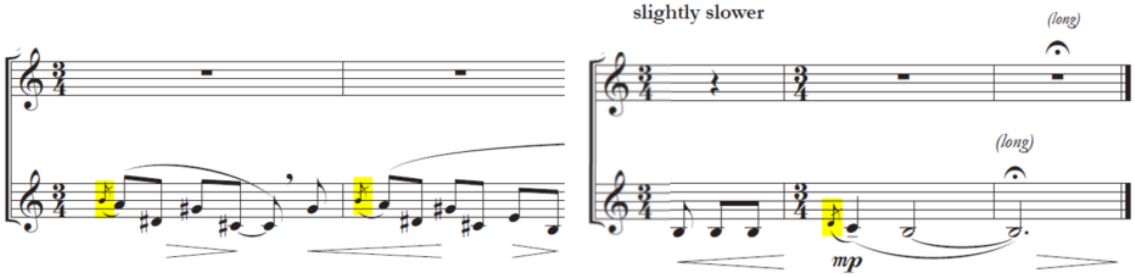
At the corresponding moment in the second verse, where the soprano reaches her high note, the saxophone is in its uppermost register, painting the words “when the blossom comes to bloom” with a mounting line that flowers at the top (Figure 14).

FIGURE 14: Mm. 25 – 27 of “The Garden” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



Laitman also adds a Jewish musical ambiance with the use of downbeat grace notes in the saxophone part, as seen in m. 15 and 36 (Figure 15)

FIGURE 15: Mm. 15 – 16, 35 – 37 of “The Garden” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



All told, the way that Laitman decides to color this song with instrumentation register choices conveys the heartbreaking sentiment of the final line of the poem, “The little boy will be no more.”

"Man Proposes, God Disposes"

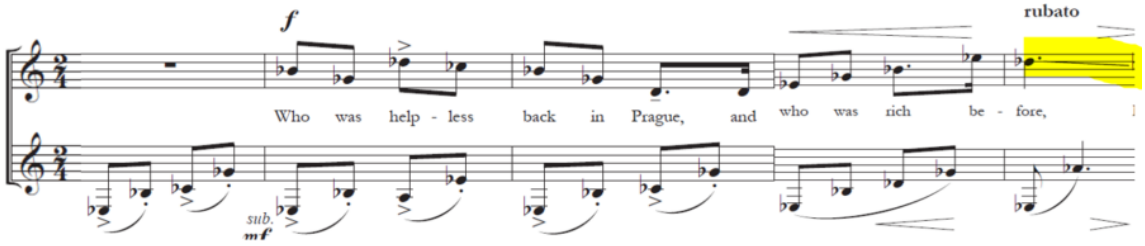
On the second half of the cycle, "Man Proposes, God Disposes" serves as the mirror to "Yes, That is the Way Things Are." Both texts are by the poets Koleba, and each are energetic alternatives to the slow, atmospheric songs that come before and after. While "Yes, That's the Way Things Are" is the more klezmer-like, "Man Proposes, God Disposes" takes on a cabaret quality. The song is presented in two very short verses (Table 8).

TABLE 8: Structural Analysis: "Man Proposes, God Disposes"

Verse 1	Verse 2
m. 1 – 13	m. 14 – 23

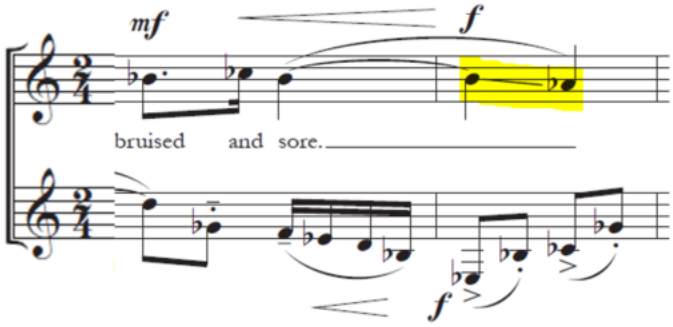
There is a morose quality to the opening saxophone motive, which spells out two perfect fifths, a half step away from one another. The accents on the first and third beat and the leaping motion mimic a limping march. The soprano enters in a similar angular fashion, with most of the line characterized by leaps (Figure 16). The disjointed quality of both melodic lines illustrates the caustic nature of the poem, which describes in blunt terminology the difference between living and dying in Terezín. In this way, Laitman uses the text to guide her compositional style, shying away from pleasing tendencies.

FIGURE 16: Mm. 2 – 6 of "Man Proposes, God Disposes" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The Yiddish folksong feeling is present, especially with the use of grace notes in the saxophone. The mordant nature of the song is also keeping with a particular style of Jewish folksong. In *Voices of a People*, Ruth Rubin remarks, "Humor became the protective shield worn by the Jews, who in times of worry and stress, clutched at the straw of lightheartedness… In an attempt to 'sing away one's troubles' or 'whistle in the dark,' many a somber text was set to a gay tune, thus endowing many of the songs with a sardonic flavor."[63] Another striking feature is Laitman's use of glissandi in the voice, used three times in the short song (Figure 17). At each instance, they are used to end the phrase, which emphasizes the cabaret quality of the song.

FIGURE 17: Mm. 11 – 12 of "Man Proposes, God Disposes" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



While short, this song is an effective vessel for Laitman to showcase two key features of her compositional style – attention to the dark text with corresponding musical angularity and Yiddish folk music references.

[63] Ruth Rubin, *Voices of a People: The Story of Yiddish Folksong*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 59.

“The Old House”

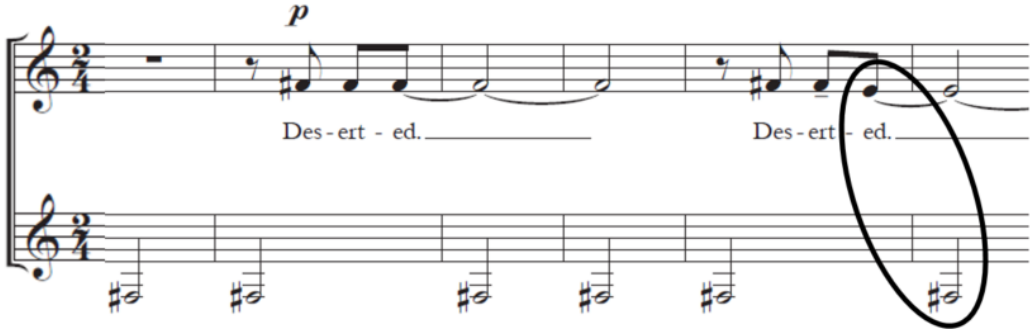
With text by Franta Bass, “The Old House” completes the set, and with it, Laitman digs into the despair and utter hopelessness of these children’s fate. The form is more through-composed than the last two songs but could be seen as two large sections, as shown in Table 9 below.

TABLE 9: Structural Analysis: “The Old House”

A section	A’ section
m. 1 – 37	m. 38 – 72

The main compositional devices Laitman uses in this song to showcase her musical interpretations are repetition and dissonance. Both are shown in the opening phrase, where the saxophone repeats a single D# as a drone, and the soprano repeats the word “deserted.” (Figure 18) For the first iteration of the word, the soprano and the saxophone create a minor third, and on the repeat, the soprano moves down a whole step so that the harmony forms a minor second.

FIGURE 18: Mm. 2 – 7 of “The Old House” from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

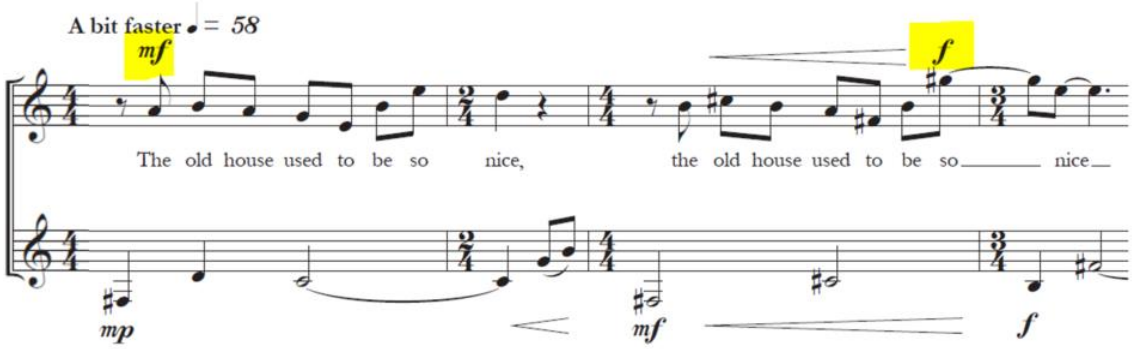


The vocal line continues in a murky C# minor over D#. While the whole step relationship is not as dissonant as the half-step from the repeated opening line, the tonal

center is ambiguous and unsettled, like the poetry text, which describes the old house standing in silence. Laitman uses an altered version of this technique twenty-one years later in the opening of "Child" in *The Secret Exit* (see Figure 71), the sequel cycle to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*.

The quality of the song changes dramatically at m. 27, where the tempo quickens, and the saxophone moves away from the D# drone (Figure 19). The soprano moves into D major with a flowing line that beautifully paints the words "The old house used to be so nice."[64] This momentary contrast highlights Laitman's traditionally sonorous style against the rest of the song, following the emotional beat of the text. Laitman describes this section as one of her favorites, remarking on "the lyricism as the voice recalls the house as it used to be."[65]

FIGURE 19: Mm. 27 – 32 of "The Old House" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



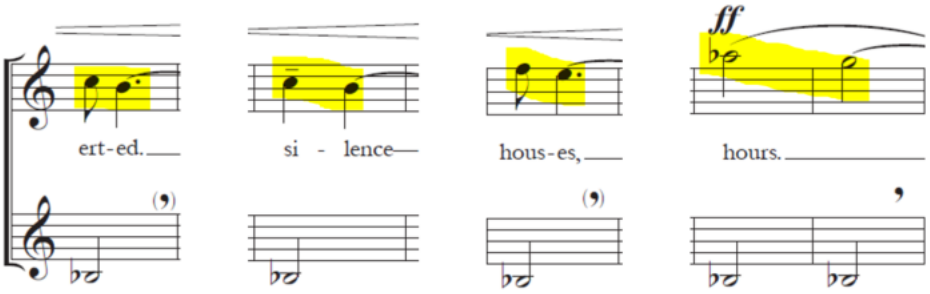
The beginning of the A' section recalls the opening sequence, but instead of a D# drone, the saxophone moves up in the register to a G. The soprano creates the dissonance in this section with descending half-steps on non-chord tones in m. 46, m. 48, m. 52, and

[64] Bass, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, 50.

[65] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

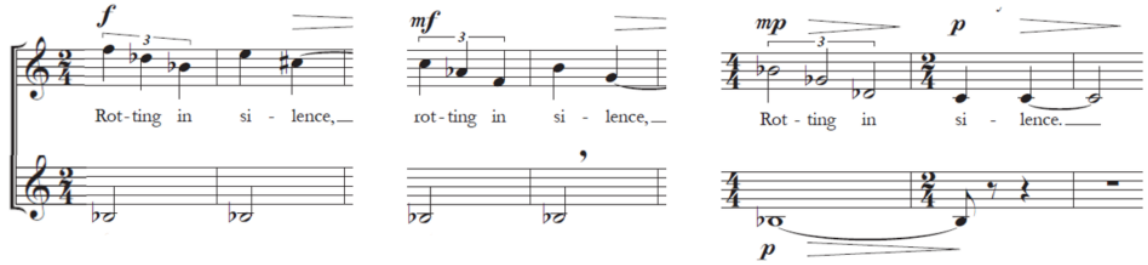
m. 59 (Figure 20). In the key of F minor, with the G drone in the saxophone, these notes never occur on the downbeat, but they are the held note at the end of the phrase, giving them extra weight.

FIGURE 20: Mm. 46, 48, 52, and 59 of "The Old House" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



The song concludes with three descending sequential repetitions of the text "rotting in silence," which Laitman describes as "the most chilling moment" (Figure 21).[66] While all share the same basic shape, there is enough variance to take the listener off guard. For example, when the final iteration uses half-note triplets instead of quarter-note triplets, the disruption of the meter segues effortlessly into the unaccompanied whisper of "silence."

FIGURE 21: Mm. 61 – 70 of "The Old House" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*



[66] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

While the combination of repetition and dissonance are used to open the song, these same tools create a completely different atmosphere to end the cycle.

Commemorative Catharsis:

Laitman's first song cycle based on a text by victims of the Holocaust was written not long after she started seriously writing art songs in 1991. Lauren Wagner, Laitman's Interlochen roommate, approached her in 1995 with the idea of composing a song cycle using poetry from the book *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Laitman recalls, "I was very drawn to the poems — amazed by the sense of hope that pervaded many of the works, as well as the brutal honesty. And I was very saddened by the knowledge that these children would later perish."[67] The poetry made a strong impact on Gary Louie, saxophonist, as well, "All of us got the book of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*… You have to deal with the poetry on a personal level and let it sink in because that's what the audience is dealing with. You have to understand what you're delivering to the audience, and the power of what these words are all about."[68] Soprano Lauren Wagner remarked on the emotional weight of the poetry and her view of music as a form of commemoration, "When you start singing these things, your body and your brain just go into the space of these children. All of you is included in all the horrible things that happened. You can't erase it.

[67] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[68] Gary Louie, Professor of Saxophone, Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

That's why I love music, because music lifts us from these things that, on paper, can feel so dry."[69]

The instrumentation choice is unique, which Laitman acknowledges,

> The work was scored for the unusual combination of soprano and alto saxophone. I was a bit concerned about the overlapping ranges and took care to make sure that the saxophone wouldn't cover the voice. The sax is typically a solo instrument, but here, its role alternates between accompaniment and equal "vocal" partner. Not only did I think that the reedy quality of the saxophone would be the perfect timbre for this poetry, I also wanted to introduce two great musicians to one another: Lauren Wagner and Gary Louie, both of whom had won the Pro Musicis competition.[70]

Louie had this to say, "There was a wonderful singer she was working with, Lauren Wagner, and Lori had this idea that saxophone and voice would work really well together. She was spot on."[71] Wagner reflects on the genesis of the piece and how the uncommon instrumentation was a vehicle for Laitman, "Sometimes composers approach a song cycle with such deep text like that, and they don't know what to do with it. Then there's someone like Laitman, who comes in and knows exactly what she's thinking about. (Gary Louie), who played the saxophone, was brilliant."[72]

Laitman would go on to create different arrangements for clarinet, bassoon, and even created a new edition of the score with English horn to be used for the lecture-recital associated with this research and the Museum of History and Holocaust Education's "Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust" opening exhibit

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[69] Lauren Wagner, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[70] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[71] Gary Louie, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[72] Lauren Wagner, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

concert. “When I made two additional arrangements, I chose clarinet and bassoon as partners for the voice, again, based on the reedy quality of the instruments. I also felt that this reediness referenced the use of clarinet in Klezmer music.”[73] Louie, who has performed the cycle 20-25 times with five different singers, speaks to these musical qualities when describing his performance choices, “There are many times when Lori paints a picture for the saxophone… The vocalist is so dedicated to the words, and it colors your sound. From a performer standpoint, it's very challenging and interesting because you know a lot of movement can happen from performance to performance.”[74] These elements come together to create a work that has found a unique chamber music niche while also commemorating the lives of the children of the Terezín ghetto.

[73] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[74] Gary Louie, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

CHAPTER 5: IN SLEEP THE WORLD IS YOURS

Musical Analysis: Overview

The three poems Laitman selected from Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger's *Harvest of Blossoms* create a dramatic arc, beginning with a somber reflection, moving into anger and despair, and ending with confusion and resignation. As Laitman describes, "'Lullaby' spotlights Selma's imagination, her capacity for love and hope, as well as her sense of foreboding and the realization that dreams might provide the only comfort in the increasingly dark days."[75] In a bittersweet cradle song, the baby is comforted to sleep with the forest, river, and wind images. There is poignancy in the final tableau, which emphasizes, "Bright is the night when a dream cuddles you."[76]

The second poem juxtaposes a vigorous series of accusations with tentative intimacy. Laitman experiments with subtext, driving with "a turbulent opening to a peaceful close, as Selma understands how memory will always keep loved one close."[77] The imagery of a pale dream concludes the song wistfully, leading into the sorrowful last poem. "Tragedy," the last song in the cycle as well as the last poem Meerbaum-Eisinger wrote, leaves her soul bare. Meerbaum-Eisinger gives in to hopelessness with terrible premonition, foretelling her demise yet forever leaving her trace. "While one wonders

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[75] Lori Laitman, *In Sleep the World is Yours – Three songs for Soprano, Oboe and Piano,* program and performance notes by Lori Laitman, commissioned by Music of Remembrance (BMI: Musica Neo, 2013), 5.

[76] Meerbaum-Eisinger, *Harvest of Blossoms*, 55.

[77] Laitman, *In Sleep the World is Yours*, Performance Notes, 5.

how she would have grown, her beautiful poetry gives us a glimpse of a supremely intelligent, spirited, and gifted young girl."[78]

TABLE 10: Summary: *In Sleep the World is Yours*

Song Cycle Title:	*In Sleep the World is Yours*
Composer:	Lori Laitman (b. 1955)
Poet/Text Source:	Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924-1942)
Ensemble:	Soprano, Oboe, and Piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. Lullaby 2. Yes 3. Tragedy
Date of Composition:	July – August 2013
Cycle Duration:	17'00"
Vocal Range:	$D_4 – B_5$
Tessitura:	$A♭_4 – A♭_5$
Publisher:	Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI
Premiere Date:	May 12, 2014
Premiere Venue:	*Music of Remembrance* Holocaust Remembrance Concert Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA
Premiere Performers:	Megan Chenovick, soprano (aka Megan Renae Parker); Mina Miller, piano/director; Ben Hausmann, oboe

Musical Analysis by Movement:

"Lullaby"

Set in a larghetto triple time, "Lullaby" opens the cycle. While certainly through-composed, there are enough small changes (especially when looking at the piano accompaniment) to suggest sections, as indicated in the analysis of the song form in Table 11.

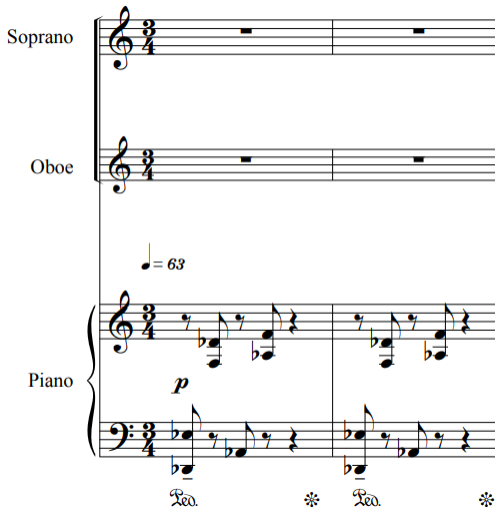
[78] Laitman, *In Sleep the World is Yours*, Performance Notes, 5.

TABLE 11: Structural Analysis: "Lullaby"

A section	A' section	B section	A'' section	C section	A'' coda
m. 1 – 35	m. 36 – 56	m. 57 – 88	m. 89– 101	m. 102 – 113	m. 114 – 122

Laitman describes the song "'Lullaby' spotlights Selma's imagination, her capacity for love and hope, as well as her sense of foreboding and the realization that dreams might provide the only comfort in the increasingly dark days."[79] In an interview, Laitman further describes the piece "The lilting quality of the accompaniment immediately suggests a lullaby."[80] Indeed, the broken eighth note pattern in the left hand of the piano accompaniment, as seen in Figure 22, characterizes the A and A' sections of the song.

FIGURE 22: Mm. 1 – 2 of "Lullaby" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



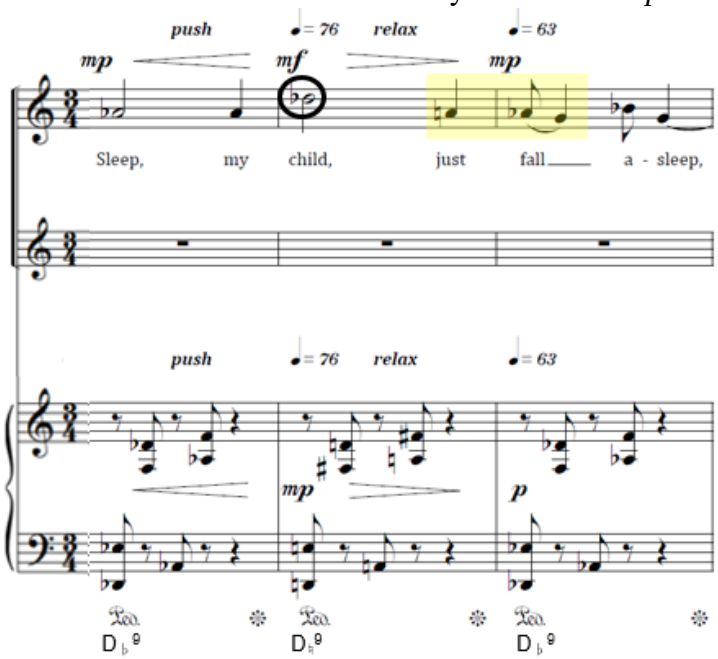
The piano begins alone with hollow, open-position D flat major chords. The addition of the 9th adds warmth and complexity to the sonorous entrance. In the fourth

[79] Laitman, *In Sleep the World is Yours*, Performance Notes, 5.

[80] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

measure, Laitman creates a feeling of tension under the word “child” (the baby’s protest perhaps) as the soprano lands on the D flat, as seen in Figure 23. The clash occurs because the accompaniment modulates up to D major for a measure before returning to the rocking D flat chords. Upon returning to the home key, the soprano instigates a syncopated rhythm facilitating the entrance of the oboe as an echo. Laitman also employs text painting by setting the word “fall” on an off-beat descending chromatic pattern.

FIGURE 23: Mm. 3 – 4 of “Lullaby” from *In Sleep the World is Yours*

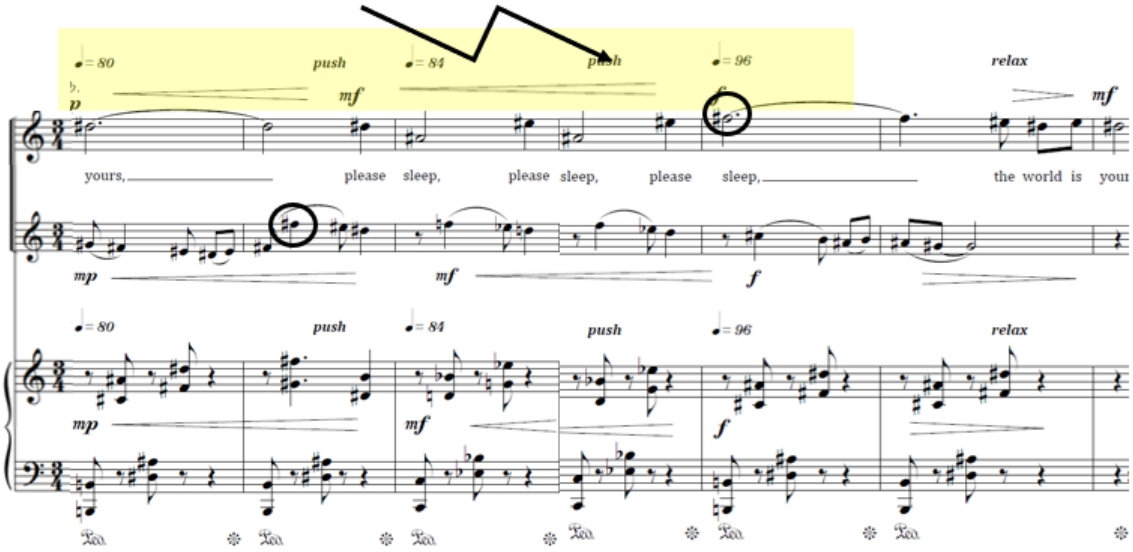


The next phrase modulates up, embracing D major, and the oboe continues the imitative role, filling in the long notes of the soprano while they both travel by step. At this moment, Laitman moves away from a direct translation of the poem, and she expands upon the text, adding, “please sleep, the world is yours, please sleep, please sleep, please sleep, the world is yours.”[81] During this expansion of the poem, the soprano and oboe

[81] Meerbaum-Eisinger, *Harvest of Blossoms*, repetition of text by Lori Laitman.

develop their range, with larger leaps, more dynamic contrasts, and long high F#s, as seen in Figure 24.

FIGURE 24: Mm. 18 – 23 of "Lullaby" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



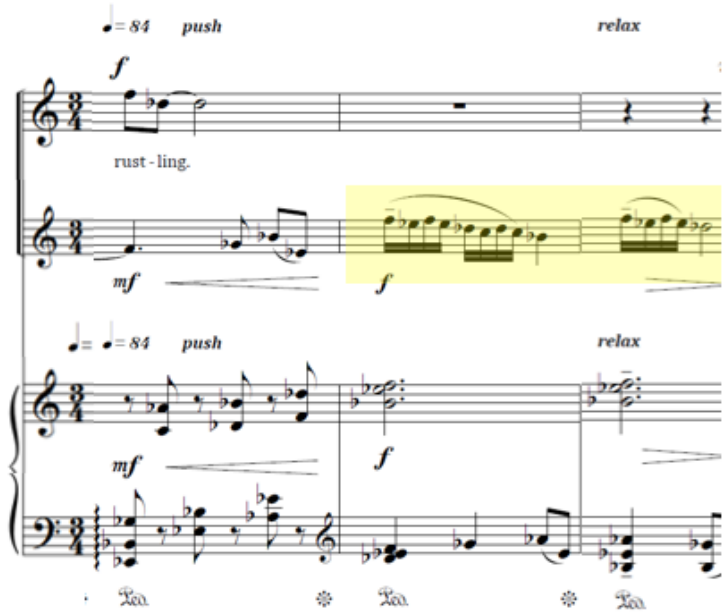
When the next line of the text returns, "and don't cry so hard," the soprano sings alone – a choice that Laitman has made in other songs, which she describes as "use of solo voice for dramatic effect."[82] The motive moves through to unaccompanied oboe before the accompaniment returns, first as a coda figure in m. 28 and then as the beginning of the A' section in m. 35. As each instrument layers slowly, the listener feels rocked to sleep. Laitman describes the ambiance she creates in an interview "I use repetition to … underscore the feeling of the song by creating a mood. I'm thinking of the repetition in "Lullaby" from *In Sleep the World is Yours* – where the repetition itself becomes part of the soothing aspect of a lullaby."[83] The A' section is shorter, following a

[82] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[83] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

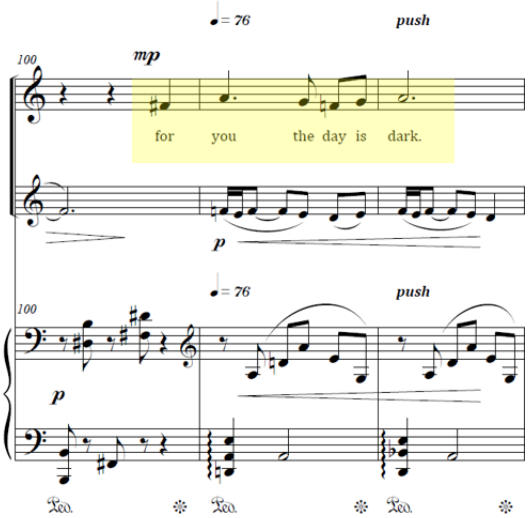
similar trajectory to the A section, with a lovely moment of word-painting on the word "rustling" in the oboe (as seen in Figure 25).

