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The art songs of Zachary Wadsworth: A guide to style performance, and literature

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The Art Songs of Zachary Wadsworth: A Guide to Style, Performance, and Literature

Jordan Robert Davidson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

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Dedication

To my beautiful wife, Elizabeth Ashley, and daughter, Emmeline Avery, for all the sacrifice and development through this process. I love you.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the composer, Zachary Wadsworth. His music has been enlightening, inspiring, and a pleasure to study.

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Finally, I can’t even begin to express my gratitude for my wife, Elizabeth. Her encouragement and support to embark on this academic journey were selfless acts of love and respect for which I have no words. I could not have managed the solitary nature of this journey had you not been there for me, waiting for this moment to arrive. You are a wonderful mother, an incredible wife, and most importantly, my best friend. Thank you for all your love and support throughout this process.
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Abstract

This Doctor of Musical Arts Document explores the role Zachary Wadsworth plays in the development of American Art Song. Born in 1983, composer Zachary Wadsworth has written over forty songs. His music is complex and challenging, with influences from all musical eras, with much of his work focusing on the techniques and sounds of twentieth-century modernism. Wadsworth’s choice of poetry focuses on English literature from many different musical eras, embracing a broad range of themes, subjects, and emotions.

Following a brief biography of Wadsworth’s early life and career, the document surveys Wadsworth’s contributions to contemporary American art song regarding his use of text and how it informs his compositional process, and style. This study will also analyze how Wadsworth incorporates his compositional influences in his writing and personal style. This thesis also explores the use of text expression in regards to rhythm, both melodically and harmonically, melody, motivic accompaniment, and centricity as compositional devices that underpin the formal foundation of his compositions. While his music can be characterized as atonal, Wadsworth suggests pitch centers as a foundation that may be unnoticeable to most singers. This document includes an annotated catalog of forty-five works for solo voice and various accompanying instruments. The annotated catalog provides support in music analysis, text analysis, and non-standard score indications, and includes an outline of Wadsworth’s interpretive preferences. The annotated catalog also provides essential information about each piece concerning levels of difficulty and accessibility for singers, teachers, pianists, and coaches.
The research was conducted through interviews with Wadsworth. In addition to preparing, coaching, and performing many of these works, the remaining songs were examined through both professional and unpublished recordings. Several prominent performers of Wadsworth’s vocal music provided live interviews. This study serves as a basis for further research into Wadsworth’s life and works, and for successful performances of his songs.
Introduction

I first met Zachary Wadsworth (1983) the summer of 2013 when I was entering the first year of my master’s degree at James Madison University, in Harrisonburg, Virginia. I had been hired to sing in the chorus at the Staunton Music Festival in Staunton, Virginia, for a performance of the Faure Requiem. Little did I know; Zachary Wadsworth was the tenor singing beside me during the rehearsals and performance. I subsequently discovered the art songs of Zachary Wadsworth through my voice professor at James Madison University, Kevin McMillan, who has been working with Wadsworth since he started his residency at the Staunton Music Festival. Throughout my master’s and doctoral studies, I continued to be exposed to Wadsworth’s compositions, as Kevin McMillan would bring his works up in lessons and his students would frequently perform them.

When I heard “Rockaby, lullaby” from Three Lullabies for the first time, I was immediately intrigued. The unsettling accompaniment under the rocking melody caught my attention, and I set out looking for more of Wadsworth’s music. It was then that I discovered his song cycle, for nothing lesse than thee. The angular, yet lyrical ensemble setting, the intriguing harmonies, and the beautiful “archaic” poetry gave me immense satisfaction. The more I immersed myself in Wadsworth’s unique compositional oeuvre, the more intrigued I became with the enormity of the output from someone so young. I decided that this up-and-coming and fascinating composer would be the primary focus of my doctoral studies for the next year and a half.

While I was very grateful for the personal connection I had with Wadsworth, I wondered how, due to his emergent status on the compositional scene, others would
manage to access this unique repertoire. As I became more familiar with Wadsworth’s massive song output, I was saddened to know that so many singers who are looking for challenging music with interesting texts might never find his scores. After researching extensively, I realized that the only website from which you could buy his music was his own website, zacharywadsworth.com, and the only “written” information available was in the form of two interviews from two organizations about commissioned works. These experiences culminated in my desire to produce comprehensive, authoritative, and helpful information on Zachary Wadsworth and his compositions for solo voice. It is my hope that this study will aid singers, pianists, coaches, and teachers in their own exploration of Wadsworth’s songs, and that it will inspire further promotion and performance of his works.
Chapter One

A Biography

Zachary Wadsworth was born on July 10, 1983, in Richmond, Virginia to Mary Ellen and Robert Wadsworth. The youngest of two children, Wadsworth has one older sister, Jennifer (Wadsworth) Love. Music played a prominent role in Wadsworth’s life growing up. Both of his parents were involved in music. His mother, while working as a nurse and administrative assistant, sang in the Richmond Symphony Chorus, while his father’s musical training began at the age of seven. Throughout Robert’s life, he received musical instruction on piano, cello, guitar, and pipe organ and maintained a passion for music while employed as a psychologist. In 1998, Robert began playing the hammered dulcimer. With almost twenty years of experience, the hammered dulcimer has become Robert Wadsworth’s instrument of choice. Now retired, Robert continues to perform and teach in Chesterfield County in central Virginia.

From a very early age, Zachary was singing. He participated in choirs all throughout his public-school career and said, “I was really singing first.”\(^1\) One experience that Zachary had, and that he describes as ‘the moment he became a composer,’ was as an eleven-year-old boy in 1994. Zachary, along with his father and sister, went to the annual Richmond Symphony Concert for kids called Kicked Back Classics. This concert was family-oriented so that young children could experience, for the first time, classical music in a safe and fun space. At the beginning of the concert, an