FIGURE 25: Mm. 43 – 45 of "Lullaby" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The B section is defined by the interplay of tempi, with large sweeping phrases that push the pulse and then relax again. Next, the piano accompaniment becomes more complex, featuring a dotted eighth /sixteenth note pattern on the downbeat in several phrases. The effect is a springy, effervescent accompaniment that builds to a wellspring at m. 79 as the soprano holds a high B. The denouement of this phrase winds together solo strands of the oboe and the soprano before moving to a change in tonality at m. 100 (Figure 26).

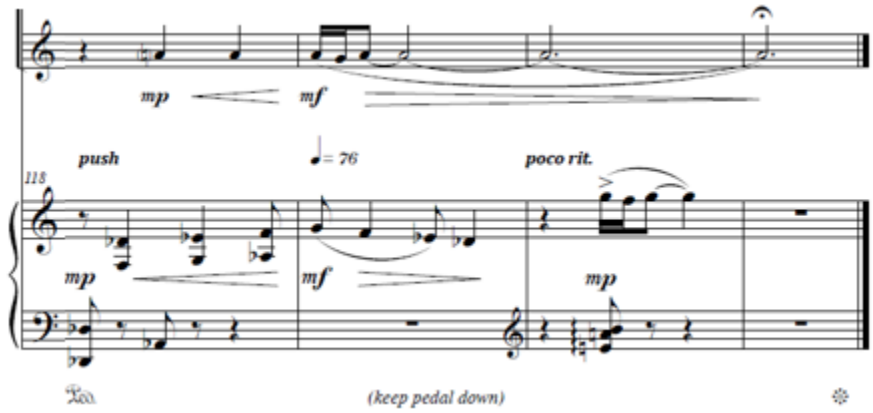
FIGURE 26: Mm. 100 – 101 of "Lullaby" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



Laitman describes this as another example of word-painting, "the harmonic change to minor to accompany the word 'dark.'"[84] "Bright is the night when a dream cuddles you," feels self-soothing as the voice rocks down from the top of the register by graduated step-wise motion. The song ends with a question mark, as the oboe plays an A♮ against the D♭ sonority in the piano. The piano's final cluster chord in a new key reiterates the ominous mood established with the oboe at the conclusion of the piece, as seen in Figure 27.

[84] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

FIGURE 27: Mm. 120 – 122 of "Lullaby" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



"Yes"

The second song in the cycle is one of Laitman's most strophic pieces. As seen in the table below, the form can be described as ABAB on the largest scale.

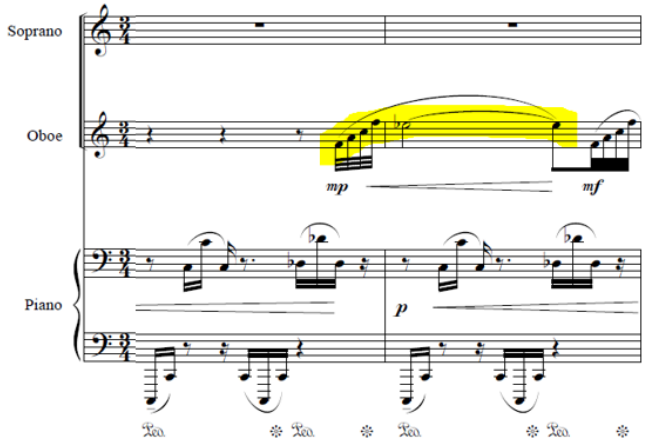
TABLE 12: Structural Analysis: "Yes"

A section	B section	A section	B section
m. 1 – 26	m. 27 – 71	m. 72 – 98	m. 99 – 147

There are more subtle segments, divisions of the A and B sections, each highlighting quality of the verse form of the poem. In the last few measures, when Laitman begins combining text from different sections of the poem, her voice as a composer shines.

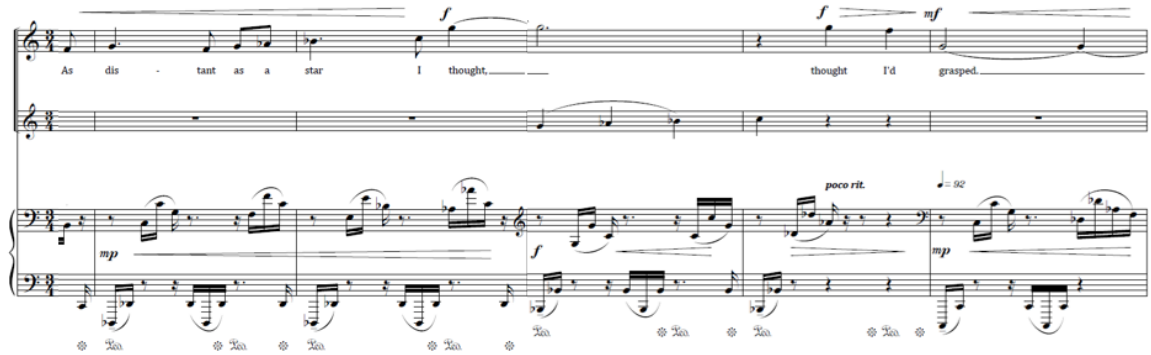
The piano enters, dark and soft, with extended pedaling indicated. The oboe establishes the first motive of the piece, as seen in Figure 28.

FIGURE 28: Mm. 2 – 3 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



This ascending, leaping figure builds in direct contrast with the descending line in the voice. Entering at forte after a steady crescendo in the piano and oboe, Laitman repeats the first line of Meerbaum-Eisinger's poem, "You are so distant."[85] This direct repetition solidifies the character of the A section, rough and stormy, as Laitman tries to capture the frustration of feeling alone. Laitman utilizes repetition more often in this song to support the form or to showcase subtext. When she repeats the word "thought" in the next line of text, hitting the highest point as seen in Figure 29, Laitman highlights the subtext, countering up after delaying resolution for the first iteration of "thought."

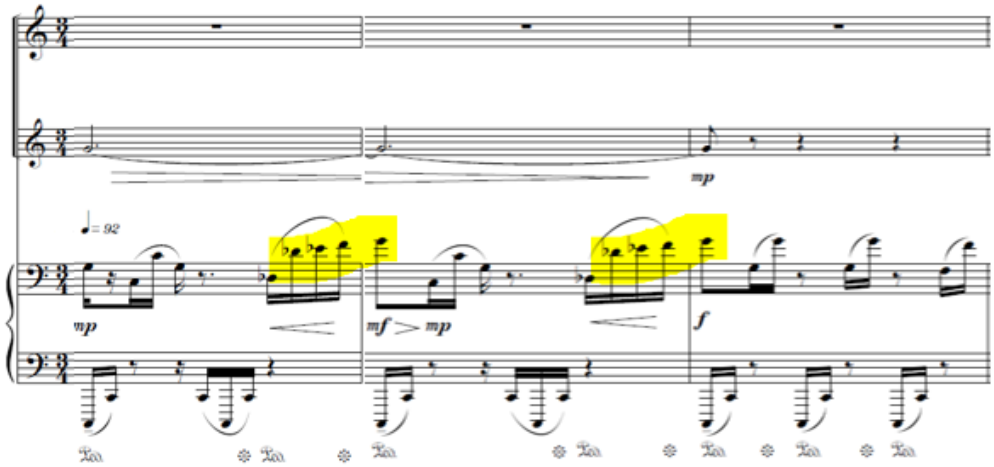
FIGURE 29: Mm. 12 – 15 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



[85] Meerbaum-Eisinger, *Harvest of Blossoms*, 35.

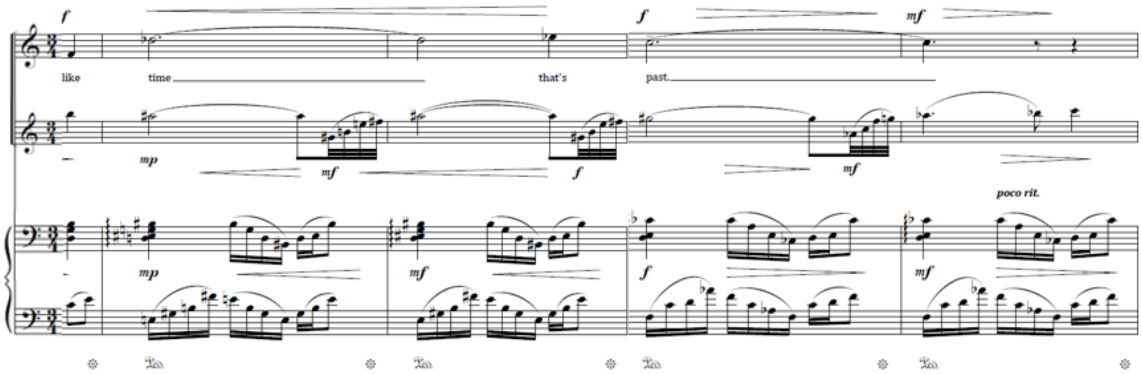
The oboe's opening motive returns at m. 16, bookending the turbulence of the A section. A diminished version of the motive, as seen in Figure 30, is used as a transition in the piano, eventually fading away into nothing.

FIGURE 30: Mm. 21 – 23 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



After a moment of silence, the oboe enters with a slower, descending variant of the opening theme. The soprano is also inverted, starting in the middle of the register and ascending softly. The energy grows, characterized by the descending arpeggios and rolled chords in the piano. In Figure 31, the mood takes on a wondrous shimmery quality, as the chord changes from a C minor 7th to a C# minor 7th.

FIGURE 31: Mm. 38 – 42 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The three players meander through different tonal centers for the next three measures, moving through C minor, C# minor, and F minor before landing at measure 43. This "hazy feeling" in the piano solidifies C# minor, if only for a few measures. This new piano theme was one of Laitman's favorite musical moments from the songs, "The harmonies are just a bit dissonant, yet sweet, and are an attempt to capture the images of 'Like time that's past/Like a star I thought I'd grasped' and 'just pale like a dream.'" (See Figure 32).[86] This is a clear example of Laitman combining her traditional consonant style with dissonance to capture the emotional stakes of the Holocaust victim.

FIGURE 32: Mm. 44 – 47 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*

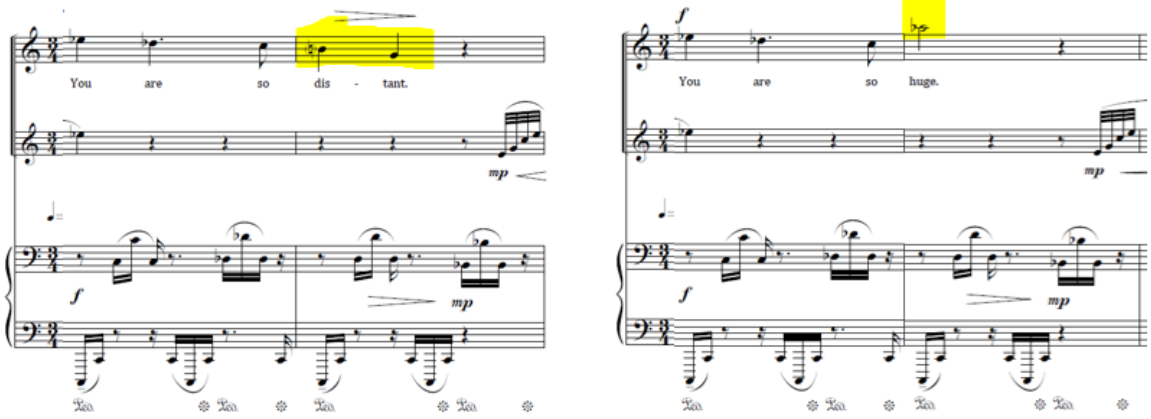
During this section of harmonic ambiguity, the soprano repeats the last line of text, "like time that's past," taking the listener deeper into Meerbaum-Eisinger's memory. With this series of repetitions and the following melismatic figures on the word "Yes," Laitman emphasizes the power of memory to explore new domains, alternating between the world of C# minor and F minor a tritone away. As the climax builds in the vocalise,

[86] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

the harmony rapidly changes, moving into A major, F# major, A♭ major, back to F minor before finally arriving at C minor, which leads to the A section's return.

At measure 72, the piano returns with the familiar opening motive, and the oboe follows suit. The first change occurs with the last note of the soprano phrase (juxtaposed with the opening in Figure 33). Whereas in the first verse, the soprano descends into the middle range, leaning on the B before landing on the G, there is a wild explosion in the second verse as the soprano leaps up to a high A♭, bisecting the original interval. This rawness is further accentuated by the B♭ in the oboe on the repeat.

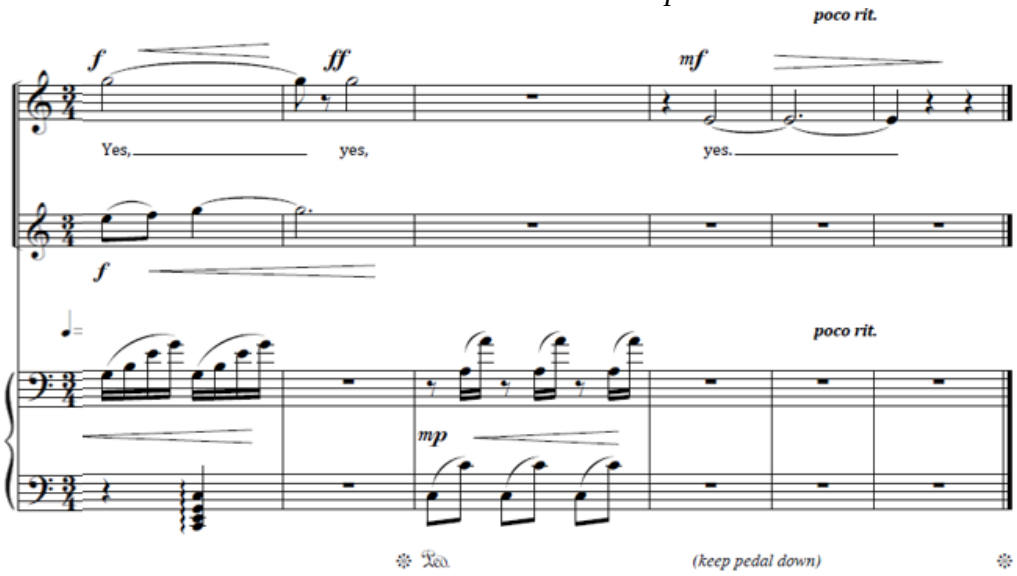
FIGURE 33: Mm. 5 – 6 vs. 80 – 81 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The denouement of the A section relies on countermelody lines in the oboe, with the piano taking a more percussive role. The return of the B section utilizes rolled chords and the slower, descending variant of the opening theme again, moving from C to C# and even repeating the "hazy feeling" theme in the piano to transition into the text repetitions. This harmonically ambiguous section resolves to a clear F minor statement for the word "yes" (as shown in Figure 12). It proceeds to change tonality again, moving through F minor, E♭7th chords, F# major/G♭ major, A major, and A♭ major, before finally ending in

C major. Through these rapidly changing harmonic centers, the soprano revisits text from the first verse, combining the phrase "just a little dusty" with "just pale" and "like a dream in my bosom" with "like time that's past."[87] With the counterpoint in the oboe, often punctuating a high note a moment after the soprano, the effect is a rapidly changing landscape where the two soloists float above a sea of chaos. After a final swell with high sustained G's in both the oboe and soprano, the dust clears, and the soprano is left vulnerable and alone. The vocalist pointedly affirms, mezzo-forte, the final "yes." In changing registers, but not fully diminishing in volume, the soprano uses the final repetition to own the final tableau, showcasing how Laitman uses this particular musical device to highlight the intention in Meerbaum-Eisinger's poetry. See the final moment of "Yes" in Figure 34 below.

FIGURE 34: Mm. 142 – 147 of "Yes" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



[87] Meerbaum-Eisinger, *Harvest of Blossoms,35*.

"Tragedy"

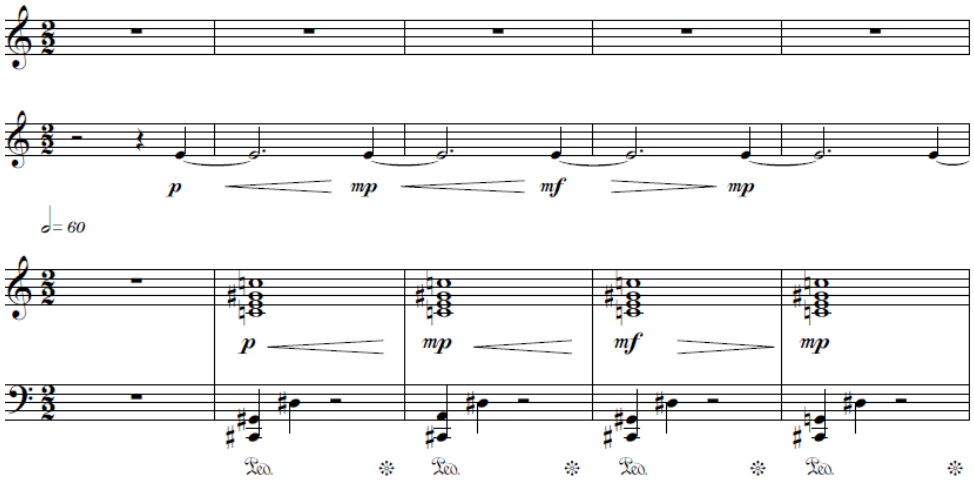
The last song reveals Meerbaum-Eisinger's prescience. As outlined in Table 13, the form can be broadly described as ABA' with a coda. The harmonic rhythm differentiates the A section and B sections. The A section relies on whole notes and single note ostinato figures, and the quick 5/8 time signature characterizes the B section.

TABLE 13: Structural Analysis: "Tragedy"

A section	B section	A' section	A coda
m. 1 – 26	m. 27 – 146	m. 147 – 189	m. 190 - 197

The song opens with a single, plaintive note in the oboe, followed by the full chord in the piano. The dissonance is raw and painful, with the piano initially playing a C augmented chord against a C# in the bass, which resolves to a D#, now a half step away from the sustained oboe. (Figure 35). The piano continues to hammer at the dissonance, growing in intensity over the four-measure phrase, until the oboe establishes a melody line.

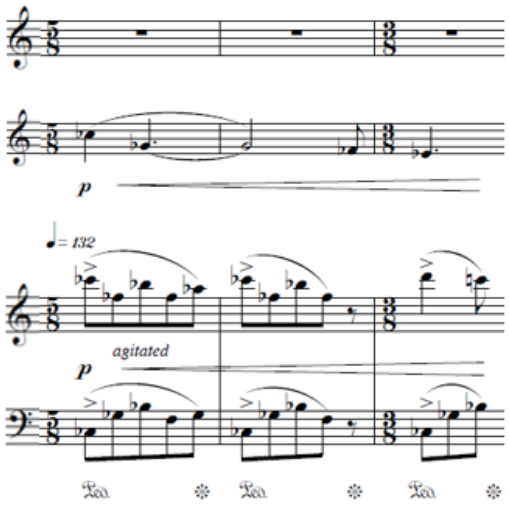
FIGURE 35: Mm. 1 – 5 of "Tragedy" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The piano block chords follow the rhythm of the oboe as the phrase reaches a crescendo. At m. 13, the tone changes as the piano moves from block chords to arpeggios. This subtle shift moves the rhythmic complexity into the piano while the oboe plays more stepwise held notes, closing out the A section. Laitman uses dissonance as the main compositional technique to establish a painful, introspective opening duet.

At m. 27, the oboe and piano take on a frantic, off-kilter quality as the time signature changes to 5/8, and the quarter note tempo increases to 132, as seen in Figure 36. While the Jewish quality of the accompaniment isn't as pronounced as *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, this short instrumental section does evoke a feeling of klezmer music, albeit in a disjunct and fragmented fashion due to the unusual metric changes.

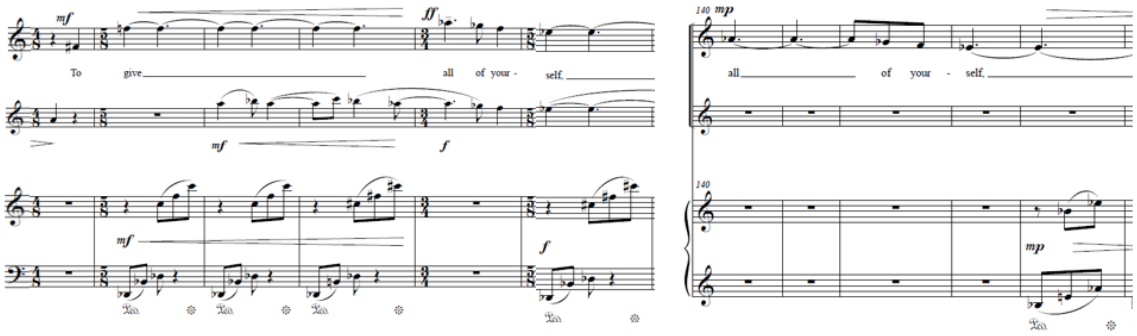
FIGURE 36: Mm. 27 – 29 of "Tragedy" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The soprano joins in m. 33, ornamenting the oboe melody line and repeating the word "this" five total times in the phrase. As the verse goes on, the soprano continues to stumble across the words, repeating certain lyrics in each stanza. Laitman describes this voice setting technique, saying it "is meant to show the psyche underlying the words as if

the singer can barely utter the thoughts."[88] The B section moves forward, climaxing in m. 125 – 131 with the soprano and oboe (Figure 37). The soprano and oboe perform unaccompanied, moving from harmony to unison and back to harmony on the phrase "to give all of yourself." She sets the soprano voice alone for the final phrase of the section, creating atmosphere and depth with her choice of instrumentation.

FIGURE 37: Mm. 121 – 126, 140 of "Tragedy" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



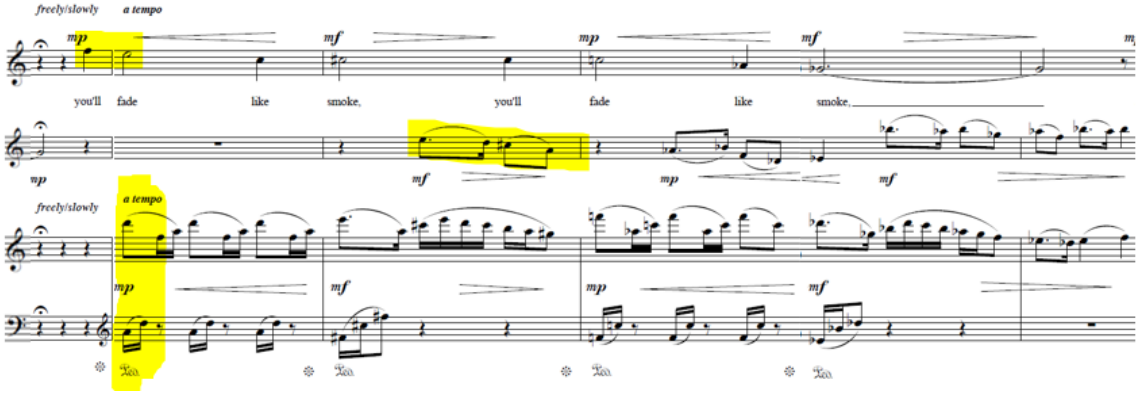
The return of the A section compresses the form to incorporate the soprano into the opening musical idea. The way Laitman achieves this is by pulling in a theme from "Yes" (see Figure 31), evoking the words "past," "dream," "grasped," and "pale." She gives the note "hazy" again for the performer, conjuring Meerbaum-Eisinger's futile alternate reality for the most poignant revelation of the entire song cycle. Laitman layers each performer's music softly, starting with the soprano in the upper middle-register tumbling slowly down on the words "you'll fade like smoke and leave no trace" (Figure 38).[89] The piano arpeggiates a D minor 7th chord while the oboe enters a bar later as an

[88] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[89] Meerbaum-Eisinger, *Harvest of Blossoms*, 97.

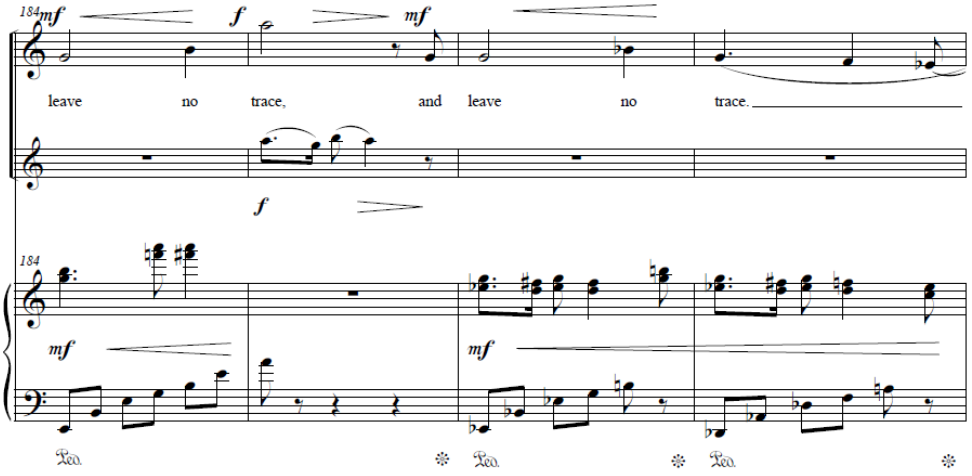
echo. The phrase gains its emotional strength from Laitman's layering compositional device.

FIGURE 38: Mm. 167 – 172 of "Tragedy" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The emotional tenor of the phrase grows as the words are repeated, underscored by the "hazy" theme in the piano. Laitman repeats the layering technique in m. 177, setting the voice alone again before entering with oboe and piano. The emotional climax of the song happens at m.184 (Figure 39).

FIGURE 39: Mm. 184 – 187 of "Tragedy" from *In Sleep the World is Yours*



The soprano moves from the top of her tessitura down to the middle of the staff, giving her the option of delivering the last phrase in chest voice. The final coda brings back the

ominous chords from the song's opening, the bell tolling the hour of death. Then, in an ending that combines two of Laitman's signature compositional traits (choice of instrumentation and textual repetition), the soprano plaintively calls out alone, eventually fading away into nothing.

Commemorative Catharsis

In Sleep the World is Yours was commissioned in 2013 by Mina Miller through her organization Music of Remembrance. Miller recalls, "We'd previously performed a number of Lori's works, including two we'd commissioned and premiered (*The Seed of Dream*, 2004 and *Vedem*, 2010), so I already knew her musical style and approach well. I also knew Lori as a wonderful collaborator and a joy to work with."[90] Laitman initially expressed hesitation when she read Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger's poetry,

> Selma's poetry did not initially overwhelm me because the language was so simple. Consequently, I had to dig deeper with the subtext. What was she trying to convey? And how could I translate the deeper meaning musically? I found these poems required more of my imagination than normal because the balance of my musical translation was skewed more towards the subtext.[91]

Miller describes what drew her to the poetry: "It struck me immediately as a wonderful source for a new song cycle, and Lori would be the perfect composer with her rare gift for embracing and enriching the essence of poetic text… The verses express the

[90] Lori Laitman, interviewed by Gregory Berg, "Listener's Gallery: Review of Tom Cipullo: After Life, Lori Laitman: In Sleep The World Is Yours," *Journal of Singing* vol. 73, no. 2 (November/December 2016): 235.

[91] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

yearnings of a young woman in love, experiencing those desires in a violent and turbulent world."[92] Megan Renae Parker, soprano, recalls her impression when preparing the work for its premiere with Music of Remembrance, "While the stories are tragic, there are also beautiful images of love & hope. Representing the lightness as well as the darkness expressed by those going through the Holocaust is a sacred trust."

When Music of Remembrance premiered the cycle in Seattle, WA, both Helene and Irene Silverblatt, relatives of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, were able to attend the concert.[93] As the editors and translators of her book, *Harvest of Blossoms*, being able to connect during this premier was incredibly impactful. As Megan Renae Parker remembers, "After the premiere, I was lucky to meet descendants and relatives of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, who wrote the poetry and perished during the Holocaust. They were very moved to see Selma honored in this way and thought the music only enhanced the poetry, giving it new life."[94] Mina Miller also reflects on performing the premiere, "It was helpful to imagine the piece as a kind of word-painting, and I needed to absorb the piece as a whole in order to find the colors I wanted. Performing *In Sleep the World is Yours* was a deeply satisfying experience for me."[95]

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[92] Mina Miller, pianist and director of Music of Remembrance, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[93] "Spring Concert: The Yellow Ticket," Music of Remembrance, published 2014, https://www.musicofremembrance.org/concert/spring-concert-yellow-ticket.

[94] Megan Renae Parker, soprano, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[95] Mina Miller, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

CHAPTER 6: THE OCEAN OF ETERNITY

Musical Analysis: Overview

The four poems that Laitman sets in "Ocean of Eternity" are connected by their thematic ideas: time and death. In Ranasinghe's Four Stanzas on Mortality, the verses are read as a single poem, and each stanza is untitled. The first stanza opens with a description of the weight of time before moving into the first person. Next, the narrator observes the wind and the ocean slowly encroaching on her house built along the water's edge. She clearly defines the symbolism in the poem's final line, calling the wind time and the ocean death, which both live eternally lonely existences.

The second stanza builds on the themes of the first by observing that neither the dead nor the past can return to the living. The next line moves into slightly more optimistic realms as the narrator reflects that the past and the deceased live in us. Ranasinghe explores her Jewish heritage, citing several biblical stories starting with the journey of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and Moses delivering the Ten Commandments, to Delilah and many other female Biblical figures. By adopting the first person, Ranasinghe simultaneously embodies doubt, kindness, power, wisdom, and deceit, culminating in the meeting of the past and present. However, the stanza ends in limbo again with the final line, "But I am futureless."[96] As a Jewish woman living in a distant land and the sole survivor in her family from the Holocaust, these words have significant meanings.

[96] Ranasinghe, *Poems*, Four Stanzas on Mortality, 26.

In recognition of the loss of custom and birthright, Ranasinghe opens the third verse, questioning if anything is left to tell. The next line explores the present once more, but instead of seeing time erode her home, Ranasinghe basks in the beauty of nature. She recalls moments of love and tenderness juxtaposed against the persistent squawk of the seagulls as they wait to feed. The birds hover, and they are there as the narrator realizes she will be no more than dust and ashes in the end. Nature keeps going, even as time and death encroach upon our short human lives.

The narrator comes to peace with her mortality in the short final stanza. The dust from her bones will serve nature as wild flowers grow from her ashes. While the ocean may be lonely, generation after generation of seagulls will thrive, even after she is gone and forgotten.

TABLE 14: Summary: *The Ocean of Eternity*

Song Cycle Title:	*The Ocean of Eternity – four stanzas on mortality*
Composer:	Lori Laitman (b. 1955)
Poet/Text Source:	Anne Ranasinghe (1925-2016)
Ensemble:	Soprano, soprano saxophone, piano
Individual Song Titles:	1. The Ocean of Eternity 2. Futureless 3. The Morning was Blue 4. Wild Flowers
Date of Composition:	April – September 2017
Cycle Duration:	11’30”
Vocal Range:	$B_3 – B_5$
Tessitura:	$F_4 – F_5$
Publisher:	Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI
Premiere Date:	February 9, 2019
Premiere Venue:	Scorca Hall at The National Opera Center in New York City
Premiere Performers:	Yungee Rhie, soprano; Michael Couper, saxophone; ChoEun Lee, piano

Musical Analysis by Movement:

"The Ocean of Eternity"

In this song, Laitman uses two primary musical devices – a leitmotif (hereafter referred to as the "Eternity motive") and descending spinning imagery. She utilizes both of these tools in each of the three instruments, passing along motivic information from one player to the next. In addition, the use of sentence structure in her vocal and instrumental lines creates something of a three-verse form with an introduction and coda, although it is most certainly through-composed. Table 15 outlines the form of the piece.

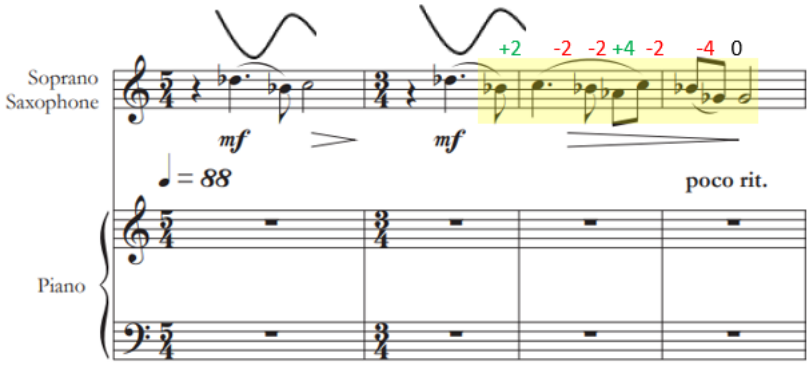
TABLE 15: Structural Analysis: "The Ocean of Eternity"

Introduction	A section	B section	C section	Coda
m. 1 – 7	m. 8 – 21	m. 22 – 34	m. 35 – 46	m. 47 – 52

The song opens with a 7-bar solo introduction by the soprano saxophone, establishing the two devices in those first moments. The saxophone engages with a descending leap followed by a stepwise upward motion. This downward spiral motion creates a twisting feeling that Laitman describes in the following way, "The opening circular motif introduced by the saxophone is meant to symbolize the cycle of life, and it is not only prominently throughout the first song, but also interspersed through the cycle."[97] Laitman utilizes repetition and expansion by using the descending theme as the launching point for the first iteration of the Eternity motive.

[97] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

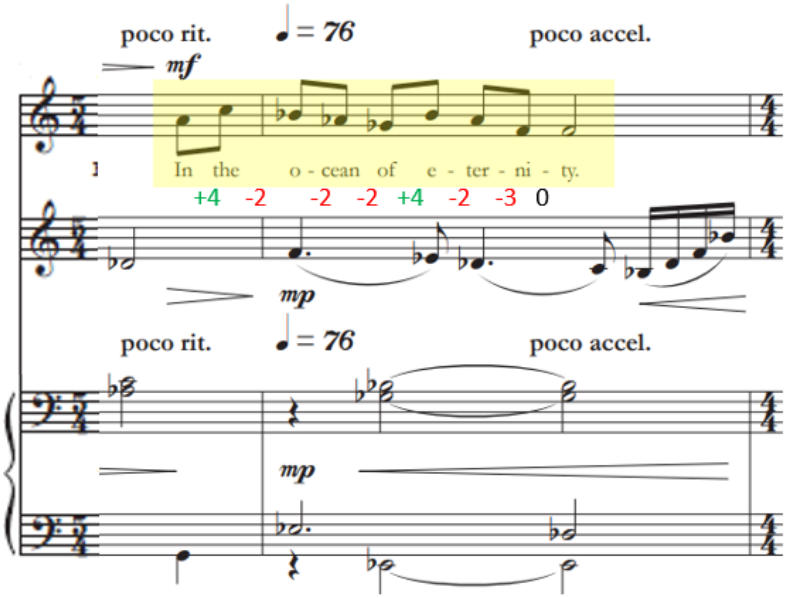
FIGURE 40: Mm. 1 – 4 of "The Ocean of Eternity" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The Eternity motive (highlighted above) is characterized by ascending and descending eighth notes, notated in Figure 40 by a positive or negative measure of half steps. Another prominent feature of the Eternity motive is using a repeated note at the end, indicated with a zero. Future iterations of the Eternity motive do not adhere to this exact pattern, but there is enough repetition for the listener to know when the theme returns.

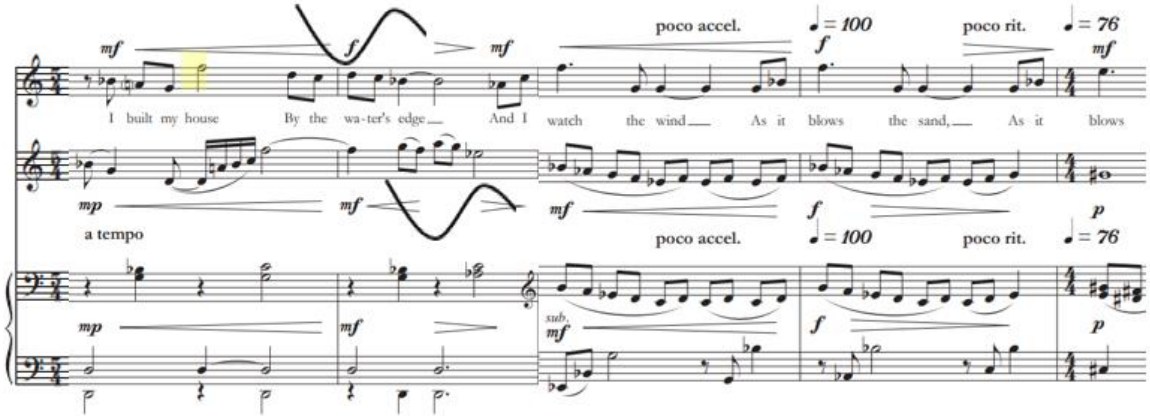
The soprano introduces text to the Eternity motive in m. 12 – 13. The soprano's theme is built primarily from eighth notes and descending whole steps like the first instance. The beginning of the Eternity motive is the most unpredictable, making the opening intervals and rhythms difficult to classify compared to the rest of the pattern. The turn in the phrase is slightly more angular when the soprano sings it, with a leap up of a 4th compared to a major 3rd in the first instance. This small alteration is set on the word "eternity," emphasizing its importance within the phrase, as shown in Figure 41.

FIGURE 41: Mm. 12 – 13 of "The Ocean of Eternity" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



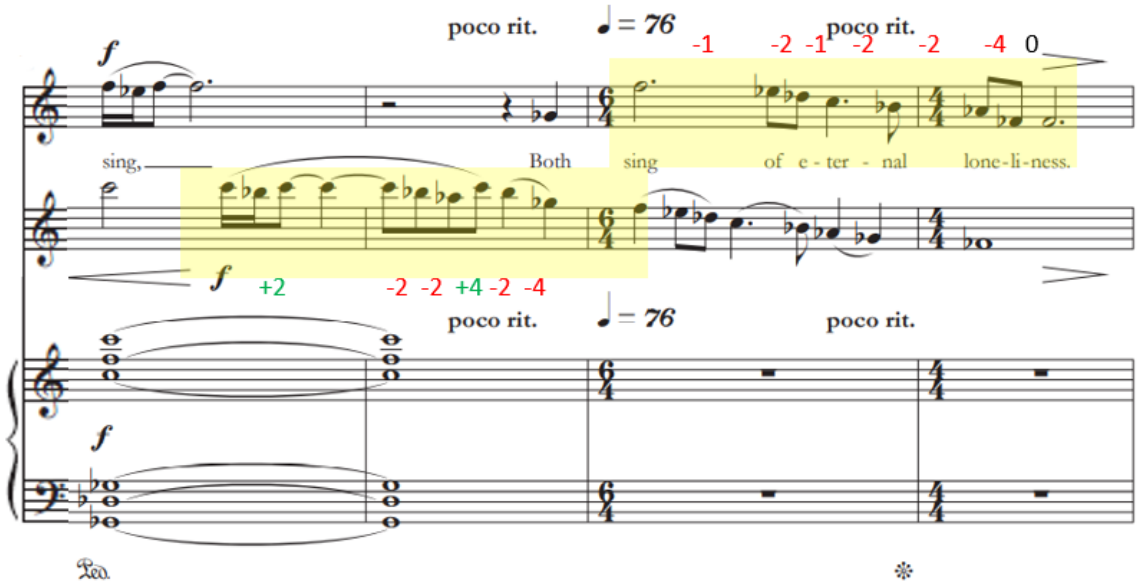
When Laitman sets the text, she employs an echo with the saxophone, which then moves into both the saxophone and the piano downward spiral duet. Again, the text painting is evident here, with Laitman setting strong words on prominent beats, leaping up to F_5 for further emphasis. These tools reach a critical point in m. 76, as seen in Figure 42, with a break in the pattern leaping up to E_5 in the soprano instead of the F_5. The result is the receding of the wave back into the surf.

FIGURE 42: Mm. 16 – 20 of "The Ocean of Eternity" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



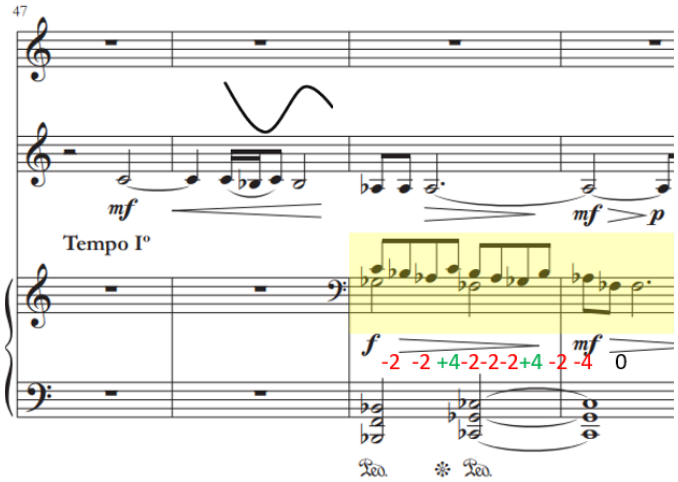
Laitman expands on the call and response theme in m. 37 in the C section. Here she utilizes a structure reminiscent of a sentence, with the presentation built as the soprano melody and the saxophone response and the return of the Eternity theme in the continuation. The overlapping ascending and descending phrases evoke the ocean and time, forever locked in a duet of inevitability. The Eternity theme is also eroded by the passage of time, as it overlaps from the saxophone into the soprano, as seen in Figure 43.

FIGURE 43: Mm. 43 – 46 of "The Ocean of Eternity" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



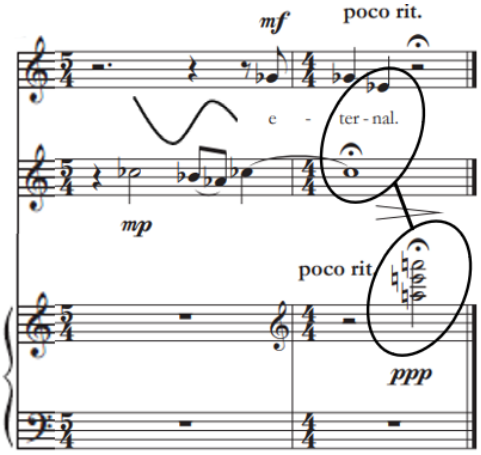
Starting in m.47, the coda follows a similar structure to the introduction, blending the spiral figure into the Eternity motive (played on the piano for the first time, as shown in Figure 44).

FIGURE 44: Mm. 47 – 50 of "The Ocean of Eternity" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



Laitman's only text repetition in this song occurs in the last measure, where she repeats the word "eternal." As one of the hallmark features of Laitman's writing style, her interpretation as the composer is allowed to blossom when she repeats text. She could have repeated any word, certainly "eternity," but Laitman's decision to truncate "eternal" shows a deeper subtext – a quiet and heartbreaking life coming to an end (Figure 45). Ending on a sonorous 6th with an E♭ and C♭ in the soprano and saxophone (respectively), the final piano chord feels disjointed with an A and E natural, further accentuating the subtext of interruption and incompletion.

FIGURE 45: Mm. 51 – 52 of "The Ocean of Eternity" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



"Futureless"

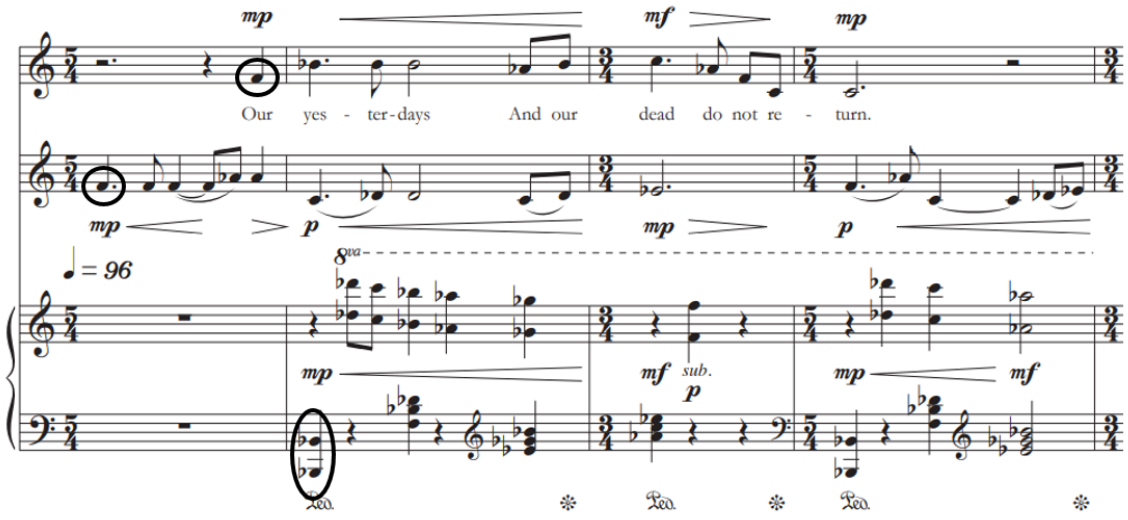
The defining feature of "Futureless" is the distinct modules in the composition. Repetition defines each block, and Laitman uses these transitions "as ties between past and present."[98] Table 16 includes the form of the song.

TABLE 16: Structural Analysis: "Futureless"

A section	B section	C section	D section	E section	Cadenza	A' section
m. 1 – 9	m. 10 – 17	m. 18 – 34	m. 35 – 45	m. 46 – 57	m. 58 – 59	m. 60 - 70

The song opens with a mournful saxophone, and the soprano and the piano enter in sequence, layering upon one another to build up the energy, as shown in Figure 46.

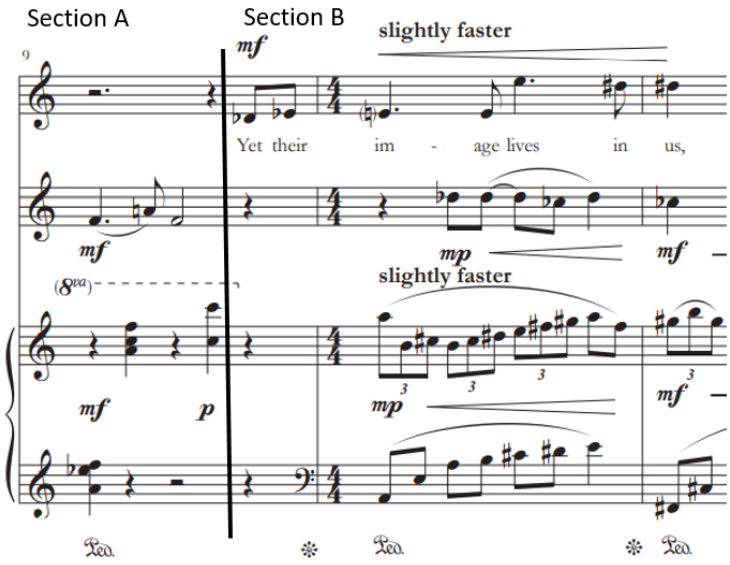
FIGURE 46: Mm. 1 – 4 of "Futureless" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



[98] Lori Laitman, *The Ocean of Eternity, four stanzas on mortality, four songs for soprano, soprano saxophone, and piano,* program and performance notes by Lori Laitman, commissioned Yungee Rhie, Michael Couper, and ChoEun Lee (BMI: Musica Neo, 2017), 6.

The first line of the A section is repeated before moving into the B section. The piece's character completely transforms at m. 10, changing from mournful to mesmerizing, as seen in Figure 47.

FIGURE 47: Mm. 9 – 11 of "Futureless" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The C section paints the rolling sea in the piano, while the D section darkens as "God brooded over the mountain." In the E section, Laitman invokes "modal harmonies to create an ancient-sounding atmosphere."[99] The text of this verse refers to strong female figures of the Bible - Ruth, Esther, Miriam, and Delilah. In Peter Manual's "Modal Harmony in Andalusian, Eastern European, and Turkish Syncretic Musics" he states:

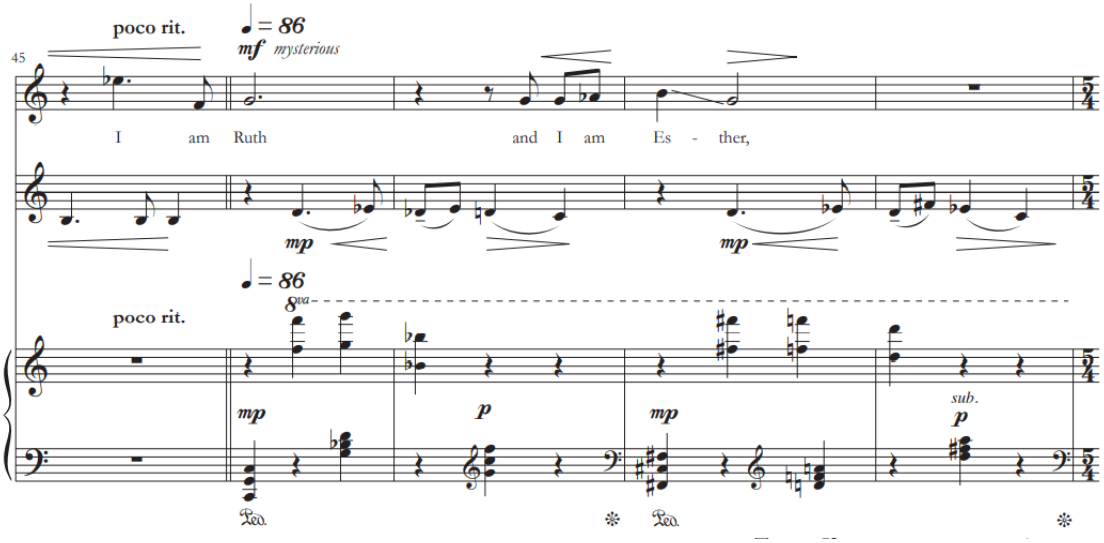
> The presence of Jewish professional secular musicians (klezmorim) throughout Eastern Europe also appears to have functioned as an agent of musical homogeneity. Jews constituted an international community present in all the countries in question here, and Jewish musicians to serve as conduits for the transmission genres (e.g., the Rumanian domina) across international borders.[100]

[99] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[100] Peter Manuel, "Modal Harmony in Andalusian, Eastern European, and Turkish Syncretic Musics," *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 21 (1989): 76.

In Figure 48, one can examine the modal harmonies Laitman uses, referencing Jewish worship music with the invocation of the Bible.

FIGURE 48: Mm. 45 – 49 of "Futureless" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



"Another distinction is the more frequent use of solo voice for dramatic effect," Laitman described in an interview.[101] After Section E, Laitman writes a solo vocal cadenza, and throughout the final section, the soprano performs alone. The repetition of "I am futureless" serves a similar function to the previous songs ending with "eternal."[102] The composer captures the finality of death with a vulnerable, exposed solo voice and extends the soprano into the lowest register, as seen in Figure 49. Also seen in Figure 49 is the scaffolding of the entrances, similar to the opening of the song.

[101] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[102] Ranasinghe, *Poems*, Four Stanzas on Mortality, 26.

FIGURE 49: Mm. 69 – 70 of "Futureless" from *The Ocean of Eternity*

"The Morning was Blue"

"The Morning was Blue" includes the most joyous music of all the movements in this song cycle. Surrounded by a somber opening and a dark conclusion, this song contains the largest juxtaposition in musical characteristics. This song also employs significant text-painting, describing multiple specific seascapes. The structural analysis of the movement is described in Table 17.

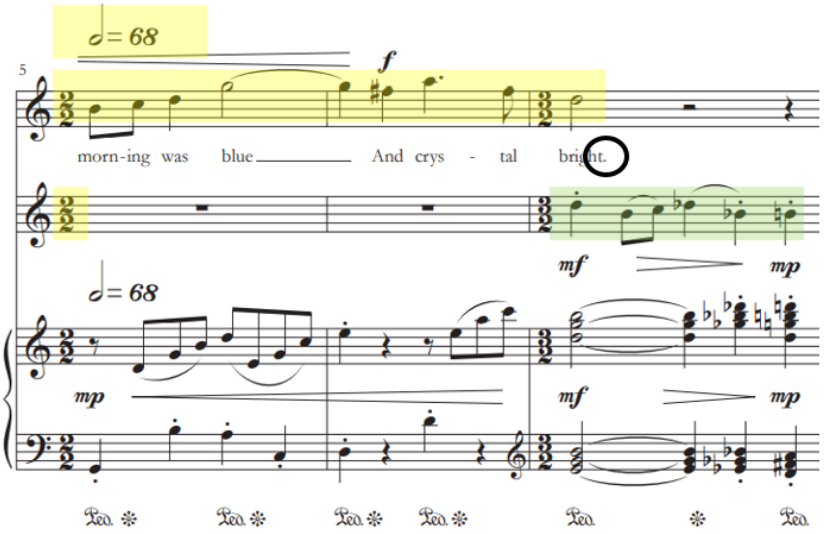
TABLE 17: Structural Analysis: "The Morning was Blue"

Introduction	A section	B section
m. 1 – 4	m. 5 – 24	m. 25 – 37

With its use of unaccompanied voice, the introduction serves as a bridge for the previous song. The piece's character completely changes at m. 5, as seen in the higher tessitura for the soprano, the quicker tempo, and the change in time signature. One aspect of this piece is Laitman's attention to the text, as seen in Figure 50. At significant marks of

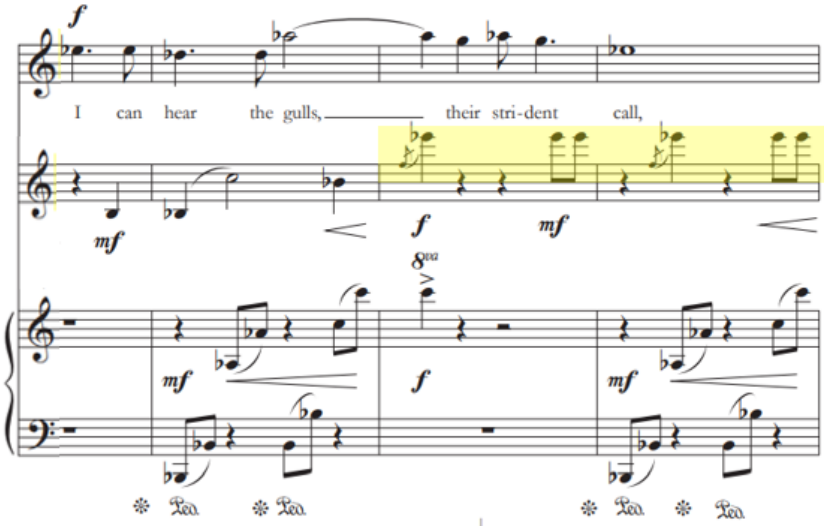
punctuation – periods, dashes – Laitman uses the saxophone as a countermelody and conclusion of the phrase.

FIGURE 50: Mm. 5 – 7 of "The Morning was Blue" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



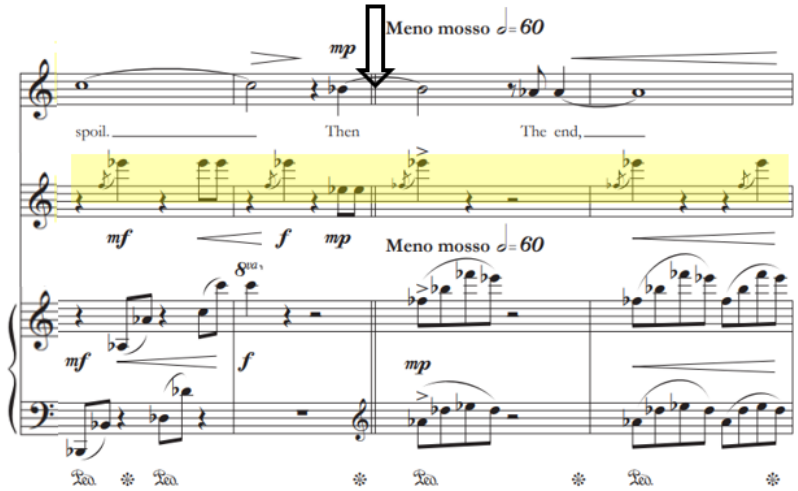
She employs the same technique at m. 10, 14, and 17, only using the saxophone when the soprano has completed a natural phrase. Finally, in m. 20, the saxophone takes on a new role of the seagull, performing its "strident call" in the instrument's highest register, as seen in Figure 51.

FIGURE 51: Mm. 18 – 21 of "The Morning was Blue" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The onomatopoeic cry of the seagull in the saxophone becomes the bridge between the A section and the B section, which abruptly moves from A♭ major to A♭ minor, as seen in Figure 52:

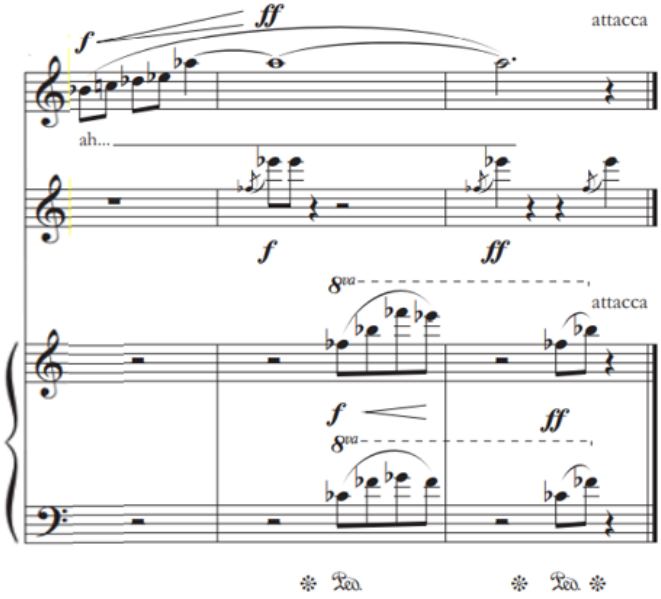
FIGURE 52: Mm. 24 – 26 of "The Morning was Blue" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



This dark turn coincides with a change in the text, as the poet moves from describing the seaside to contemplating death. With this last stanza of text, Laitman again experiments with the soprano singing unaccompanied, this time in the lowest register of the voice.

Laitman alternates between unaccompanied voice, the saxophone seagull, and the broken chords in the piano, never losing the quick tempo. The effect feels ephemeral, with the delicacy of the voice juxtaposed against the saxophone's shrill caw. Finally, Laitman chooses to end the song with a vocalise, a high floated "ah," which briefly recalls A♭ major, as seen in Figure 53. With this tonally ambiguous ending and her decision to add the word "ah," the soprano bellows to the sea, a cry of frustration and resignation at the inevitability of death.

FIGURE 53: Mm. 35 – 37 of "The Morning was Blue" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



"Wild Flowers"

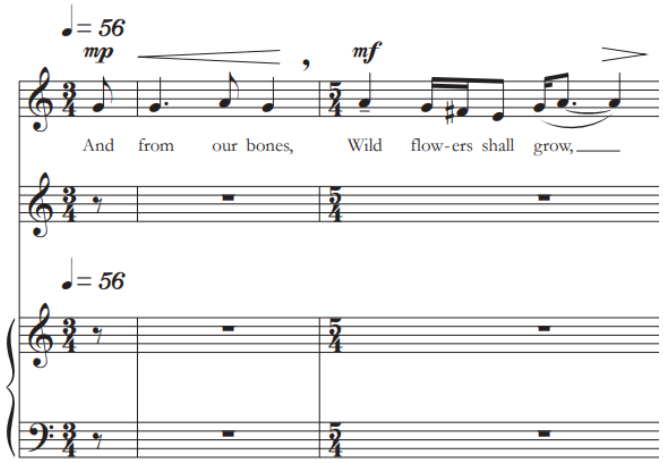
The final song of the *Ocean of Eternity* cycle, "Wild Flowers," pulls in many aspects of the previous songs and includes more textual repetition than any of the other selections. Table 18 illustrates the song form. Like "Futureless," "Wild Flowers" consists of many smaller sections, although repetition plays a more important role in the form of this piece.

TABLE 18: Structural Analysis: "Wild Flowers"

A section	B section	C section (B')	A' section	C' section	A'' coda	C'' coda
m. 1 – 6	m. 7 – 10	m. 13 – 18	m. 18 – 21	m. 22 – 28	m. 29 – 31	m. 32 - 35

At the opening performance at Scorca Hall, Laitman said the following, "The concluding song, 'Wild Flowers,' speaks of how wild flowers will grow from our ashes. Which you could view as sort of depressing, or, I happen to think it's nice. It's just sort of cycling."[103] There is something simple and serene about the opening of the A section when the soprano sings the opening line unaccompanied, as shown in Figure 54. The tessitura of the phrase is very limited, only spanning a fourth and in a speaking register of the voice, which suggests comfort.

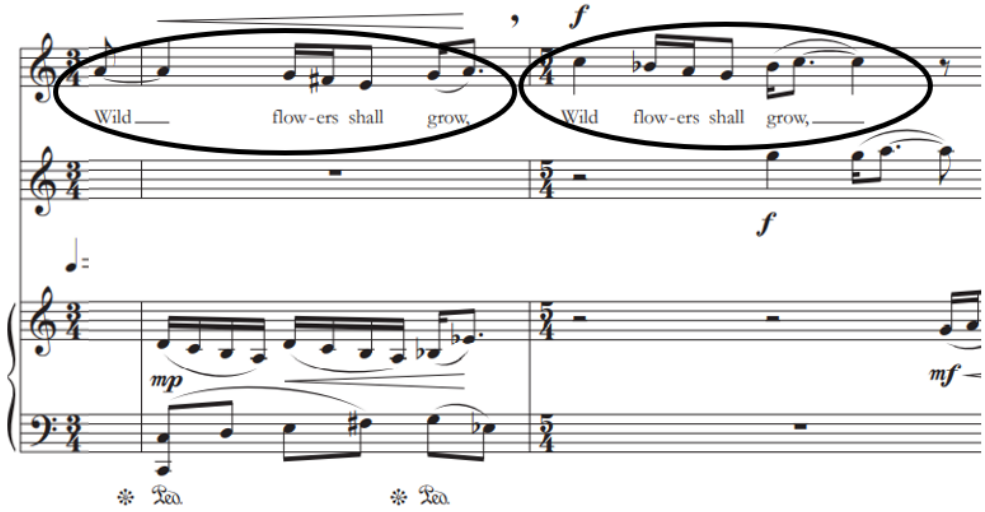
FIGURE 54: Mm. 1 -2 of "Wild Flowers" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The soprano restates the text, but now with a piano accompaniment. Laitman repeats the second half of the phrase to modulate into the B section, as shown in Figure 55.

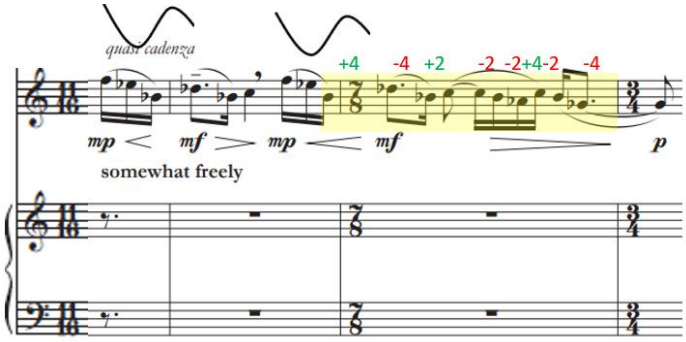
[103] *Live from the National Opera Center*, Lori Laitman opening remarks, "The Ocean of Eternity," February 9, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y2A4lBIllk.

FIGURE 55: Mm. 5 – 6 of "Wild Flowers" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The short B section feels like a connecting fragment from "The Morning was Blue," utilizing the high tessitura of the soprano voice and the imagery of the gulls and ashes again. The saxophone enters at m. 10, with a reintroduction of the descending spiral motive from "The Ocean of Eternity," which moves into a full iteration of the Eternity Motive at m. 12, as seen in Figure 56.

FIGURE 56: Mm. 10 – 12 of "Wild Flowers" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The soprano confirms the return of the motive with her repetition on the text "in the ocean of eternity," which seamlessly moves back into text seen in the B section "where

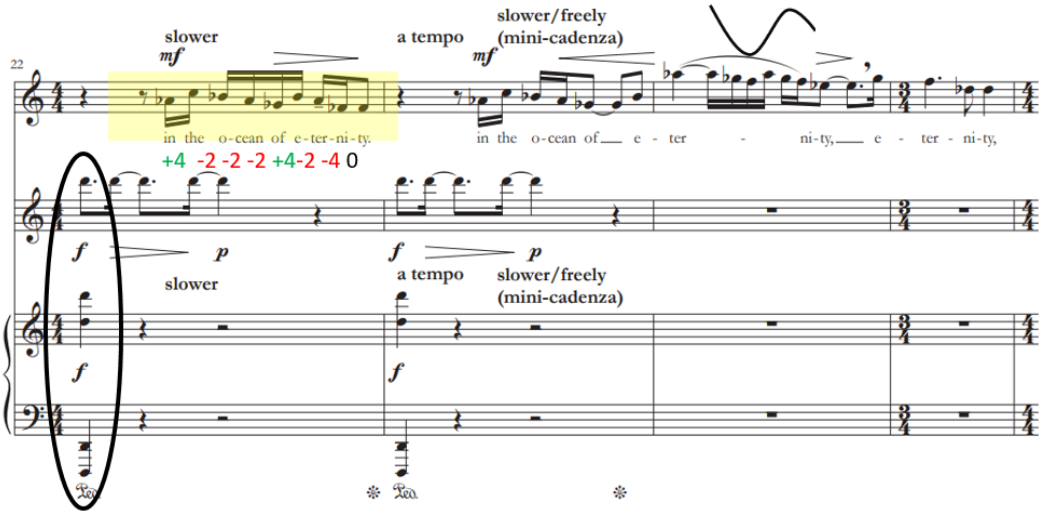
the ashes fall."[104] This final song blends so many elements of the cycle, which Lori describes "When making final choices for a cycle, I also consider which poems might be juxtaposed to create a compelling dramatic arc."[105] Her perspective as the composer shines through in this song as she weaves together the different musical and textual tools from the previous songs in the cycle.

The A' section starts at m. 18, an almost exact repetition of the unaccompanied soprano voice from the song's beginning. The repetitions build faster, condensing the six measures in the A section to only three measures in the A' section. After briefly returning to the G major in the A' section, an open-position, hollow D in both the piano and saxophone abruptly bring the music back to the Eternity theme, as seen in Figure 57. Her decision to duplicate that phrase, leading into the mini-cadenza for the soprano, is another example of Laitman's interpretative voice being most prominent in instances of repetition. The soprano voice soars, slowly spinning downward as the cycle of life concludes in a beautiful swan song.

[104] Ranasinghe, *Poems*, Four Stanzas on Mortality, 26.

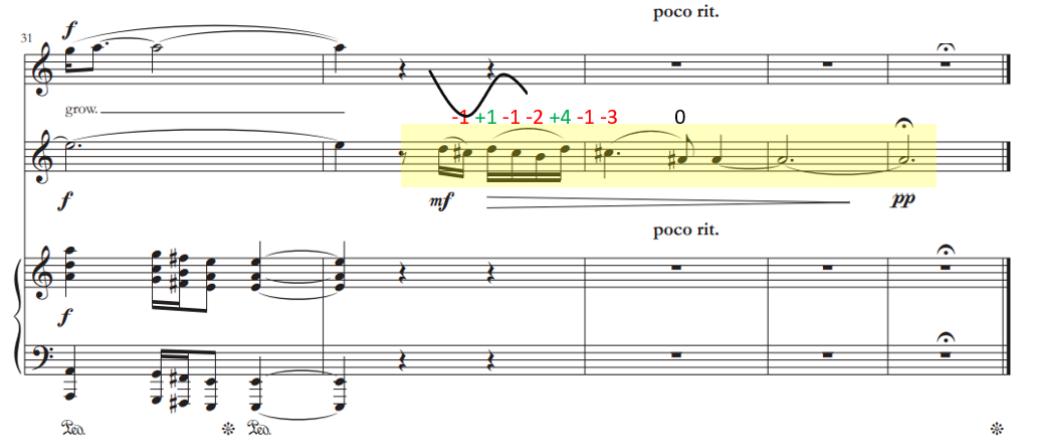
[105] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

FIGURE 57: Mm. 22 – 35 of "Wild Flowers" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



The denouement alternates between the "wild flowers shall grow" theme and one more iteration of the Eternity motive in the saxophone. While the final "wild flowers" are triumphant (as seen in Figure 58), the haunting Eternity theme in the solo saxophone leaves the listener feeling chilled.

FIGURE 58: Mm. 31 – 35 of "Wild Flowers" from *The Ocean of Eternity*



Commemorative Catharsis

Lori Laitman has set Anne Ranasinghe's poetry in four other song cycles: *And Music Will Not End, Fathers, Daughters,* and *Holocaust 1944.* So when Michael Couper, saxophonist, reached out to Laitman to discuss a new cycle for his trio, he and Laitman decided to explore Ranasinghe's poetry once more. "He and I both shared a great interest in the poetry of Anne Ranasinghe and her belief that education and memory could be a shield against future atrocities," commented Laitman.[106] Michael Couper recalled the climate in the United States when he first approached Laitman about commissioning a song cycle for his trio.

> It was shortly before the 2016 US election, and Lori and I shared concerns about the historical parallels with twentieth-century fascism and the rhetoric that was rising in temperature. … In this case I think Lori and I were both acknowledging the precarious times we find ourselves in today. It is tempting to think such things can't happen again, that there's some absolute trend toward moral growth within our species. My other concerts that programmed Holocaust remembrance music felt more commemorative and respectful to a dark period of history. This time it felt more prescient and urgent… While I typically would refrain from politicizing my performing and alienating any potential audience member, especially considering the political divisions within my own family, it felt necessary to set aside neutrality and call attention to something we were both feeling deeply. [107]

As a commissioner, Couper and his trio chose the poetry of Anne Ranasinghe not only as a way to honor the work of a magnificent poet but to make a social commentary. As Yungee Rhie, soprano, states, "Our present comes from the past, and our history must not be forgotten."[108] She goes on to state her own connection to performing

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[106] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[107] Michael Couper, composer, conductor, saxophonist, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[108] Yungee Rhie, soprano, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

commemorative works, “When performing this work, I was not creating sounds that will vanish once the performance was over, but the message will live within the audiences’ mind through the music.”[109] That initial performance of *The Ocean of Eternity* brought together the disturbing political parallels brooding in the United States at the time and a keen awareness of music as a unique bridge to understanding the atrocities of the Holocaust.

[109] Yungee Rhie, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

CHAPTER 7: THE SECRET EXIT

Musical Analysis: Overview

Like the poems of Anne Ranasinghe, the three settings Laitman selects for *The Secret Exit* examine Nelly Sachs's interpretation of life and death through the lens of disillusionment. Even though Nelly Sachs was not a child during the Holocaust, through describing the relationships of mothers and children these poems channel youth and innocence lost. The first poem delves into Sachs's feelings regarding the death of her mother. The first seven stanzas progress through a series of contradictory questions as Sachs reels in her loss. In an article looking at Sachs's relationship with her mother, noted Sachs scholar Kathin Bower expands, "Sachs looked to her mother as an anchoring force, the connection to the reality and home that had been, treating her as patient and muse, confidante and child."[110] The poem moves from questions into mysticism, ending with resignation as Sachs tries to accept her mother's death.

The second poem of the cycle, "When In Early Summer," "contrasts the wonders of nature with the inhumanity of man."[111] One of the salient qualities of this poem is its use of mysticism with lyrics like, "But in dreams fish fly in the air and a forest takes firm root in the floor of the room."[112] The mysticism is juxtaposed starkly with the image of the children being thrown like butterflies into the flames. The third poem also conjures

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[110] Kathrin M. Bower, "Searching for the (M)Other: The Rhetoric of Longing in Post-Holocaust Poems by Nelly Sachs and Rose Ausländer." *University of Richmond UR Scholarship Repository*: Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Faculty Publications (1996): 126.

[111] Laitman, Program notes, *The Secret Exit*, 4.

[112] Nelly Sachs, *The Seeker and Other Poem*, trans. Ruth and Matthew Mead and Michael Hamburger (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), 147.

the concentration camps with the line Laitman uses to title the cycle, "… seeking the secret exit of death. Already without a voice – breathing out smoke."[113] The tone of the third poem feels the most resigned, with the weight of a survivor's hopelessness and guilt crushing all earlier allusions to the beauty of nature. This progression, from the loss of her mother, to the quixotic parallels of the beauty of nature vs. humanity's cruelty, and the absolute emptiness of the loss of the children, creates a dramatic arc.

TABLE 19: Summary: *The Secret Exit*

Song Cycle Title:	*The Secret Exit*
Composer:	Lori Laitman (b. 1955)
Poet/Text Source:	Nelly Sachs (1891-1970)
Ensemble:	Soprano, B♭ clarinet
Individual Song Titles:	1. What rose out of the white leaves of your body 2. When In Early Summer 3. Child
Date of Composition:	November 2016 – March 2017, rev. May 2017, January 2019.
Cycle Duration:	16'30"
Vocal Range:	$C_4 – B_5$
Tessitura:	$F_4 – F_5$
Publisher:	Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI
Premiere Date:	January 26, 2018
Premiere Venue:	Temple Emanu-El, Birmingham, AL
Premiere Performers:	Kristine Hurst-Wajsczuk, soprano; Denise Gainey, B♭ clarinet

Musical Analysis by Movement

"What rose out of the white leaves of your body"

This first song is characterized by sections with subtle variations in the clarinet accompaniment. Within each section, Laitman creates an ambiance by choosing specific

[113] Sachs, *The Seeker*, 265.

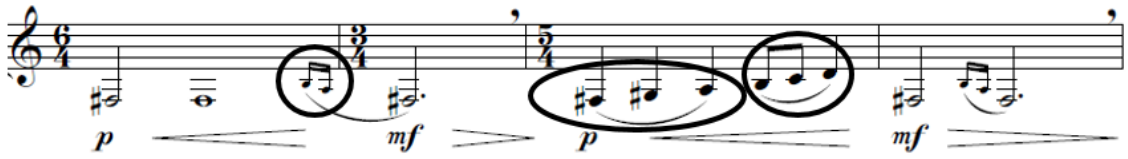
words to repeat in the soprano, and these textual repetitions display the author's contemplation of her mother's death. While using one technique of repeating, Laitman creates many different moods and expressions, outlined below. In addition, the range and setting of the soprano voice on specific words highlight the meaning of the text. The form of this first song is based on the divisions Laitman marks in the score.

TABLE 20: Structural Analysis: "What rose out of the white leaves of your body"

A section		B section	C section	D section
m. 1 – 59		m. 60 – 76	m. 77 – 91	m. 92 - 181
m. 1 - 35	m. 36 - 59			

The clarinet opens the piece with an obbligato bass line with three defining features: grace note 16th notes, ascending stepwise quarter notes, and a quickening at the end of the phrase leading into a held note (see Figure 59). The grace notes, as in other songs like "The Butterfly" from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* and later in this cycle "Child," call to mind the quaver of the cantors vocal line associated with Jewish worship music. Later, Laitman introduces large leaps as a part of the accompaniment pattern for the clarinet. These elements continue as accompaniment gestures under the soprano for the first 35 measures and create the groundwork for the A section's first half.

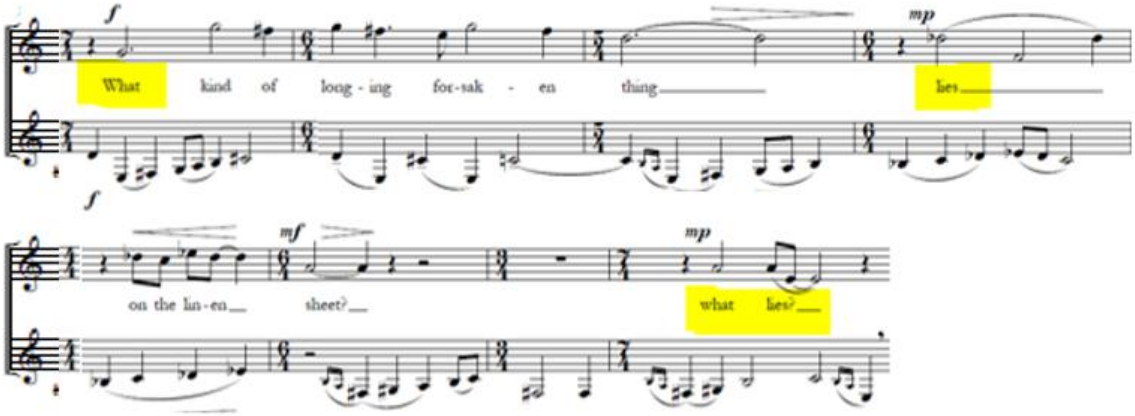
FIGURE 59: Mm. 1- 4 of "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" from *The Secret Exit*



By laying this framework in the clarinet part, the soprano overlays a melody dictated more by the words and less by narrow musical gestures.

The first example of text repetition is on the words "what lies," which are taken out of context from the previous line, "What kind of longing forsaken thing lies on the linen sheet?"[114] The tessitura and dynamics of the soprano, which moves softly down to the lower-middle range, in contrast to the high, soaring first iteration, emphasizes the uncertainty Laitman seeks to display by repeating this phrase (see Figure 60).

FIGURE 60: Mm. 16 – 23 of "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" from *The Secret Exit*

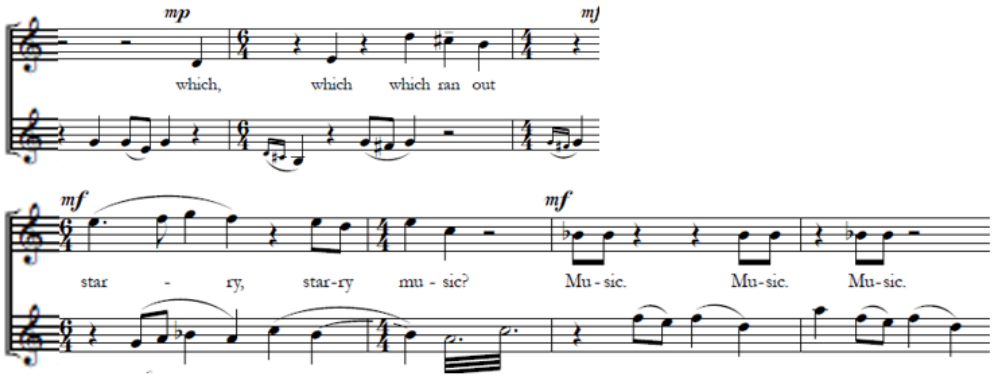


The next time Laitman repeats text is on the word "which," repeating it three times almost like a stutter. The clarinet accentuates the tension with short interjections before and after the soprano sings, leaving the soprano voice unaccompanied and vulnerable for the repetitions. This repetition can be contrasted clearly with the next repetition, which occurs on the words "starry music." Laitman breaks from the repeated notes in the soprano to word-paint "starry" with a beautiful, ascending figure before returning to repeated notes. With the repetition of "music" in the soprano line, the accompaniment pattern in the clarinet changes (Figure 61). Laitman adds a tremolo in the clarinet under the first iteration of "music," then moves to invert the musical gestures

[114] Sachs, *The Seeker*, 223.

previously established in the clarinet part. Instead of ascending quarter notes, the second half of the A section is characterized by descending quarter notes, the grace notes have disappeared, and moving eighth notes are used more frequently, not just at the end of phrases.

FIGURE 61: Mm. 28 – 29, 35 – 38 of "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" from *The Secret Exit*



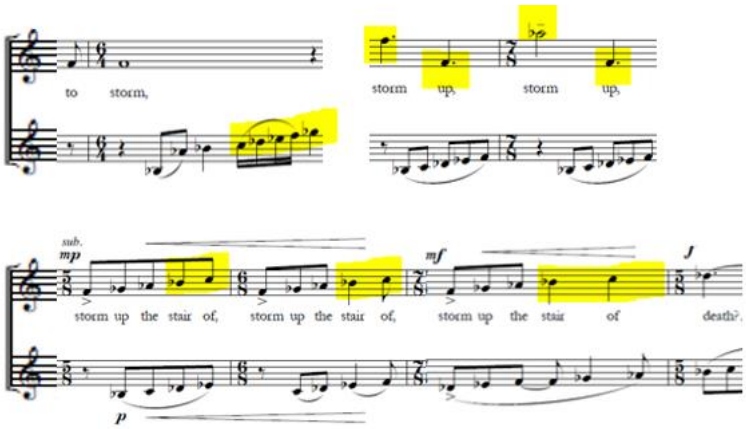
With the inversion of accompaniment themes, expansion on "starry," and addition of a tremolo under "music," this repetition feels more like a magical echo instead of a stutter. It also heralds in the second half of the A section, which does not repeat any more text.

The B section begins at m. 60, and the rhythmic tempo created by the clarinet quickens with lines of moving eighth notes. For this final question among the seven included in the first half of the poem, Laitman emphasizes the text "to storm up the stair of death" with several different styles of repetitions (Figure 62).[115] The soprano first sings the word "to storm" on a whole note in the middle register, while the clarinet depicts the scene with a crescendo and ascending sixteenth notes. The soprano's tessitura for the next repetition, leaping an octave and beyond, builds tension and takes the mantle of word-

[115] Sachs, *The Seeker*, 223.

painting over from the clarinet. The final tool she uses in this repetition is elongation, where the phrase “storm up the stair of death” is repeated three times with the last two notes lengthened for each iteration before culminating in the word “death.”

FIGURE 62: Mm. 67 – 76 of “What rose out of the white leaves of your body” from *The Secret Exit*



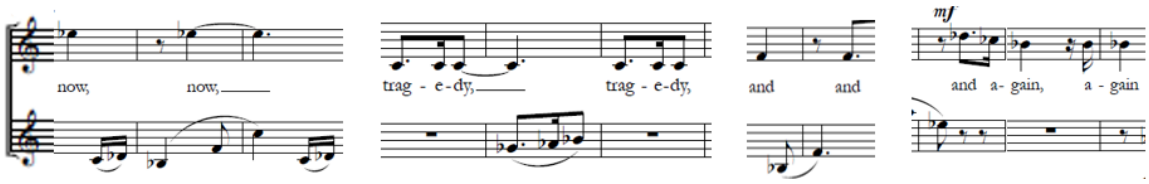
Laitman’s interpretation of the text as a composer is highlighted through these forms of repetition, creating extra emphasis through word painting in the clarinet and the soprano and through elongation to close the phrase.

The C section is the fastest of the song with angular leaps, which capture the mysticism of the text. The final two verses of the poem return to reality, and with it, a daughter slowly accepts the lack of clarity and emptiness felt after the death of a loved one. This last section moves from duple to triple meter, and with it, Laitman applies repetition much more liberally than before. Laitman even adds her own stanza to the poem's end, taking words from both the beginning and end of the poem, “Love. What rose up, love.” Bora Kim suggests in her dissertation as to why Laitman set the end of the song in this manner, “As the composer strives to conclude the forever bond between the mother and the child, she repeats the word “love” two more times at the end of the

song."[116] Laitman also repeats the words, "but now," "the woman," "over the sorrow," "and," "tragedy," "breathing," "again," "what rose up," and the added vocalise on "ah." The way Laitman uses repeats in the vocal line in this final section fall into three different categories:

1. Sobbing: in these instances, the vocal line stays on the same pitch, and the word is repeated with a short break (sometimes just a breath) in between. The interrupted quality of this repetition mimics the gasp of a breath of someone trying to hold back tears.
    a. Examples: "now," "tragedy," "and," "again" (Figure 63)

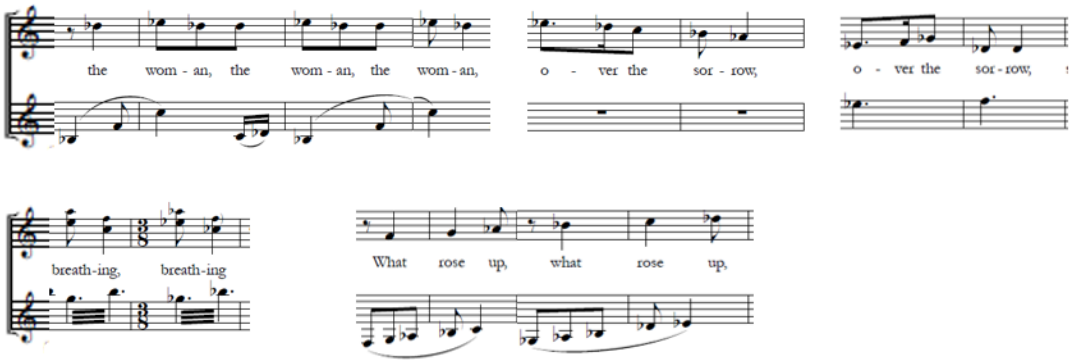
FIGURE 63*:* Mm. 100 – 101, 127 – 129, 146 – 147, 157 – 159 of "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" from *The Secret Exit*



2. Reeling: the vocal line repeats multiple words in a phrase (or in the case of "breathing" a two-syllable word), and if not repeating the same notes, then using the same rhythmic pattern. These repetitions show the author trying to process information, repeating the words to grapple with their meaning.
    a. Examples: "the woman," "over the sorrow," "breathing," "what rose up" (Figure 64)

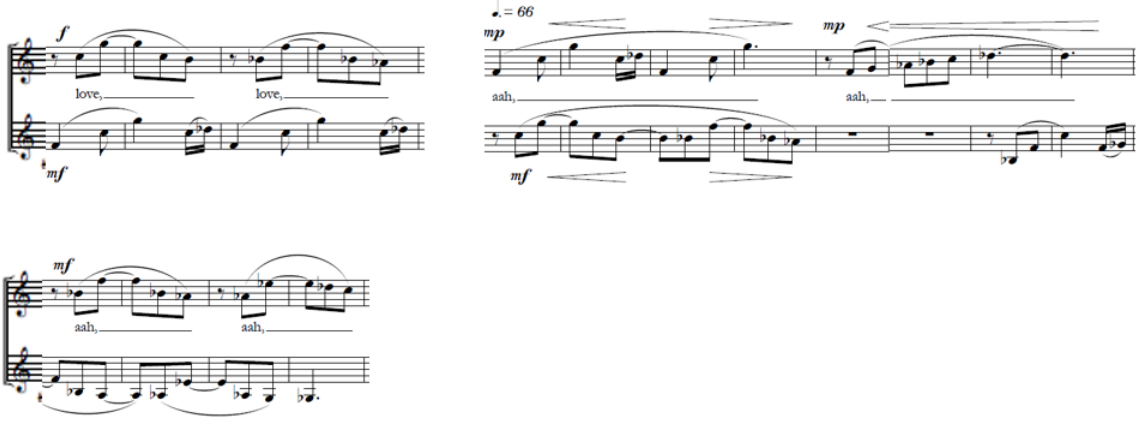
[116] Bora Kim, "A Guide to Performing Two Twentieth-Century Song Cycles by Lori Laitman and Lowell Liebermann," (DMA diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 37.

FIGURE 64: Mm. 103 – 106, 117 – 118, 123 – 124, 153 – 154, 172 – 175 of "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" from *The Secret Exit*



3. Reflection: the final category of repetition develops a word over multiple notes, extending the vocal phrase with more complex, legato lines. Expanding over a larger vocal tessitura, these examples feel like a cathartic release as the author grieves the loss of the maternal bond.
    a. Examples: "love," "ah" (Figure 65)

FIGURE 65: Mm. 107 – 110, 137 – 145, 165 – 168 of "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" from *The Secret Exit*



Laitman's "What rose out of the white leaves of your body" utilizes word repetition as the primary means of expressing compositional ideas. These different forms of repetition, highlighted in the final section of the song, showcase how much variability can be achieved with different forms of the same musical technique.

“When in Early Summer”

The second song in the cycle “contrasts the wonders of nature with the inhumanity of man.”[117] These contrasts are delineated in four distinct sections, which are outlined in the table below.

TABLE 21: Structural Analysis: “When in Early Summer”

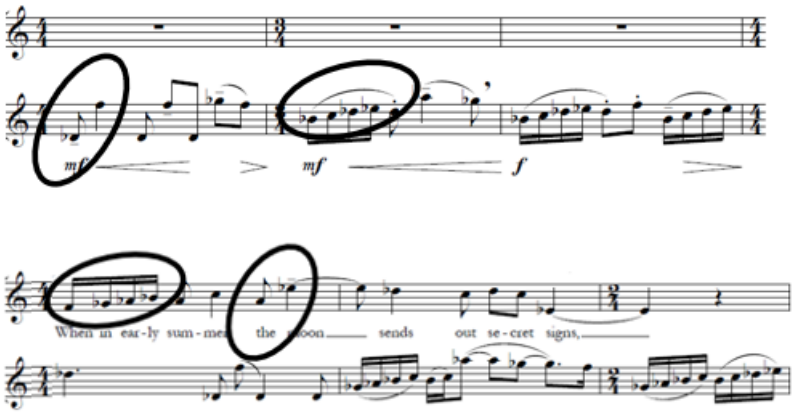
A section	B section	C section	D section
m. 1 – 32	m. 33 - 51	m. 52 - 69	m. 70 - 86

Similar to “What rose out of the white leaves of your body,” “When in Early Summer” utilizes repetition as a way to illuminate meaning in the text. Laitman hones in on dissonance, especially in the D section, which contrasts with the beauty of the A section. Laitman and her commissioners specifically designed *The Secret Exit* to be a sequel song cycle to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, connecting the two not only by instrumentation but also by poetic theme. By selecting this particular poem, Laitman references butterflies and ties it back to Pavel Friedman’s titular poem in Laitman’s *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* cycle.

The song opens with a clarinet line characterized by large leaps and ascending sixteenth notes. These musical qualities translate into the voice part, creating a connected call and repeat in the voice and clarinet (Figure 66).

[117] Laitman, Program notes, *The Secret Exit*.

FIGURE 66: Mm. 1 – 6 of "When in Early Summer" from *The Secret Exit*



The result is a particularly lovely duet between the voice and clarinet, showcasing Laitman's traditional, consonant style.

Following a long cadenza in the clarinet, the B section explores mysticism, which became a feature of Nelly Sachs' poetry when she explored her Jewish heritage. As a part of the Jewish Women's Archive, scholar Krick-Aigner discusses Sachs' interest in this particular branch of Judaism.

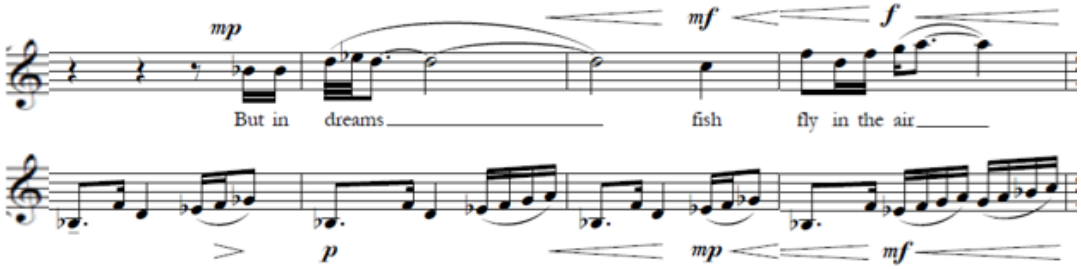
> Although she had not gone to synagogue nor taken part in Jewish ceremonies in Germany, Sachs had been deeply influenced by the Hasidic stories of Martin Buber (1878–1965). In Sweden she became fascinated with Kabbalistic mysticism and the writings of Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) on Jewish mysticism and the Zohar. For Sachs, writing was linked to the mystical and became what biographer Kathrin Bower described as "momentary manifestations of Divine Presence in the world [that] indicate a path to transcendence" (Bower, 11).[118]

The soprano and clarinet incorporate some of the earlier elements (running ascending 16th notes) and add new elements to portray the mysticism of the text. The 32nd note trill on

[118] Kristin Krick-Aigner, "Nelly Leonie Sachs: 1891-1970," (Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia. Jewish Women's Archive), https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/sachs-nelly-leonie.

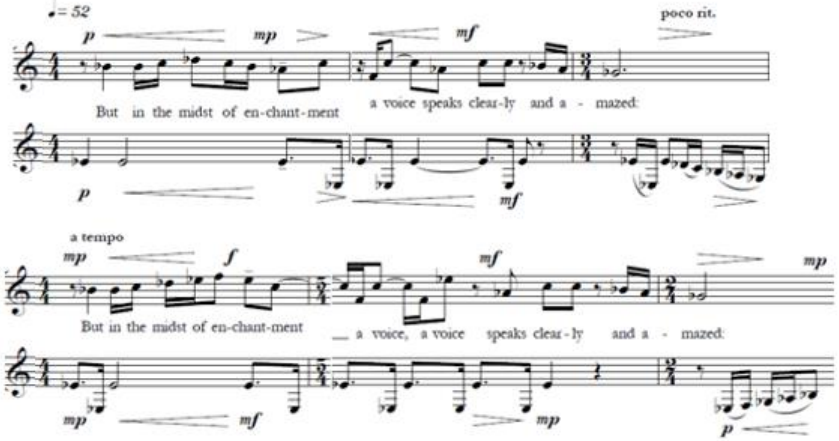
"dreams" and the tessitura of the soprano on "fish fly in the air" follow Laitman's characteristic word-painting technique, highlighting both the otherworldliness and soaring features of the text (Figure 67).

FIGURE 67: Mm. 34 – 37 of "When in Early Summer" from *The Secret Exit*



Laitman uses repetition during the transition of the B and C sections, repeating the text, "But in the midst of enchantment a voice speaks clearly and amazed" (Figure 68).[119] The differences between the first iteration and the second are subtle but increase the urgency of the line. The clarinet opens as an E♭ drone, later employing a lower octave leap and ending the phrase with a descending 16th note pattern.

FIGURE 68: Mm. 45 – 50 of "When in Early Summer" from *The Secret Exit*

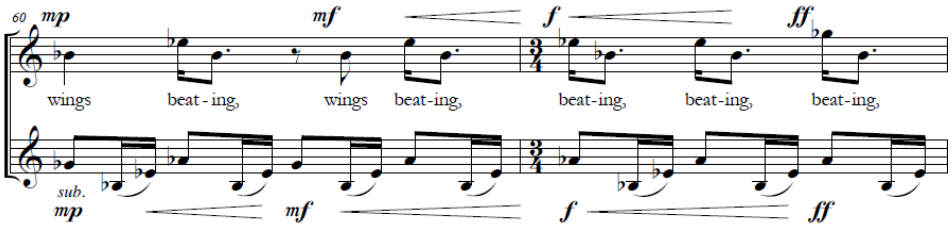


[119] Sachs, *The Seeker*, 147.

The soprano differences fall on the word “enchantment” (which on the first iteration is sung lower in the voice and on the repeat is higher in the register) and on the word “a voice” (which is sung twice on the repetition, higher on the staff). These two changes, both utilizing the upper tessitura of the soprano voice and louder dynamic markings, draw the listener in as the song moves from describing nature into condemning the actions of humanity.

The C section enters agitato and fortissimo, employing the upper register of the soprano voice for heightened impact. The clarinet uses the same running 16th notes and large leaps in the accompaniment, playing at full dynamics. Laitman utilizes the reeling repeat style from “What rose out of the white leaves of your body” on the word “beating” (Figure 69).

FIGURE 69: Mm. 60 – 61 of “When in Early Summer” from *The Secret Exit*



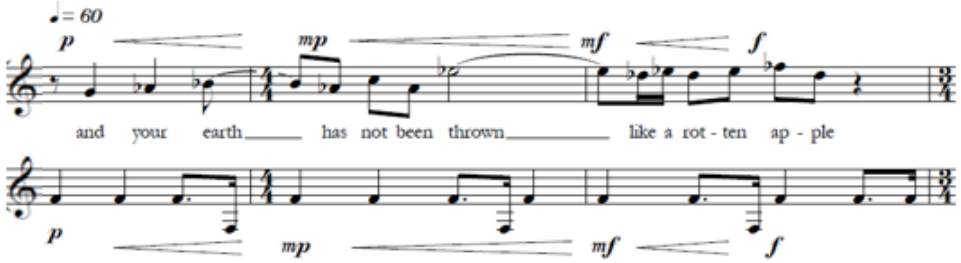
The contrapuntal movement in the clarinet emphasizes the frustration of the text as Laitman uses these repeats to capture the author’s disbelief that the innocent Jewish children were callously murdered, like butterflies thrown into the flames. Finally, Laitman employs a longer clarinet solo as a somber remembrance to close the C section.

The final section mimics the drone and leaps in the clarinet, shown in Figure 68. Both of these sections are the author narrating rather than commenting on the situation,

and both carry a sense of disbelief (Figure 70). Bora Kim describes the harmonic tension Laitman uses on this opening line of the D section in her dissertation,

> In mm. 70-74, the vocal line progresses mainly based on a G Locrian scale; however, a flat is applied only on the word "apple." As a rotten apple may contaminate a whole box quickly, rotten apples should be thrown away. The composer uses a flat to express a rotten state; the use of a flat changes the mood.[120]

FIGURE 70: Mm. 70 – 72 of "When in Early Summer" from *The Secret Exit*



This is an example of how Laitman goes against her normal musical style, which is more tonal and sonorous, to showcase the atrocities of the Holocaust through dissonance.

Similar to how Laitman uses repetition in "What rose out of the white leave of your body," the first two iterations of the word "nothing" are on the same note, broken by a short rest to end the song. The final nothing comes three measures later, ending the song on a whisper.

"Child"

The final song of the cycle lives in a dreamy, subdued state. The selection of "Child" completes the emotional arc of resignation in Laitman's cycle. The theme of

[120] Bora Kim, "A Guide to Performing Two Twentieth-Century Song Cycles," 46.

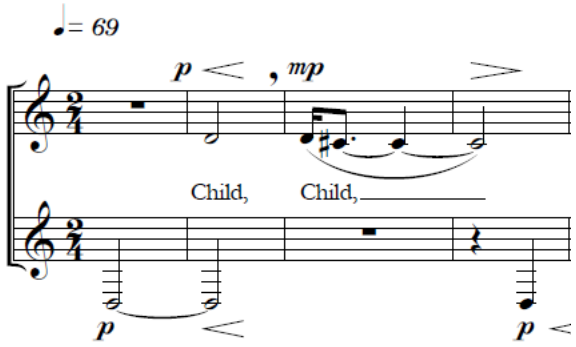
repetition comes directly from the poem itself, including four iterations of the word "child." Laitman adds four more uses of the word with a coda. The full form is below:

TABLE 22: Structural Analysis: "Child"

A section	A' section	Coda
m. 1 – 30	m. 31 – 60	m. 61 - 73

This song opens with a low D in the clarinet, and the soprano enters an octave higher, piano, for the first singing of the word "child." The next measure has the soprano singing unaccompanied for the repetition of the word "child," leaning into the dissonance of the C# (Figure 71).

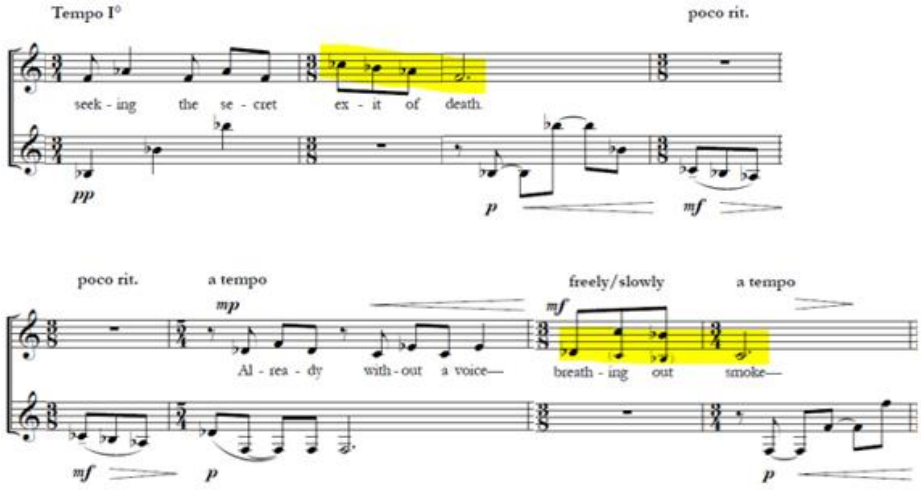
FIGURE 71: Mm. 1 – 3 of "Child" from *The Secret Exit*



Laitman's decision to set the soprano alone, accenting the half-step discordance in the low register, immediately establishes a haunting, hollow mood that permeates this final song of the cycle. It also brings to mind the opening figure of "The Old House" (see Figure 18) from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, providing another thread to tie the two cycles together.

Laitman sets another prominent series of unaccompanied text that inspired the song cycle's title, "the secret exit of death."[121] The section begins with an agitated clarinet part, personifying the hurricane mentioned in the text. The decision to outline three octaves of B♭ under the opening of the soprano's line creates a disjointed accompaniment directly preceding the unaccompanied section (Figure 72). The next line continues more somberly, repeating the unaccompanied line on the words "breathing out smoke" three measures later.

FIGURE 72: Mm. 14 – 20 of "Child" from *The Secret Exit*

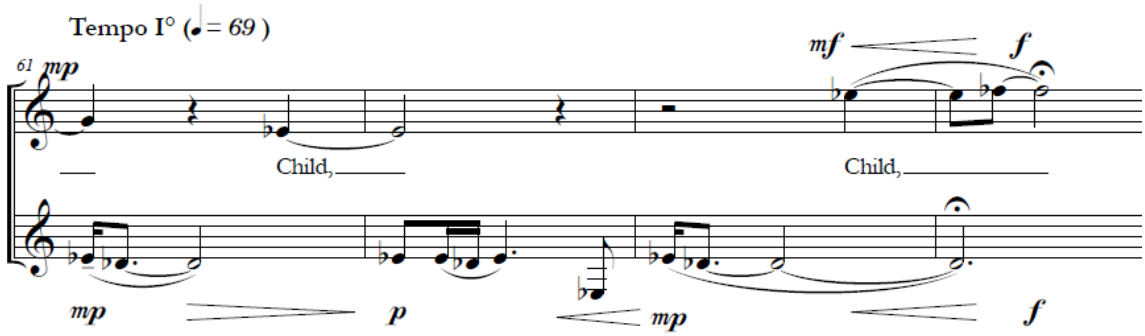


Laitman uses these touchpoints of unaccompanied soprano lines to ground the listener in solemnity, in contrast to other busier, higher tessitura sections of the song.

For the final settings of "child," the clarinet adds a sixteenth note downbeat to the drone and finishes the phrase with the same sixteenth note waver (Figure 73). This musical figure echoes the 16th note used earlier in the soprano (Figure 71).

[121] Sachs, *The Seeker*, 265.

FIGURE 73: Mm. 61 – 64 of "Child" from *The Secret Exit*



The addition of the sixteenth note in the clarinet also calls to mind the technique Laitman used for the opening of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, "For *The Butterfly*, the opening saxophone line with grace notes immediately sets the stage for the haunting quality of the text, and the grace note, for me, is reminiscent of the sometimes quavering quality of a cantor's voice during a Jewish service."[122]

With unaccompanied voice, Jewish cantor allusions with 16th notes, and repetition of key phrases as a coda, Laitman ends *The Secret Exit* as a true tribute to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. She honors a Holocaust survivor, Nelly Sachs, while also drawing in elements from the children of Terezín, creating a complex and moving tribute to victims of the Holocaust.

Commemorative Catharsis:

Dr. Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk approached Laitman about composing a sequel to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* in 2016. Hurst-Wajszczuk describes some of their first

[122] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

interactions, “I mentioned that I loved her “Butterfly” songs, and asked if she might be interested in writing a cycle for me. After I sent her a recording of our performance, she said she enjoyed my work and agreed to compose another cycle. I suggested poems by Sachs, and we worked together to choose them.”[123] In working with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, clarinetist Denise Gainey and Hurst-Wajszczuk secured grant funding to support the commission of the new song cycle. Laitman describes some of her thoughts about writing the songs, “Kristine and I consulted quite a bit about which poems to choose, eventually settling on three poems that reflected on life and death. The first one, in particular, was longer and more complex in language and structure than poems I typically set and presented a challenge.”[124]

In creating a follow-up work to the acclaimed *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* cycle, there were additional considerations from the perspective of both the composer and the performer. Hurst-Wajszczuk reflects,

> It’s easy to view our work as musicians as simply presenting the music, but I believe our role is much more than that. In this case, my role involved supporting a female composer, who is famous and deserves amplification in her own right; it encompassed developing another forum for poet Nelly Sachs to express her experience; most of all, it served as a vehicle for lifting the voices of all of those lost in the Holocaust.[125]

[123] Dr. Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk, Soprano, Associate Dean, Professor, University of Alabama at Birmingham, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[124] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[125] Dr. Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

Laitman expands on her mindset when setting Holocaust poetry, "I believe that it is important to honor the dead by telling their stories, and to create empathy by revealing our common humanity."[126]

The Secret Exit premiered in 2017 at Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham, AL. Gainey and Hurst-Wajszczuk collaborated with Laitman to release the official recording through Naxos American Classics in 2020. Hurst-Wajszcuk had this to say on the creative process and offers this advice to musicians who may want to perform the song cycle in the future, "There were a few times when I handled a phrase a certain way dynamically or expressively that Lori responded by saying, 'I like what you did there: let me put it in the score.' All that is to say that—it's in the music! Tend to the score, to every detail, and you'll be fine."[127]

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Summary

This research seeks to capture how Lori Laitman and her music's performers (many of whom commissioned the works) commemorate the words of witnesses of the Holocaust through music. These stories are difficult to read and even harder to bear,

[126] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[127] Dr. Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

knowing the fate of many of the authors. The victims whose words have been shared created poetry to comprehend their situation, whether it was in the moment or many years later. The poems were then selected and interpreted through music by composer Lori Laitman, who has made it her mission to give a voice to those who were silenced in the Holocaust. Through the generous support of commissioners and the careful preparation of performers, this layering of the arts – poetry, composition, and performance – makes the act of witnessing take on a deeper meaning. This premise is explored by first understanding the history and context of the poetry's original authors, then by analyzing the musical devices Laitman used to interpret and augment the poetry, and finally by interviewing the premiere performers and commissioners to learn how they decided to interpret the poets and the composer for an audience. As a performer, in presenting the concert for the opening exhibit of "Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust," and this document's accompanying lecture recital, this project seeks to engage audiences aurally and physically by highlighting these interpretative connections through performance and through a complementary museum exhibition.

The literature review in Chapter 2 discusses other song cycles in English written as commemorative Holocaust works and some of the criteria established for what makes a commemorative work, particularly when analyzing solo vocal works on the subject of the Holocaust. The organization Music of Remembrance, based in Seattle, WA, and directed by pianist Mina Miller is responsible for commissioning many of these works, which fall into the criteria established in this DMA document. The chapter also provides in-depth information about the authors of the text Laitman uses to set her works.

Chapter 3 discusses biographical information, compositional style, and analysis of Lori Laitman's Holocaust works. Laitman has written ten song cycles, one opera, and one oratorio to commemorate victims of the Holocaust. This document identifies four key musical elements which, when combined, differentiate her Holocaust commemorative soprano song cycles from her other works:

1. Tessitura and range: Laitman's selection of the soprano voice embodies the youth and innocence of the chosen author through tessitura, range, and setting.
2. Accompanying instrumentation: Laitman's use of woodwind instruments incorporates Jewish sacred and secular klezmer music into the fabric of the song cycles.
3. Use of text: Laitman's decision to repeat selections from the source text creates additional layers of meaning for the commemorative process.
4. Use of dissonance: In the selected repertoire and in comparison/contrast to Laitman's harmonic language in other compositions.

Chapter 4 examines Laitman's first Holocaust commemoration song cycle, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. In analyzing the musical devices Laitman employs, the first song, "The Butterfly," primarily utilizes accompanying instrumentation to evoke the Jewish quality in its opening theme as well as tessitura and range, such as the setting of the word "high" in the soprano (Figure 2). Her next song, "Yes, That's the Way Things Are" displays three of the four musical techniques: it is distinctly klezmer-like, explored through the accompanying instrumentation, uses textual repetition (see Figure 7 with the "poor old graybeard" line), and introduces dissonance to illustrate the cruel irony of the

text (Figure 6). “Birdsong” is particularly sonorous, providing a contrast to the dissonance she uses elsewhere in the cycle, with hints of the Jewish quality introduced in “The Butterfly” (Figure 11) and it utilizes the upper range of the soprano voice in an extended vocalise. “The Garden” explores tessitura, placing the saxophone and soprano in competing middle registers, and traditional Jewish sonorities with the accompanying instrumentation (Figure 15). The fifth song, “Man Proposes, God Disposes,” is a mirror in many ways to the second song of the cycle, “Yes, That’s the Way Things Are,” employing cabaret accompanying instrumentation and leaning into dissonance in the form of glissandi in the voice. The final song, “The Old House” uses extensive textual repetition, the upper register of the soprano tessitura, and dissonance in many different combinations to create a specific atmosphere to end the cycle. Laitman, Lauren Wagner, soprano, and Gary Louie, saxophone, have all provided commentary regarding their involvement with the pieces, summarized in Chapter 4 (full text is included in Appendix 2: Interview Transcripts).

Chapter 5 outlines the musical qualities of *In Sleep the World is Yours*, which sets poetry from Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger’s collection *Harvest of Blossoms*. The first song, “Lullaby”, explores the soprano’s tessitura and range with large leaps (Figure 24) and frequent repetition of particular phrases of the text, but remains sonorous throughout until a moment of dissonance in the final chords of the song (Figure 27). “Yes” also uses a lot of text repetition, going so far as to explore the soprano’s full range on a cadenza repeating the word “yes” to conclude the B section. Dissonance and sonority are contrasted in the two distinct halves of the form, with the harsh and murky piano accompaniment in the A section opposite the “hazy” theme in B section (Figure 32). The

ending tableau fully utilizes the soprano tessitura, leaping over an octave from the upper register to lower-middle register, repeating the word "yes" (Figure 34). The final song, "Tragedy," similarly utilizes text repetition extensively, but it offers a small hint of klezmer music in the extended instrumental opening of the B section. "Tragedy" digs into dissonance more than the other songs in the cycle, opening and closing with half steps and augmented chords (Figure 35). The climax of the song can be delivered in chest voice, another example of utilizing the soprano tessitura (Figure 39). Mina Miller, Director of Music of Remembrance, provides invaluable commentary as both the original piano performer and the commissioner of the song cycle. Megan Renae Parker, the premiere soprano and frequent collaborator with Music of Remembrance, and Laitman offer additional insights, with full transcripts of their interviews contained in Appendix 2.

Chapter 6 presents a musical analysis of Anne Ranasinghe's "Four Stanzas on Mortality," which Laitman entitles *The Ocean of Eternity.* In addition to a particularly prominent leitmotif, the first song "The Ocean of Eternity" utilizes a distinctive moment of repetition to enhance the meaning of the piece (Figure 45). "Futureless" relies more on dissonance and repetition, employing a structure of distinct modules which allows each portion of the song to have its own character. The E section employs modal harmonies in the accompanying instruments to personify the Biblical figures of the Old Testament, creating a distinct Jewish worship tonality (Figure 48). The final moment of the song leans into dissonance, with the soprano, saxophone and piano all sustaining half-step intervals (Figure 49). After an opening recitative, the next song, "The Morning was Blue," highlights Laitman's traditionally sonorous style, providing a counter to other more dissonant sections of the cycle. This song utilizes the upper tessitura of the soprano

to enhance the atmosphere (Figure 50). It also contrasts the upper register with unaccompanied voice and the lower-middle tessitura to further enhance the meaning of the text, which turns dark in the last section. The final song of the cycle, "Wild Flowers," pulls in many aspects of the previous songs and includes the most textual repetition in the cycle. The soprano's middle voice tessitura (Figure 54) is contrasted with the high tessitura B section which repeats motivic information from "Wild Flowers." Another thread that connects the cycle is repetition, with the "Ocean of Eternity" leitmotif returning and several lines of text, such as "wild flowers shall grow" (Figure 55) and "where the ashes fall," repeated to create a dramatic arc. Laitman, saxophonist Michael Couper, and soprano Yungee Rhie discuss the inspiration behind the commission and premier in the National Opera Center in 2019, with full transcripts of their interviews in Appendix 2.

Twenty-one years after the composition of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, soprano Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk approached Laitman about a sequel that culminated in *The Secret Exit*, which is analyzed musically in Chapter 7. While utilizing the same musical techniques and poetic themes as *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, over the course of two decades Laitman's musical style matured. The musical devices in this cycle are more complex, interwoven, and subtle. The first song of the cycle, "What rose out of the white leaves of your body," utilizes similar 16^{th} note grace notes in the accompanying instrumentation to evoke Jewish worship music as in "The Butterfly" (Figure 59). It also utilizes repetition, but by combining the textual repetition with specific musical devices, Laitman conjures three specific moods: sobbing (Figure 63), reeling (Figure 64), and reflection (Figure 65). Laitman also utilizes the full tessitura of the soprano voice with

the repetitions, contrasting high soaring lines with lower-middle register repeats (Figure 60). “When in Early Summer” utilizes repetition much in the same way as the previous song, but dissonance plays a larger part. One example of repetition, which also utilizes the soprano’s tessitura, is on the words “but in the midst of enchantment a voice speaks clearly and amazed,” with first the phrase and then several key words repeated in different registers of the voice to achieve the composer’s intended effect (Figure 68).[128] Laitman utilizes a G Locrian scale then adds an additional flat, showcasing the complexity of how her use of dissonance has evolved over time (Figure 70). The final poem, “Child,” leans into repetition once more, but also pulls in the downbeat 16th notes to hint at the Jewish quaver of types of worship music (Figure 71 and Figure 73). Hurst-Wajszczuk and Laitman discuss the significance of the selected poems and some of the musical choices they both made in the final commemorative catharsis, with full interviews in Appendix 2.

Recommendations for Future Research

The field of research into music specifically as a form of commemoration, whether it be on the subject of the Holocaust or other victims throughout history, has yet to be fully developed. Vocal music is a natural form of commemorative music since words are an integral part of the performance. While, in some ways, any song cycle that sets music to the text of poets could be seen as a form of commemoration, the text takes on a deeper meaning when the author was a victim. A large body of work could be defined in commemorative vocal music, which would be well worth further investigation.

[128] Sachs, *The Seeker*, 265.

Specifically, while several graduate documents discuss Holocaust commemorative works, they are often in the context of a single composer or a single literature source such as *I Never Saw Another Butterfly.* An organized volume that creates the sub-genre of Holocaust commemorative vocal works, especially in languages besides English, could be a future research topic. In the opening review of the literature, there are sixteen identified song cycles plus the ten song-cycles by Lori Laitman, which could be further analyzed for how their composers have chosen to set text based on words of Holocaust victims. This list could be the launching point of current English settings to be expanded upon in future research.

There is also great potential to document several of the organizations mentioned in the literature review. Of particular note in the solo vocal work subgenre would be Music of Remembrance, which seeks to ensure that musical witnesses' voices are heard through their commissions and performances. Founded in 1998, this organization fills a unique role worldwide by remembering the Holocaust through music. Anyone interested in documenting Holocaust commemorative art songs would find a wealth of information from their generous director, Mina Miller, who has brought together artists and composers from all over the world to support this cause.

Finally, the Museum of History and Holocaust Education has created a traveling exhibit, “Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust,” and while Lori Laitman's music is featured prominently throughout, there are other compelling stories, such as Eva.Stories on Instagram which could be further researched and documented. There are so many beautiful and artistic ways that people can use their gifts

to amplify voices from the past. Lori Laitman and her incredible works form just a small part of this deeply moving canon.

Conclusion

> Hey, try to open up your heart to beauty
> Go to the woods someday
> And weave a wreath of memory there.
>
> - "Birdsong" (1941 Anonymous)[129]

In every link of this musical chain, a memory has been used to weave a wreath. The linking of different perspectives – the author and witness, the composer, the commissioners, the performers, and finally the audience – creates art profoundly impacted by the different threads in the wreath of memory. The act of commemorative performance honors the Holocaust victims by introducing their narrative to new audiences in a new medium. This document illuminates the witness accounts of Pavel Friedman, Franta Bass, Miroslav Košek, Bachner, Hanus Löwy, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, Anne Ranasinghe, and Nelly Sachs. Mina Miller, Director for Music of Remembrance, said, "When we commission and perform new works set in the Holocaust's shadow, we're not trying to teach history but to tell stories about people and their lives."[130] As witnesses of horrific crimes, their poetry and their wisdom must never be forgotten.

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[129] Anonymous, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, 54.

[130] Mina Miller, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

As an integral aspect of commemoration, this document examines the musical devices Lori Laitman used to amplify these works in new and glorious ways that only music can. Specifically, through tessitura and range, accompanying instrumentation, use of text, and use of dissonance, Laitman crafted four song cycles that utilized the soprano voice in a way that effectively memorialized the Holocaust victims. She says, "My role is to tell a story through music and to share the story of those who were silenced. I approach Holocaust poetry in the way I approach any poem or text. My goal is to create dramatic music to illuminate and magnify the meaning of the words."[131]

The final threads in the wreath of memory are the performers and commissioners of these works, whose reflections and interpretations craft the art for the audience. As Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk said when discussing *The Secret Exit*, "My role as a musician is not only to sing the music faithfully according to the composer's wishes and to clearly express the text of the poet, it is also as a social activist of sorts. People need to know what happened in fairly recent history, or we are doomed to repeat it."[132] Finally, Adina Langer of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University said it best in her exhibit, "Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust."

> We hope this exhibit will motivate you to find your voice and share a story, whether that story is your own or one you connected with through empathy. You can help expand the web of connections across space and time through the creative process. As a writer, artist, composer, performer, producer, or supporter, you have the power to inspire others to hear the voices of the past. Those voices call on us to work to realize a better future.[133]

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[131] Lori Laitman, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[132] Dr. Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk, interviewed by the author, Summer 2021.

[133] Adina Langer, *Words, Music, Memory*, Exhibition catalog.

APPENDIX 1: SONG CYCLE TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

I Never Saw Another Butterfly
Various Authors

Pavel Friedmann (1921-1944)

4.6.1942

The Butterfly

The last, the very last
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing against a white stone…

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to kiss the world good-bye.

For seven weeks, I've lived in here,
Penned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
in the ghetto.

4,6.1942

motýl

ten poslední ten zcela poslední
tak sytě hořce oslnivě žlutý snad kdyby slunee slzou zazavonile e bílý kámen

taková taková žluť
vzášel se lehce tak do vysoka
šel jistě jistě chtěl políbit svět mój poslední

na sedmý týden tu žiji
ghettoisiert
mí mě tu našli
pampelišky tu na mne volají
i bílá větev v dvoře kaštanu
motýlaj sem tunev hidě

ten tenkrát byl poslední
motýli tady nežijí v ghettuv.

Koleba - Miroslav Košek (1932-1944), Hanus Löwy (1931-1944), Bachner

Yes, That's the Way Things Are

I.

In Terezín in the so-called park
A queer old granddad sits
Somewhere there in the so-called park.
He wears a beard down to his lap
And on his head, a little cap.

II.

My poor old man with working gums,
He's only got one single tooth.
Hard crusts he crumbles in his gums,
Instead of soft rolls, lentil soup.
My poor old grey-beard!

Jo, jo, je to tak

I.

V Terezínském tak zvaném sadě,
sedí jakýs dědeček,
místo někde na zahradě.
Vousy má na svojí bradě,
a na hlavě čepeček.

II.

Tvrdý chleba v zubech chřupe,
zub má už jen jediný.
Ubohý můj starý chrupe,
místo housky linzenzupe
ubohé mé šediny.

Man Proposes, God Disposes

I.

Who was helpless back in Prague,
And who was rich before,
He’s a poor soul here in Terezín,
His body’s bruised and sore.

II.

Who was toughened up before,
He’ll survive these days.
But who was used to servants
Will sink into his grave.

Člověnk míní, Pánbůh mění.

I.

Kdo byl v Praze bez nemoci,
kdo byl v Praze boháčem,
v Terezíně chudák on je,
na těle fáč za fáčem.

II.

Kdo byl kdysi otužilý,
vydrží tu dobu.
Kdo byl zvyklý na posluhu,
sklátí se do hrobu.

František Bass (1930-1944)

The Garden

A little garden,
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.

Zahrada

Zah rádka malá
plan růží, voni
cestička je úzká
chlapeček prochází se po ní.

Chlapeček malý, hezoučký
jak poupě rozkvétající
až poupě rozkvete
zahrada už nebude.

The Old House

Deserted here, the old house
stands in silence, asleep.
The old house used to be so nice,
before, standing there,
it was so nice.

Now it is deserted,
rotting in silence –
What a waste of houses,
a waste of hours.

Starý dům

Starý dům zde opuštěný
stojí v tichu ve spánku
dřív - ten dům jak hezký býval
když tam stál jak hezký byl

Opuštěn je
hnije v tichu
škoda domů
škoda časů

Anonymous

Birdsong

He doesn’t know the world at all
Who stays in his nest and doesn’t go out.
He doesn’t know what birds know best
Nor what I want to sing about,
That the world is full of loveliness.

When dewdrops sparkle in the grass
And earth’s aflood with morning light,
A blackbird sings upon a bush
To greet the dawning after night.
Then I know how fine it is to live.

Hey, try to open up your heart
To beauty; go to the woods someday
And weave a wreath of memory there.
Then if the tears obscure your way
You’ll know how wonderful it is
To be alive.

1941 Anonymous

Ptačí píseň

Kdo stale ve svém hnizdě sedí,
ten nezná, co je svět,
Jen nevé so, co všichní ptací védí,
ten neví, a čem já chci kěl,
zě celý svět je plný krás

Když ráno zemi zaplaví sluneč – ní jas
a v trávě třpylí se perly rosy,
když jitro zpívá sem zas
a v křoví zpěji kosi,
pak vidín, jak krásnné je žit.

Člověcé, zkus krásám srdce tevříl
když jednou kračíš
když do ní jies vénec svých vzpomínek vít
i když slzami ustu svou smáčíš
a poznáš jak krásné ju žít.

1941

Harvest of Blossoms
Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924 – 1942)

Lullaby

Sleep, my child, just fall asleep
please sleep, and don't cry anymore
Just look, in sleep the world is yours,
please sleep and don't cry so hard

Close your eyes and fall asleep
listen, the forest is rustling.
In sleep there is no hate and no scorn,
and in sleep you are not cold.

Sleep, my darling, and smile, my child,
listen, the river is singing.
Sleep, then the wind will sing of joy
and sing of the blossoming spring.

Sleep my child and forget your ails,
for you the day is dark.
Bright is the night when a dream cuddles you,
so sleep my child, so sleep.

January 1941

Schlaflied

Schlaf, mein Kindchen, so schlaf schon ein,
so schlaf doch und weine nicht mehr.
Sieh nur, im Schlaf ist die Welt ja dein,
so schlaf schon und wein nicht so sehr.

Schließe die Augen und schlafe schon,
hör nur, es rauschet der Wald.
Im Schlafe da gibt es nicht Haß, nicht Hohn,
im Schlafe, da ist es nicht kalt.

Schlafe, mein Liebling, und lächle, Kind,
höre, der Fluß singt sein Leid.
Schlafe, dann singt dir vom Glück der Wind
und singt dir vom Frühling, der blüht.

Schlafe mein Kind und vergiß, was dich schmerzt,
dunkel ist für dich der Tag.
Hell ist die Nacht, wenn der Traum dich hertz,
so schlafe mein Kindchen, so schlaf.

Januar 1941

Yes

You are so distant
As distant as a star I thought I'd grasped.
And yet you are near–
just a little dusty
like time that's past.
Yes.

You are so huge.
As huge as the shadow of that tree.
And still you're just here too–
just pale like a dream
in my bosom.
Yes.

July 6, 1941

Ja

Du bist so weit.
So weit wie ein Stern, den ich zu fassen geglaubt.
Und doch bist du nah –
nur ein wenig verstaubt
wie vergangene Zeit.
Ja.

Du bist so groß.
So groß wie der Schatten von jenem Baum.
Und doch bist zu da –
nur blaß wie ein Traum
in meinem Schoß.
Ja.

6.7.1941

Tragedy

This is the hardest: to give yourself away
and then to see that no one needs you,
to give all of yourself and realize
you'll fade like smoke and leave no trace.

December 23, 1941

Tragik

Das ist das Schwerste: sich verschenken
und wissen, daß man uberflussig ist,
sich ganz zu geben und zu denken,
daß man wie Rauch ins Nichts verfließt.

23.12.1941

The Seeker and Other Poems
Nelly Sachs (1891-1970)

What rose out of the white leaves of your body

What rose out of the white leaves of your body
You whom before your last breath
I still called mother?

What kind of longing-forsaken thing lies on the linen sheet?

What wound closes the suffered time
which ran out of your pulse
with starry music?

Where is the wreath of your warm embrace?
In which azure your whispered blessing?

What smile was born
at the airy sign-language
of your finger?

On which track
shall I seek the poetry of your blood?
Where inquire for your salvation?
How push away
the sucking ball from under my feet
to storm up the stairs of death?

Was stieg aus deines Leibes weissen Blättern

Was stieg aus deines Leibes weissen Blattern
die ich dich vor dem letzten Atemzug
noch Mutter nannte?

Was liegt dem Leinen für Sehnsuchtsverlassenes?

Welche Wunde schliesst die durchschmerzte Zeit
die ran aud deinem Puls
mit Sternmusik?

Wohin der Kranz deiner warmen Umarmung?
In welchen Azur dein geflüsterter Segen?

Welches Lächeln gebar sich
an deines Fingers
luftiger Zeichensprache?

Auf welchen Spuren
soll ich deines Blutes Dichtung suchen?
Wo deine Seligkeit anfragen?
Wie unter meinen Füssen
die saugende Kugel fortstossen
um die Todestreppe hinaugzustürmen?

We were often
invited
to time-transcending receptions
petrified bark
pushing back curtains of sea and fire–

But now:
the woman love dismissed bent
here over the sorrow-stone-tragedy
musing on the hair of separation

and creating a time of the heart
where death breathing fills itself
and again diminishes–

Oft waren wir
geladen
zu überzeitlichen Empfängen
versteinerte Rinden
Meer- und Feuer-Vorhänge zurückschlagend–

Aber nun:
die Entlassene der Liebe hier
gebeugt über das Lied-Steine-Trauerspiel
dem Haar der Trennung nachsinnend

und eine Herzenszeit schaffend
wo Tod sich atmend fullt
und wieder abnimmt–

When in Early Summer

When in early summer the moon sends out secret signs,
the chalices of lilies scent of heaven,
some ear opens to listen
beneath the chirp of the cricket
to earth turning and the language of spirits set free.

But in dreams fish fly in the air
and a forest takes firm root in the floor of the room.

But in the midst of enchantment a voice speaks clearly and amazed:
World, how can you go on playing your games
and cheating time–
World, the little children were thrown like butterflies,
wings beating into the flames–

and your earth has not been thrown like a rotten apple
into the terror-roused abyss–

And sun and moon have gone on walking–
two cross-eyed witnesses who have seen nothing.

Wenn im Vorsommer

Wenn in Vorsommer der Mond geheime Zeichen aussendet,
die Kelche der Lilien Dufthimmel verströmen,
öffnet sich manches Ohr unter Grillengezirp
dem Kreisen der Erde und der Sprache
der entschränkten Geister zu lauschen.

In den Träumen aber fliegen die Fische in der Luft
und ein Wald wurzelt sic him Zimmerfussboden fist.

Aber mitten in der Verzauberung spricht eine Stimme klar und verwundert:
Welt, wie kannst du deine Spiele weiter spielen
und de Zeit betrügen–
Welt, man hat die kleinen Kinder wie Schmetterlinge,
flügelschlagend in die Flamme geworfen–

und deine Erde ist nicht wie fauler Apfel
in den schreckaufgejagten Abgrund geworfen worden–

Und Sonne und Mond sind weiter spazierengegangen–
zwei schieläugige Zeugen, die nichts gesehen haben.

Child

Child
Child
in the hurricane of parting
kicking with the toe's white-flaming foam
against the burning ring of the horizon
seeking the secret exit of death.

Already without a voice–breathing out
smoke–

Lying like the sea
but without depth beneath it
tearing at the mooring
with the spring-tide of desire–

Child
Child
with the internment of your head
the seed pod of dreams
grown heavy
in final submission
ready to sow another land.

With eyes
turned to maternal soil–

Kind

Kind
Kind
im Orkan des Abschieds
stossend mit der Zehen weissflammendem Gischt
gegen den brennenden Horizontenring
suchend den geheimen Ausweg des Todes.

Schon ohne Stimme–ausatmend Rauch–

Liegend wie das Meer
nur mit Tiefe darunter
reissend an der Vertauung
mit den Springwogen der Sehnsucht–

Kind
Kind
mit der Grablegung deines Haputes
der Träume Samenkapsel
schwer geworden
in endlicher Ergebung
bereit anderes Land zu besäen.

Mit Augen
umgedreht zum Muttergrund–

You
cradled in the notch of the century
where time with ruffled wings
drowns bewildered
in the flood
of your endless doom.

Du
in der Kerbe des Jahrhunderts gewiegt
wo Zeit mit gesträubten Flügeln
fassungslos ertrinkt
in der Überschwemmung
deines masslosen Untergangs.

Poems

Anne Ranasinghe (1925 – 2016)

Four Stanzas on Mortality

Each yellow eyed day
Drops like a stone
In the ocean of eternity.
I built my house
By the water's edge
And I watch the wind
As it blows the sand
As it blows my marks
From the sand;
I hear the wind
Grieve in the eaves
Worry the door
And sift up the slats
Of my floor.
And the wind that is time
And the ocean death
Both sing of eternal loneliness.

* * *

Our yesterday
And our dead
Do not return. Yet
Their image lives in us.
So that I am the one
Who walked through the sea
Who worshipped the calf
The golden calf
While God brooded over the mountain.
And I am Ruth and I am Esther
Miriam and Delilah;
In me the past and present meet
But
I am futureless.

* * *

And what then
Is there left to tell–
That the morning was blue
And crystal bright
That we often loved
In the white mooned night
(The sweet sweet touch
Of face and hand
Despite the wind
In the sand.)
But the wind
Reaps the tide,
It laps my wall –

I can hear the gulls,
Their strident call,
They are waiting
For the spoil. Then
The end, only dust,
In forgotten soil,
Or ashes in the wind

* *

And from our bones
Wild flowers shall grow
Or gulls swoop
Where the ashes fall.

(1971)

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Lori Laitman
Composer

What has drawn you to composing vocal music on the subject of the Holocaust and how do you select the specific poets you choose to set?

My journey in setting poetry related to the Holocaust began in 1995 when soprano Lauren Wagner asked me to compose a song cycle using the poetry from the book "I Never Saw Another Butterfly." The poems were by children who had been incarcerated in the Terezín Concentration Camp, who later perished. I was very drawn to the poems — amazed by the sense of hope that pervaded many of the works, as well as the brutal honesty.

For each Holocaust-themed cycle I have composed, I read a lot of poetry, searching for poems that I connect with emotionally, and that I think could be suited to a musical "translation." When making final choices for a cycle, I also consider which poems might be juxtaposed in order to create a compelling dramatic arc.

With each Holocaust themed composition, I have examined different aspects of the Holocaust. I am lucky to have worked with Mina Miller and Music of Remembrance since the early 2000s and they commissioned several of my Holocaust themed works.

I believe that it is important to honor the dead by telling their stories, and to create empathy by revealing our common humanity. As David Mason writes so poignantly at the end of our Holocaust-themed oratorio *Vedem*, "We were no different than you."

What is your role in interpreting the words of Holocaust victims, and what compositional devices do you use to most truly and meaningfully communicate and give voice to the poets and writers of your chosen texts?

My role is to tell a story through music and to share the story of those who were silenced. I approach the Holocaust poetry in the way I approach any poem or text. My goal is to create dramatic music to illuminate and magnify the meaning of the words. I compose the vocal line first and let the words guide me towards creating the proper structure to house the words. After figuring out which rhythms best suit the words to honor the natural stresses, I then custom craft the melody and emphasize what I believe to be the most important words in a phrase. This in turn allows the singer to most effectively communicate the words to an audience. All other aspects of the music — texture, timbre, harmonies, rhythm, etc. are inspired by the words and are meant toward providing additional commentary on the text.

I also often use the technique of "word painting" — creating miniature aural portraits to illustrate the meanings of the words.

Can you share the story of composing "I Never Saw Another Butterfly," including your favorite musical moments?

It was soprano Lauren Wagner who suggested I look at the book "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" book. The poems were written by children incarcerated in the Terezín Concentration Camp. I was amazed by the sense of hope that pervaded many of the

works, as well as the brutal honesty. And I was very saddened by the knowledge that these children would later perish.

For the song cycle, I chose to set 6 poems, and positioned them to create a dramatic arc that proceeded from one of hope and relative innocence to one of despair. The work was scored for the unusual combination of soprano and alto saxophone. I was a bit concerned about the overlapping ranges and took care to make sure that the saxophone wouldn't cover the voice. The sax is typically a solo instrument, but here, its role alternates between accompaniment and equal "vocal" partner. Not only did I think that the reedy quality of the saxophone would be the perfect timbre for this poetry, I also wanted to introduce two great musicians to one another: Lauren Wagner and Gary Louie, both of whom had won the Pro Musicis competition.

Regarding favorite musical moments: I have some from each movement. For *The Butterfly*, the opening saxophone line with grace notes immediately sets the stage for the haunting quality of the text, and the grace note, for me, is reminiscent of the sometimes quavering quality of a cantor's voice during a Jewish service. The voice's dramatic "Only I never saw another butterfly" is a favorite spot, as is the saxophone's solo interlude, depicting the butterfly's flight. I also love the transfer of the high F from voice to saxophone at the end.

For song 2, *Yes, That's The Way Things Are*, the "ba-de-dum" interludes and the ending sequence, "my poor old greybeard" are my favorite spots. The "ba-de-dums" were not part of the original poem and I was worried about inventing and inserting these words into the poem —but I think the additions adds to the folk-song character of the piece. Interestingly, the approach into these interludes has given some performers difficulty

— the gradual ritard and the immediate new tempo should feel entirely natural. I also like the ending sequence and the way that voice and sax (or clarinet or bassoon) end together with the release of the “k” of “park”.

For song 3, *Birdsong*, the thing I always remember about its composition was the length of the song. The entire surface of my piano was covered with sheets of paper and I was despairing whether I’d be able to piece things together to create a song that wouldn’t collapse under its own weight. I have a few favorite spots: the interplay between voice and sax in m. 19-20; the vocalise interludes from mm. 58-66 and mm. 119-128, and the final measure when the saxophone comes to rest creating an unexpected consonance.

For song 4, *The Garden*, my favorite spot is the dramatic climax, from the pickup to m.26 through m. 31, with the solo “no more”.

For song 5, *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, I am very fond of the glissandi in the voice, which adds to the cabaret atmosphere.

For song 6, *The Old House*, I have a few favorite spots: the opening sparseness with the repeated saxophone notes (I wanted to honor Gary’s extraordinary technique and was concerned that he might not favor playing one note repeatedly, yet it was what I felt was necessary and it’s actually quite hard to pull off); the lyricism as the voice recalls the house as it used to be, and the return to the opening repeated notes. The most chilling moment comes with the voice singing “What a waste of hours” — and then the sequential descent “rotting in silence” — followed by the silence at the end.

Can you share the story of composing "In Sleep the World is Yours," including your favorite musical moments?

This piece was commissioned by Music of Remembrance, specifically to set the poetry of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. What I found inspiring about Selma's poetry was that she was able to speak the truth in simple but clear poetic language.

Although, at first, I was concerned about the simplicity of the poetry, but soon realized the depth of feeling beneath the works. When choosing poetry, I look for words that an audience can grasp aurally — but also for an underlying complexity, which provides me with opportunities for creating dramatic music to illuminate the text. In this respect, Selma's poems were perfect.

It was amazing that her poetry survived at all. Selma was born to a Romanian Jewish family in 1924. A talented writer, she began writing poetry at age 15. Her works consist of fifty-two poems and five translations. In 1942 at age 18, Selma died of typhus in a Ukrainian labor camp. Thanks to the dedication and love of her friends, and later her distant relatives, her poetry survived, resulting in the 2008 publication *Harvest of Blossoms*. The poems were translated by Jerry Glenn and Florian Birkmayer, in conjunction with Selma's relatives Helene and Irene Silverblatt. Irene traveled to Seattle for the premiere and it was wonderful to meet her and her family.

My favorite musical moments: Song 1, *Lullaby*: The lilting quality of the accompaniment which immediately suggests a lullaby, and the various word paintings: i.e., "fall" in m. 5, m. 39; the harmonic change to minor in m. 102 to accompany the word "dark"; and the dissonance of the oboe at the end.

Song 2, *Yes*, from mm. 44-52, and the return of this motif at m. 112-124. The harmonies are just a bit dissonant, yet sweet, and are an attempt to capture the images of "Like time that's past/Like a star I thought I'd grasped." and "just pale like a dream."

I'm also quite fond of the fragmentation of lines and texture in Song 3, *Tragedy*, starting at m 33, which is meant to show the psyche underlying the words, as if the singer can barely utter the thoughts.

Can you share the story of composing "The Secret Exit," including your favorite musical moments?

Soprano Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk approached me about writing a song cycle for soprano and clarinet using the poetry of Nelly Sachs. She and clarinetist Denise Gainey had often performed my song cycle *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, and wanted a new work to be a sequel of sorts. The use of voice and clarinet would make the cycle "transportable" — able to be more easily performed in a variety of settings.

Kristine and I consulted quite a bit about which poems to choose, eventually settling on three poems that reflected on life and death. The first one in particular was longer and more complex in language and structure than poems I typically set and presented a challenge. And as always, before I began the composition, I had to secure the permission to the poetry.

As far as favorite moments go: Song 1: What rose out of the white leaves of your body: The gesture of the opening rise and fall by the clarinet that is later captured by the voice.

Song 2: When In Early Summer: my setting of the dramatic “World, world, how can you go on playing your games and cheating time” (with the shorter meter descriptive of the cheating of time), followed by the word painting for “wings beating”. The sparseness of the conclusion, ending in a whisper is also quite dramatic.

Song 3: Child: the interplay between the voice and clarinet in the opening and closing.

Can you share the story of composing of “The Ocean of Eternity,” including your favorite musical moments?

Saxophonist Michael Couper had been performing my works for quite some time, including arrangements of other Holocaust themed music not originally for saxophone. He and I both shared a great interest in the poetry of Anne Ranasinghe and her belief that education and memory could be a shield against future atrocities. Michael asked for a song cycle for soprano, soprano saxophone and piano, and he, soprano Yungee Rhie and pianist ChoEun Lee co-commissioned the work. I composed the work between April and September of 2017 and the premiere took place at Scorca Hall in New York City on February 9, 2019.

Michael and I decided on the text Anne’s poem *Four Stanzas on Mortality*, which was written as she was nearing the end of her life. While not explicitly about the Holocaust, all of her poetry was tinged with her personal experience of surviving by being sent away from Germany at age 13 and subsequently having her entire family murdered by the Nazis.

The opening circular motif introduced by the saxophone is meant to symbolize the cycle of life, and it is not only used prominently throughout the first song, but also interspersed through the cycle. It is one of my favorite aspects of the cycle. Another distinction is the more frequent use of solo voice for dramatic effect: see mm. 58-59 and the end of "Futureless," at the beginning and mm. 27-28 of "The Morning was Blue" and throughout the last song "Wild Flowers."

What is your musical significance when repeating a line of text in a song?

I use repetition to draw extra attention to a particular text, or sometimes to underscore the feeling of the song by creating a mood (I'm thinking of the repetition in Lullaby from *In Sleep The World is Yours* — where the repetition itself becomes part of the soothing aspect of a lullaby). Or, if there is a character in the song, the uses of repetition is meant to comment on an aspect of that character's psyche. Please see my notes above about "Tragedy," the last of the songs in *In Sleep The World Is Yours*.

How does the poetry and the translation influence your selection of instrumentation and range?

The poetry itself can suggest a particular instrumentation. As I mentioned before, it was the reedy quality of the saxophone that seemed to pair perfectly with the text for *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. When I made two additional arrangements, I chose clarinet and bassoon as partners for the voice, again, based on the reedy quality of the instruments. I also felt that this reediness referenced the use of clarinet in Klezmer music.

For my 2nd Holocaust themed song cycle, *Holocaust 1944,* I used baritone and double bass. The poems were by adults who either were killed or had their lives upended by the Holocaust, and I felt that the darker colors would best exemplify the essence of the poetry.

But because of my compositional process, with the primary focus on melody, the vocal line can often (but not always) be transcribed for a different voice type. And for practical reasons, I have also often created optional arrangements for different accompanying instruments.

For example, *The Seed of Dream*, originally for baritone, cello and piano also has a version for mezzo-soprano, cello and piano. At your request, Sheena, for *The Ocean of Eternity*, I created a version that uses oboe instead of saxophone. Recently I made some adaptations to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* so that a mezzo-soprano could sing the music. I haven't heard the results, and the changes in the vocal line are not ideal, yet I am willing to experiment in order to present the texts to a wider audience.

What do you view as the role of klezmer and Jewish worship music in your Holocaust compositions?

I think that the role of Klezmer and Jewish worship music is pretty minimal in my Holocaust compositions, although I have referenced both. In the song *Holocaust 1944* from the cycle of the same name, I directly quote the Shabbos blessing tune. It was more of the reediness of the clarinet from Klezmer that was referenced in the Butterfly cycle more than any specific tunes or gestures from tunes.

Michael Couper
Composer, Conductor, Saxophonist

Can you share the story of your involvement in the premier "The Ocean of Eternity"?

I met Lori during a coaching session on her work, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a piece I had performed for a number of years with multiple vocalists. When chatting afterward, it came up that I did music preparation work and we started working more closely together. A few years later, I put together a trio to premiere a different work I had co-commissioned from a composer friend of mine for sax, piano, and voice (John Plant, Insomnia, premiered October 2015 at Weill Recital Hall). The three of us (Yungee Rhie, ChoEun Lee, and I) enjoyed the experience so much that we decided to found a trio and commission additional repertoire for us to perform on future engagements. I immediately thought of Lori. I had done a transcription of *The Seed of Dream* on one of my doctoral recitals and was taken with the trio texture. It was shortly before the 2016 US election and Lori and I shared concerns about the historical parallels with twentieth-century fascism and the rhetoric that was rising in temperature. In our discussion of possible texts we settled on the work of Anne Ranasinghe and Lori shared with me one of her last books, *Who Can Guess the Moment*, which contained a lot of disturbing detail about the Holocaust of which I had not been aware, despite having studied it a great deal to that point. From there, it was a short journey to the four pieces of text that would become the basis for *The Ocean of Eternity*. We had originally considered a multi-sax work, meaning I would switch between alto and soprano, but we settled on soprano for the whole work. I had requested that we do something other than alto for the sake of variety (I had used the

baritone on *Seed of Dream*). For the world premiere, we booked Opera America's Marc A Scorca Hall for February 9, 2019 as part of a blended program of trio and duo works.

Through your involvement in that premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

In this case I think Lori and I were both concerned with drawing historical parallels and acknowledging the precarious times we find ourselves in today. It is tempting to think such things can't happen again, that there's some absolute trend toward moral growth within our species. My other concerts that programmed Holocaust remembrance music felt more commemorative and respectful to a dark period of history. This time it felt more prescient and urgent. The willingness of so many to dehumanize others had reached an alarming fever-pitch (of course, it only continued to get worse). While I typically would refrain from politicizing my performing and alienating any potential audience member, especially considering the political divisions within my own family, it felt necessary to set aside neutrality and call attention to something we were both feeling deeply.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

One of the things that draws me to vocal music, both as a composer and instrumentalist, is the way in which the text can inform every nuance of the performance. I wouldn't highlight any specific musical choice except to say that as a saxophonist, I always strive to be visceral and evocative, rather than limiting myself to rendering notes

on a page. Lori's music lends itself well to that approach, which is one of the main reasons I wanted to work with her on another piece.

Gary Louie*
Professor of Saxophone, Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University

* The interview transcript included in this document is an edited version of the Zoom conversation with Gary Louie. The edited answers were approved by Louie.

Can you share the story of your involvement with Lori Laitman in I Never Saw Another Butterfly?

I was in Washington DC, and Lori and I knew each other from playing around town. She invited me to her house and she played me some of her pieces. There was a wonderful singer she was working with, Lauren Wagner, and Lori had this idea that saxophone and voice would work really well together. She was spot on. She asked me if I was interested, and of course I said “Absolutely!” At the time I knew Lori's works, but I didn't know the poetry she was going to choose. I allow the composers to find their own voice, so I said, “Whatever you write is fine.” Lori has perfect pitch, so she listened to my solo album and chose notes that gave the color she wanted. In the weeks before the concert she began to coach us, and she would notice things that were difficult for me do, and she simply said, “I can choose different notes.” She made it very playable for the saxophone - it's still hard, but it fits the instrument really well, and that's to her credit. I won't say that it was a collaboration in any way, she did all the work! She's very good at painting the picture of the story, and I find them to be extremely effective pieces. That's how they came about, and I've played it 20 - 25 times, all over the place, and with five different singers. Each one brings something different, and that’s been really kind of fun.

Through your involvement in the premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

All of us got the book of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. Lori has a sequel, *The Secret Exit*, which I'm looking forward to doing one day too. You have to deal with the poetry on a personal level and let it sink in because that's what the audience is dealing with. You have to understand what you're delivering to the audience, and the power of what these words are all about. But as a performer, when you get on the stage, you have to focus on craft. To be powerful for the audience, you have to play the notes, you have to take your breath where you're supposed to, you have to play in time, and that's the bottom line. For me the performance is the most important thing, but having an understanding as you're working on the piece is critical. That's when you can let yourself go to that space, because you have time to recover. As I program this piece, trying to figure out where to include it in the concert was initially challenging. The audience can feel funny applauding afterwards. In other words, they know that they've just experienced something great and they want to release that energy, but even applause is hard.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

There are many times when Lori paints a picture for the saxophone. In "The Butterfly" there are times when the saxophone is the butterfly, and you have to realize when she has switched into her painting mode. I approach some of the technical aspects, like the 16th notes, more lightly to change the color. Likewise, in "The Old House" when

you're playing that intense single note, vibrato is important to me. When I choose to remove the vibrato entirely, it brings a different quality to the sound. Some of the songs are klezmer-like, and the klezmer clarinet has a particular articulation. In those moments, I'll change my articulation to make it little bit tougher. Reed instruments have a lot of articulation capability, how hard and what kind of air we use, so we can change articulation quite rapidly. Some of that has to do with the words, like when the saxophone mimics the soprano's gesture. In "Birdsong," I take my cue from the vocalist, and then I copy the sound they're bringing in. The vocalist is so dedicated to the words, and it colors your sound. From a performer standpoint, it's very challenging and interesting because you know a lot of movement can happen from performance to performance.

Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk, DMA
Soprano, Associate Dean, Professor, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Can you share the story of your involvement in the premier of The Secret Exit?

I commissioned the work, and received substantial grant support from both the UAB College of Arts and Sciences and the UAB Department of Music to do so. I contacted Lori via Facebook and mentioned a mutual friend who actually suggested I write to her. I mentioned that I loved her "Butterfly" songs, and asked if she might be interested in writing a cycle for me. After I sent her a recording of our performance, she said she enjoyed my work and agreed to compose another cycle. I suggested poems by Sachs, and we worked together to choose them. She composed according to what she knew about my voice and we talked throughout the process. She coached us the day before the world premiere, and even changed a few notes and meters that we all thought would be helpful. She also very graciously gave a lecture at the premiere.

Through your involvement in that premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

It's easy to view our work as musicians as simply presenting the music, but I believe our role is much more than that. In this case, my role involved supporting a female composer, who is famous and deserves amplification in her own right; it encompassed developing another forum for poet Nelly Sachs to express her experience; most of all, it served as a vehicle for lifting the voices of all of those lost in the Holocaust. During the years of the commission, composition, and premiering of the work,

it seemed that the Holocaust deniers had become especially loud. More alarmingly, a survey indicated that two-thirds American millennials don't know what Auschwitz was. My role as a musician is not only to sing the music faithfully according to the composer's wishes and to clearly express the text of the poet, it is also as a social activist of sorts. People need to know what happened in fairly recent history, or we are doomed to repeat it. Sometimes, music can be a more easily-received entry point than, for example, a lecture.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

My interpretation was chiefly to serve the composer's wishes. Lori is extremely fastidious in her use of markings, and there were times in our coaching that asked for more attention to a dynamic marking, for example. There are many tempo and meter changes, so we spent a good deal of time with a metronome at first. Those relaxed a bit, and Lori seemed pleased with the result. There were a few times when I handled a phrase a certain way dynamically or expressively that Lori responded by saying, "I like what you did there: let me put it in the score." All that is to say that—it's in the music! Tend to the score, to every detail, and you'll be fine.

Mina Miller
Pianist, Music of Remembrance Artistic Director

Can you share the story of your involvement in the premiere of In Sleep the World is Yours?

My involvement with the work goes back much further than the premiere, since it was commissioned by Music of Remembrance, the organization I founded and lead. We'd previously performed a number of Lori's works, including two we'd commissioned and premiered (*The Seed of Dream*, 2004 and *Vedem*, 2010), so I already knew her musical style and approach well. I also knew Lori as a wonderful collaborator and a joy to work with.

The concept for *In Sleep the World is Yours* began with a conversation with the brilliant poet David Mason, who had crafted the libretto for Lori's oratorio *Vedem*. He shared with me a beautiful book of poetry by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. It struck me immediately as a wonderful source for a new song cycle, and Lori would be the perfect composer with her rare gift for embracing and enriching the essence of poetic text.

Through your involvement in that premiere, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

"Holocaust music" can mean so things to different people and in different contexts, and I don't think the term is always helpful. Of course we listen to *In Sleep the World is Yours* knowing that Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger died in a slave labor camp, but

her poetry is not “Holocaust poetry.” The verses express the yearnings of a young woman in love, experiencing those desires in a violent and turbulent world. When we commission and perform new works set in the Holocaust’s shadow, we’re not trying to teach history but to tell stories about people and their lives. In this case, it’s a story of a young woman coming of age as she struggles to reconcile her dreams with an uncertain and menacing universe.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

When you play in the premiere of a new work there are no previous performances to serve as reference points – and this is part of what makes it so special to discover its actual sound when you bring it to life. I think of Lori as a “performer’s composer.” She participates collegially in rehearsals. She’s clear in communicating what she wants, but also open to ideas. When she offers interpretive guidance, it’s with a keen sense of who the actual performers are and what will bring out the best in them. As the pianist in this work, I was struck by how Lori integrates the instrument as part of the work’s broader tonal palette. It was helpful to imagine the piece as a kind of word painting, and I needed to absorb the piece as a whole in order to find the colors I wanted. Performing *In Sleep the World is Yours* was a deeply satisfying experience for me. The piano part itself is so beautiful on its own – but you always feel how organically it’s interwoven with the words and how it reinforces even their most subtle nuances.

Megan Renae Parker (Megan Chenovick)
Lyric Coloratura Soprano, Private Vocal Instructor (Vocalpath Studio)

Can you share the story of your involvement in the premier of "In Sleep the World is Yours"?

I have worked for several years with Seattle non-profit, Music of Remembrance (MOR) founded by Mina Miller. Mina kindly hired me to premiere In Sleep the World is Yours after singing on several other Sparks of Glory concert programs and covering other commissioned works like Farewell Auschwitz. It was a real thrill to perform with Mina on piano and Ben Hausmann on oboe. Prior to the recording MOR flew the composer, Lori Laitman, out to rehearse with us and she was present as we recorded in Benaroya Hall. It was supremely rewarding and insightful to have Lori there to help interpret the tempo & dynamic changes, so we were fulfilling her wishes for the music.

Through your involvement in that premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

I have often felt when performing for Music of Remembrance that I represent the people that were murdered during the Holocaust, and find the performance to be an act of remembering and honoring those whose voices were silenced. While the stories are tragic, there are also beautiful images of love & hope. And representing the lightness as well as the darkness expressed by those going through the Holocaust is a sacred trust. After the premiere I was lucky to meet descendants & relatives of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, who wrote the poetry and perished during the Holocaust. They were very

moved to see Selma honored in this way and thought the music only enhanced the poetry, giving it new life.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

In addition to Lori's direction, I thought it important to acknowledge the piano & oboe as a part of the ensemble and texture of the piece. I hope that in my performance my acting embraced the instrumental solos as well as my own solos. A moment that stands out to me in the song cycle is "Yes!" To me that word carries all the heartbreaking hope of a young person's life, cut off all too soon. It is a musical section I loved singing fully.

Yungee Rhie
Soprano, Adjunct Professor in Voice at Gyeongsang National University

Can you share the story of your involvement in the premier "The Ocean of Eternity"?

Michael (saxophonist), ChoEun (pianist), and I premiered another composer's work once before Laitman's work and we found three of us really admired each other's artistry. So we wanted to continue performing together and Michael reached out to Lori to write music for us. Her music was not hard to understand, but yet, it was beautifully written. Each instrument had their own voices, but still blended well.

Through your involvement in that premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

Our present comes from the past and our history must not be forgotten. When people die, one's existence ends, but memories and images of that life lives in other people. When performing this work, I believed that I was not creating sounds that will vanish once the performance was over, but the music and the message will live within the audiences' mind through the music.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

There are moments of somberness that our life is not eternal, but I wanted to focus on sweet moments that will live in one's memory and the hopeful message that 'wild flowers shall grow from our bones'.

Lauren Wagner*
Soprano

* The interview transcript included in this document is an edited version of the Zoom conversation with Lauren Wagner and her husband, Geoffrey Jacquez. The edited answers were approved by Jacquez who serves as Wagner's surrogate agent.

Can you share the story of your involvement with Lori Laitman?

We were at Interlochen together as students. Our rooms were right next to each other, and I remember we had these horrible knickers. We always had a lot of fun, we would just giggle all the time. She was just starting to write, and she would come out with her papers, write the score out, and then she'd cross it out, go back and do another one. She's unbelievably wonderful, patient, and kind. She is one of my dearest friends. One of the first songs she wrote Lori said, "Can you sing this?" and I said, "No, no, I can't sing it." Then after she worked on it, it was finally okay, and I just took it in. Then we started doing things together. She would write something, hand me the music. She was always so calm about it. She also has this real connection to the text. Lori would have all of these fantastic musical phases, and getting to sing the music was a win-win for me.

Through your involvement in that premier, how did you come to understand your role as a performer/commissioner when presenting Holocaust music?

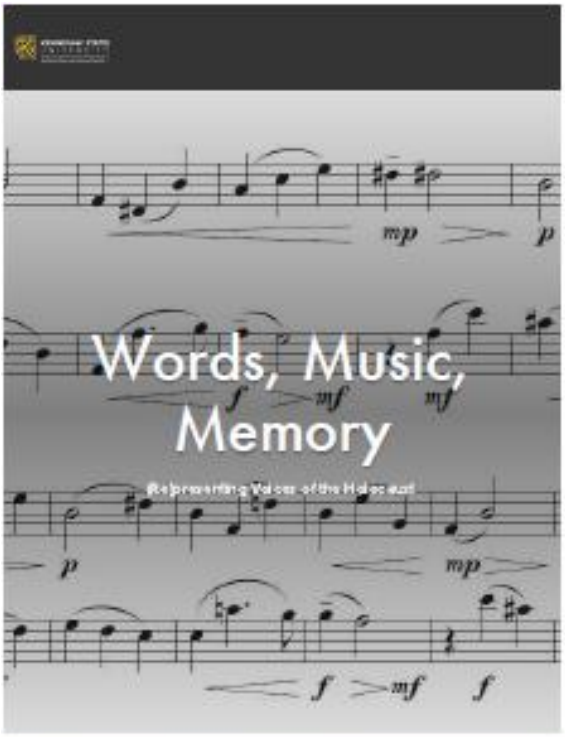
Oh my God, I'm getting goosebumps now. The songs (from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*) were just so beautifully done. There's this structure of the music, which is amazing and wonderful. Sometimes composers approach a song cycle with such deep text like that, and they don't know what to do with it. Then there's someone like Lori who comes in and knows exactly what she's thinking about. (Gary Louie), who played the saxophone, was brilliant. Singing about how the butterflies were able to get out, but the children couldn't, I just get goosebumps thinking about it. When you start singing these things, your body and your brain just go into the space of these children. All of you is included in all the horrible things that happened. It's not like we can pretend it never happened - it's happening as we're playing or singing it. You can't erase it. That's why I love music, because music lifts us from these things that, on paper, can feel so dry.

Are there any specific interpretative choices you made when performing this work?

We did a lot of recordings, getting the pieces just right, and Lori was so wonderful to work with. She never gave me notes about what to sing or how to sing it, or to ever change anything. You know, I'm a really good musician, but I'm not super, super bright like Lori, but that's okay. Lori is incredibly intelligent. She's just a lovely, lovely person. I'm thrilled that you called me about her.

APPENDIX 3: SELECTIONS FROM "WORDS, MUSIC, MEMORY: (RE)PRESENTING VOICES OF THE HOLOCAUST"

The following pages have been excerpted from the gallery guide for the travelling exhibit, "Words, Music, Memory: (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust" published by the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. The travelling exhibit information page is available online at https://historymuseum.kennesaw.edu/exhibitions/traveling/words_music_memory.php and the full gallery guide for the exhibit can be found at https://spark.adobe.com/page/nCHeHO08HvKq7.



Introduction

Words, Music, Memory: Representing Voices of the Holocaust is a ten-panel traveling exhibit created by the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. While the exhibit focuses on words written by people who experienced the Holocaust — some who perished, and others who survived —this digital gallery guide highlights the links along the chain of commemoration that connect the past and the present and generation to generation.

Each section of the gallery guide begins with a brief biographical sketch of the writer along with a concept sketch by the illustrator whose work appears on the corresponding exhibit panel.

Each section then goes on to feature a particular commemorative trajectory from witness, to preservation, to interpretation, to performance, to appreciation. The human actors and affirmative acts along this trajectory are described and given opportunities for reflection. Excerpts from creative works are made available for you to enjoy.

We invite you to engage with questions for consideration along the way. At the end, we also offer suggestions for you to find your voice and add your own link in the chain that keeps memory alive.

As you go through the exhibit and the gallery guide, keep this portal open as a way to share your answers with the MHE.

Top image: Sheet music for "Khayele's Waltz" by Laurence Sherr, courtesy Laurence Sherr

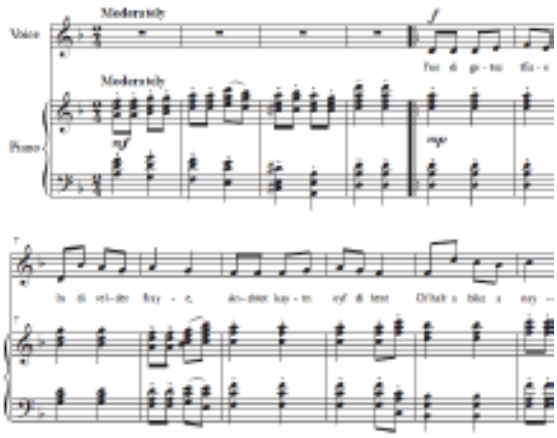
Image across: Guild or performance to inaugurate the new Holocaust History Museum at Jerusalem's

Yad Vashem memorial, 2006. Courtesy NBC News

I always thought that beauty in art would help save the world; and I continue to be driven by one piece of Jewish philosophy that I picked up: "Tikkun Olam," and that is that people on earth can repair the world. My belief is that everybody has a unique gift. It took me a while to discover what my gift was, which is to compose art songs. I am always driven by a desire to add beauty to the world. I hope my music touches people, and I feel that's my small contribution

– Composer Lori Laitman, interviewed by Serdar Ilban, 2008

Image: Laitman with Austrian baritone Wolfgang Holzmair and French-American cellist Sonia Wieder-Atherton at the premier of her composition "Tod als Flucht" on February 21, 2010, at the Austrian Cultural Center. Composer David Leisner stands beside Laitman on stage.



I am interested in the compositional and performance devices that both underpin the power of words to bear witness to lived experience and ensure the process of musical commemoration as an act of historical preservation.

– Soprano Sheena Ramirez, Dissertation Proposal, 2021

Image: Sheet music for "Yid du partizaner" arranged by Laurence Sherr for Sheena Ramirez to sing in September 2021

[Holocaust composition] connected me with my family history. It connected me with the culture of my ancestry. It connected me with the Klezmer music and the cantorial music I heard growing up. So all of that came together.

– Composer Laurence Sherr, interview with Adina Langer, 2021.

Image: *Oy Klezmer!* band featuring Jerry Fields, drums; Susan Clearman, accordion; Chip Epstein, violin; L. A. Tuten, tuba; and Laurence Sherr, clarinet, ca. 1990s. Courtesy KSU Archives and Special Collections

The visual arts are an important form of commemorative interpretation. The MHHE commissioned two illustrators, [illegible], and Mattie Hemingway, to create portraits of the writers featured in the Words, Music, Memory exhibit. Their final illustrations appear on the exhibit panels, and concept sketches appear in this gallery guide.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Franta Bass
Born in Brno, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic), in 1930. František Bass was known as Franta to his friends and family. After the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, they established the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939. Two years later, they created Theresienstadt in the fortress town of Terezín, north of Prague.

Theresienstadt was both a ghetto, intended to mislead the international community through the incarceration of prominent European Jews, and a transit camp that served as a waystation to extermination camps established in the Germany-occupied territories in the east. Franta Bass and his family were among the first Jews transported to Theresienstadt in 1941.

Conditions in Theresienstadt were purposefully brutal, but Jewish cultural life also thrive under the leadership of dedicated artists and educators. Franta Bass was among 15,000 children who lived in Theresienstadt during the years of its existence (9/10 of whom would perish after deportation). Although education was not allowed officially, teachers taught children secretly and encouraged them to create magazines and draw pictures.

Franta Bass wrote poetry in a diary which survived the war. His four surviving poems carried themes of longing and resilient personal identity. Bass was deported to Auschwitz with his family on the last transport that left Theresienstadt in October 1944. He was murdered there on October 28 at the age of 14.

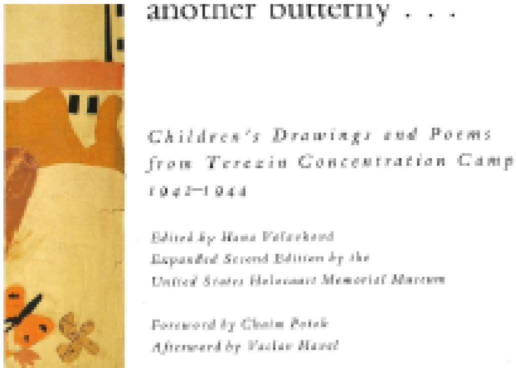
His poems were published, along with other children's writings and drawings, in the Czech anthology *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* in 1959. A second edition, translated into English, came out in 1964.

Franta Bass, ca. 1941. Courtesy Prostějovské Noviny.com

Image: Concept sketch for Franta Bass illustration by Julia Guevara, 2021.

One of the most prolific children's magazines in Theresienstadt was Vedem created by the boys of Home One (L417). Vedem included poems, drawings, and satirical articles by 92 boys including Petr Ginz and Hanuš Hachenburg. In 2018, four of the boys who wrote for Vedem were able to attend the premier of an [opera](#) by Lori Laitman. The opera was commissioned by Music of Remembrance, a Seattle-based organization committed to remembering the Holocaust through music. Vedem has also inspired museum exhibits, such as [Vedem Underground](#) and a play with music called [The Last Boat](#).

Image: Cover for Vedem magazine 44-5. Courtesy Terezín Memorial Museum

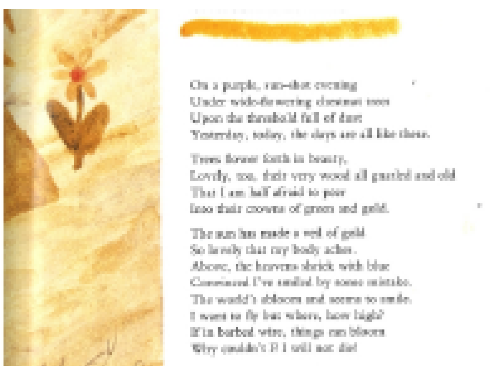


I Am a Jew

by Franta Bass, ca. 1942

> *I am a Jew and will be a Jew forever.*
>
> *Even if I should die from hunger,*
>
> *never will I submit.*
>
> *I will always fight for my people,*
>
> *on my honor.*
>
> *I will never be ashamed of them,*
>
> *I give my word.*
>
> *I am proud of my people,*
>
> *how dignified they are.*
>
> *Even though I am suppressed,*
>
> *I will always come back to life.*

Image: Title page, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, edited by Hana Volavkova, New York: Schocken Books, 1994.



I Never Saw Another Butterfly

This collection of children's drawings and poems from Terezín Concentration Camp/Theresienstadt Ghetto spans the years 1942 – 1944. It was compiled by Czech art historian Hana Volavková (1904 – 1985). Volavková, a Jewish woman, had been commissioned in 1940 by the occupation government in Czechoslovakia to build a museum of liturgical objects, books, and other artifacts collected from Jewish communities in the occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Volavková worked to create the Central Jewish Museum in Prague until she was deported to Terezín in February 1945.

Volavková was the only member of the professional staff of the Central Jewish Museum to survive the war and became the first post-war director of the Jewish Museum. Working under difficult conditions during the Communist era, Volavková managed to preserve the museum and promote public awareness of its collections, including a group of children's drawings from Terezín that were created under the supervision of Austrian art educator Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, who smuggled the artworks out of the ghetto in suitcases.

Collected and compiled by Volavková, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* was first published in Czech in 1959. In it, poems are paired with drawings, and the fate of the authors and illustrators is shared where known.

The publication inspired composers and playwrights to create commemorative works based on the included texts and images. Among those works are a play by Celeste Raspanti, song cycles by Srul Glick and Lori Laitman, and a choral work by Charles Davidson.

Image: "On A Sunny Evening" page from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, edited by Hana Volavkova, New York: Schocken Books, 1964.

Click here to read *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

Engage

Watch "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" for children's chorus by Charles Davidson:

Watch "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" song cycle by Lori Laitman:

After watching these performances, consider the following questions:

1. How does the setting for children's chorus differ from the setting for solo soprano?
2. What role do the performers play in the emotions you feel when hearing the words?
3. How would you interpret the poetry and art of "I Never Saw Another Butterfly?"

Click here to share your answers

Image: "Airing mattresses in the garden" by Irena Karpikova (1930-1944) during the drawing classes in the Terezin Ghetto organized between 1943 and 1944 by the painter and teacher Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (Jewish Museum in Prague) Courtesy *Times of Israel*

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Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger

Born in Czernowitz, Bukovina, Romania, in 1921, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger began writing poetry as a teenager. She dedicated most of her poems to her boyfriend, Leiser Fichman.

Sent to the ghetto in October 1941, Selma continued to write poetry until she and her parents were deported to Transnistria in June of 1942. She gave her boyfriend a notebook containing 52 poems and five translations which he managed to keep with him during his incarceration in a forced labor camp. Selma died of typhus at Michailowka labor camp on December 16, 1942.

Lori Laitman, the composer who set Selma's poems to music, wrote in 2021,

> *"It's amazing that her poetry survived at all."*

Before his death aboard the Mefkure ship bound for Palestine in 1944, Leiser sent the book of poetry to Selma's friend Ilse in Czernowitz. It was preserved by Selma's friends and family and ultimately published as *Harmat of Blossoms* in 2008.

In 2013, composer Lori Laitman was commissioned by Music of Remembrance to create a song cycle based on Selma's poetry. The haunting title "In Sleep, the World is Yours" is drawn from an evocative line in one of the poems.

Selma (right) with Ilse Schender in Czernowitz, 1940. Courtesy Yad Vashem

Image: Concept sketch for illustration of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger by Masha Hemingway, 2021.

Image: "Tragedy" manuscript by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, 1941. Courtesy Yad Vashem

"Tragedy"

– Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger, December 23, 1941

The heaviest weight of all to see

that no one needs me,

to know, to think

I'll fade into nothingness like smoke

Interview with Composer Lori Laitman

Sheena Ramirez and Adina Langer interviewed Lori Laitman in June 2021.

What has drawn you to composing vocal music on the subject of the Holocaust?

My journey in setting poetry related to the Holocaust began in 1995 when soprano Lauren Wagner asked me to compose a song cycle using the poetry from the book "I Never Saw Another Butterfly." The poems were by children who had been incarcerated in the Terezin Concentration Camp, who later perished. I was very drawn to the poems — amazed by the sense of hope that pervaded many of the works, as well as the brutal honesty.

For each Holocaust-themed cycle I have composed, I read a lot of poetry, searching for poems that I connect with emotionally, and that I think could be suited to a musical "translation." When making final choices for a cycle, I also consider which poems might be juxtaposed in order to create a compelling dramatic arc.

What is your role in interpreting the words of Holocaust victims, and what compositional devices do you use to most truly and meaningfully

communicate and give voice to the poets and writers of your chosen texts?

> *My role is to tell a story through music and to share the story of those who were silenced. I approach the Holocaust poetry in the way I approach any poem or text. My goal is to create dramatic music to illuminate and magnify the meaning of the words. I compose the vocal line first and let the words guide me towards creating the proper structure to house the words. After figuring out which rhythms best suit the words to honor the natural stresses, I then custom craft the melody and emphasize what I believe to be the most important words in a phrase. This in turn allows the singer to most effectively communicate the words to an audience. All other aspects of the music — texture, timbre, harmonies, rhythm, etc. are inspired by the words and are meant toward providing additional commentary on the text. I also often use the technique of "word painting" — creating miniature aural portraits to illustrate the meanings of the words.*

Can you share the story of composing "In Sleep the World is Yours"?

> *This piece was commissioned by Music of Remembrance, specifically to set the poetry of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. What I found inspiring about Selma's poetry was that she was able to speak the truth in simple but clear poetic language.*

> *Although, at first, I was concerned about the simplicity of the poetry, I soon realized the depth of feeling beneath the words. When choosing poetry, I look for words that an audience can grasp purely — but also for an underlying complexity, which provides me with opportunities for creating dramatic music to illuminate the text. In this respect, Selma's poems were perfect.*

> *It was amazing that her poetry survived at all. A talented writer, she began writing poetry at age 15. In 1942 at age 18, Selma died of typhus in a Ukrainian labor camp. Thanks to the dedication and love of her friends, and later her distant relatives, her poetry survived. The poems were translated by Jerry Glenn and Florian Birkmayer, in conjunction with Selma's relatives Helene and Irene Silverblatt. Irene traveled to Seattle for the premiere and it was wonderful to meet her and her family.*

What was your favorite musical moment in your setting of *Lullaby*?

> *The lilting quality of the accompaniment which immediately suggests a lullaby, and the various word paintings: i.e., "fall" in m. 5, m. 39; the harmonic change to minor in m. 102 to accompany the word "dark"; and the dissonance of the oboe at the end.*

Described by *Fanfare Magazine* as "one of the most talented and intriguing of living composers," Lori Laitman has composed multiple operas and choral works, and hundreds of songs, setting texts by classical and contemporary poets, including those who perished in the Holocaust. Her music has generated substantial critical acclaim. The *Journal of Singing* wrote "It is difficult to think of anyone before the public today who equals her exceptional gifts for embracing a poetic text and giving it new and deeper life through music." For more information, please visit: artsongs.com.

Image: Lori Laitman, courtesy of the composer

Engage

Watch the premiere of "In Sleep the World is Yours" at Music of Remembrance's Holocaust Remembrance Day concert on May 12, 2014. Megan Chenowick, soprano; Benjamin Haumann, oboe; Mina Miller, piano

Watch Sheena Ramirez's performance of "In Sleep the World is Yours" at James Madison University on December 7, 2019. Sheena Ramirez, soprano; Jeanette Zyko, oboe; Kathryn Schmidt, piano.

After watching these performances, consider the following questions:

1. How does the setting of poetry for voice and instruments impact how you experience it?
2. What role do the performers play in interpreting the music?
3. What role do musicians play in perpetuating Holocaust memory?
4. How might you choose to share Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger's poetry?

Click here to share your answers!

Image: Premier of "In Sleep the World is Yours," courtesy Music of Remembrance

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After you watch the video, consider the following questions:

1. What role does the cello play in communicating the feeling of the original source song?
2. How is instrumental music different in your experience of Holocaust commemorative music?
3. How might you choose to present the songs and works of Shmerke Kaczerginski?

Click here to share your answers.

Image: A close-up of the bridge area on a cello, 2009. Courtesy Turideth

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Nelly Sachs

Born in Berlin on December 10, 1891, Nelly Sachs began writing poetry at the age of seventeen. During the 1920s, she studied ancient Jewish texts while contemplating the rise of Nazism. In 1940, Swedish novelist Selma Lagerlof aided Nelly's escape to Sweden, where she lived with her mother in a tiny apartment for the duration of the war. There, she worked as a translator and

wrote lyric poetry in German, often on mystical themes related to loss and survival.

Her most famous poem "O die Schornsteine" *(O the Chimneys)* relates directly to the murder of Jews in Nazi death camps. First published in 1947, it became the title poem of a 1957 anthology of her works in English translation. In 1970, *The Seeker, and Other Poems* further cemented her reputation among English speakers.

Nelly was honored with the 1965 Peace Prize of German Publishers and the 1966 Nobel Prize for Literature. In her acceptance speech, she took on the mantle of suffering that Jews had experienced during the Holocaust saying,

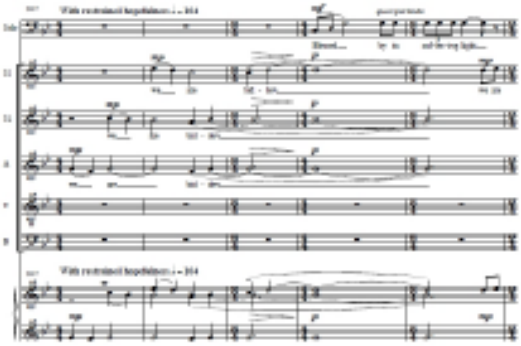
> *I represent the tragedy of the Jewish people.*

Nelly Sachs died in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1970.

Nelly Sachs, 1910. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Nelly Sachs, 1946. Courtesy Nobel Foundation.

Image: Concept sketch for Nelly Sachs illustration by Julia Guevara, 2021.



World, do not ask those snatched from death

by Nelly Sachs, "O The Chimneys," 1966, translation copyright 1970.

> *World, do not ask those snatched*
> *from death*
>
> *where they are going,*
>
> *they are always going to their*
> *graves.*
>
> *The pavements of the foreign city*
>
> *were not laid for the music of fugitive*
> *footsteps--*
>
> *The windows of the houses that*
> *reflect a lifetime*
>
> *of shifting tables heaped with gifts*
> *from a picture-book*
>
> *heaven--*
>
> *were not cut for eyes*
>
> *which drank terror at its source.*
>
> *World, a strong iron has cauterized*
> *the wrinkle of their*

smile;

they would like to come to you

because of your beauty,

but for the homeless all ways wither

like cut flowers –

But we have found a friend

in exile: the evening sun.

Blessed by its suffering light

we are bidden to come to it with our sorrow

which walks beside us:

A psalm of night.

Image: Excerpt from sheet music for "Fugitive Footsteps" by Laurence Sherr, based on "World, do not ask those snatched from death."

Flame Language and Fugitive Footsteps by Laurence Sherr

Laurence Sherr was first drawn to the poetry of Nelly Sachs in 2000 when he decided on a choral setting for his first Intentional Holocaust remembrance work.

I found Nelly Sachs. I really liked her work because it was specific if you knew her life circumstances, but it was also universal because while she references the Holocaust obliquely, she is also referring to the universal suffering of losing a loved one or the universal suffering of being a refugee and having to leave and go to a different land and culture.

Sherr chose Sachs' poem "World, do not ask those snatched from death" for his choral work, "Fugitive Footsteps." In it, the chorus performs a cappella, and Sherr uses the technique of text painting to communicate the meaning behind the words.

"Flame Language," based on Sachs' poem "The Candle That I Have Lit for You," was written in 2007 and 2008 for mezzo-soprano or baritone and chamber orchestra or chamber ensemble. In discussing the relationship between the vocal music and the instrumental music in the piece, Sherr said,

The singer sings, but after each section with a singer, there is instrumental music. Instrumental music is meant as a reflection, as a way to delve into the meaning of the poetry.

Sherr also reflected on the importance of using English-language translations of Sachs' poetry in his works:

> *I used English translations because it was important to me for the words to be intelligible. A crucial approach for me is to try to make as much as possible the words intelligible, understandable so that the audience listening can actually hear and understand the words, because the words are the crucial part.*

Image: "Fugitive Footsteps," Kieran Raynor, baritone, Cantoris Choir, Thomas Nilon, conductor Wellington, New Zealand, 2014. Courtesy Laurence Sherr

The Secret Exit by Lori Laitman

In 2017, Lori Laitman was commissioned by the University of Alabama at Birmingham to write "The Secret Exit" for soprano Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk and clarinetist Denise Gainey. Based on three poems by Nelly Sachs, the song cycle reflects on themes of life and death.

In a 2021 interview with Sheena Ramirez, Laitman said,

> *Kristine and I consulted quite a bit about which poems to choose, eventually settling on three poems that reflected on life and death. The first one in particular was longer and more complex in language and structure than poems I typically set and presented a challenge.*

Laitman also reflected that her favorite moments in the songs involved the interplay between the clarinet and the voice, and how that related to themes in the poetry.

Image: Recording cover for "The Secret Exit" by Kristine Hurst-Wajszczuk and Denise Gainey, world premier, FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018. Courtesy Temple Emanu-El (Birmingham, Alabama)

Engage

Watch Laurence Sherr's "Flame Language."

Listen to "The Secret Exit" by Lori Laitman:

Watch "Fugitive Footsteps" by Laurence Sherr:

After watching the videos, consider the following questions:

1. How do you feel that the solo voice, instruments, chamber orchestra, and chorus contribute differently to the interpretation of Sachs' poetry?
2. What themes in Sachs' poetry come out through the music?
3. How might you choose to interpret poetry by Nelly Sachs?

Share your answers here.

Image: Google Doodle for Nelly Sachs' 127th birthday December 10, 2018. Courtesy Google.com

Conclusion

Lasting Language

Many of the musical compositions featured in this exhibit were commissioned by Music of Remembrance which began in 1998 with a mission to remember the Holocaust through music and has since extended its mission to honor "those of all backgrounds who found the strength to create even in the face of persecution, and those who had the courage to speak out against cruelty."

Such musical commissions literally re-present the voices of those who experienced the Holocaust, amplifying the emotional impact of their words and leaving new impressions on audience members.

But they are not the only way to represent these voices and perpetuate their memory. Artwork, like the illustrations on view in this exhibit, drama, animation, collaborative storytelling, and sharing on social media are all ways to keep memory alive.

The Museum of History and Holocaust Education emphasizes the importance of meeting history face to face. But what will you do once you meet that history? How will you share it with others?

These new works bridge generations. They focus fresh creative energies on the vital lessons of the Holocaust for whole new generations.

– Music of Remembrance founder Mina Miller in Gigi Yellen's article "The Arts: Memory and Music," *Hadassah Magazine*, July 2012.

Image: Mina Miller, Courtesy Music of Remembrance

Engage

After experiencing *Words, Music, Memory (Re)presenting Voices of the Holocaust*, we invite you to consider the following activities based on the writers featured in the exhibit. Be creative and feel free to share your works with us on Twitter or Facebook @KSUMHHE.

Franta Bass

Illustration by Julia [illegible]


Draw a picture of something special to you.
Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger


Write song lyrics that comfort someone in fear.
Anne Frank


Write a journal entry about your family or group of friends.
Eva Heyman


Make a video about an activity that makes you happy.
Krystyna Zywulska
Write a dramatic scene poking fun at something you find ridiculous.
Shmerke Kaczerginski

Illustration by Martha Hemingway

Create a playlist of your favorite songs or make a scrapbook with poems by your favorite writers.

Nelly Sachs

Illustration by Julia Quenzer

Write a poem about something you've had to leave behind.

Elie Wiesel

Illustration by Martha Hemingway

Write a story about someone you think should be remembered.

We hope that you will consider uploading your work at the end of this evaluation form tool

Image: Page from diary of Vincent Cornelius Reed, ca. 1918. Courtesy Vincent Cornelius Reed Collection, Veterans History Project, Library of Congress

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Exhibit Credits
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Artists: Julia Guevara and Martha Hemingway
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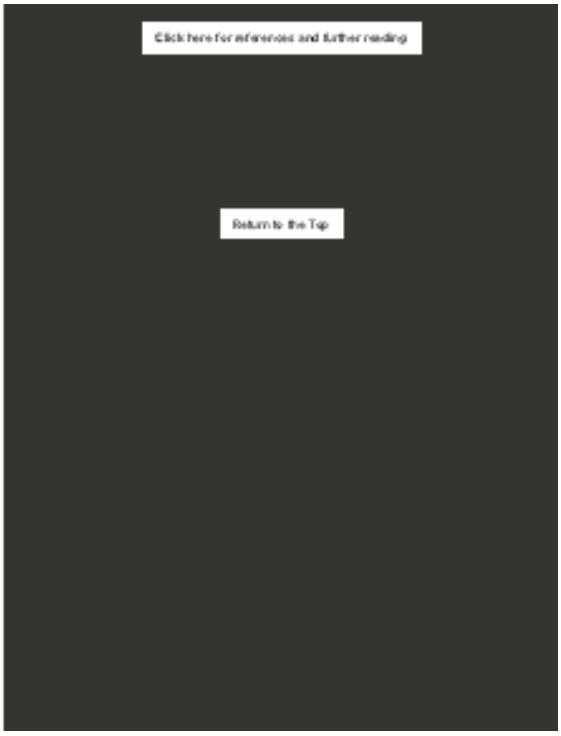
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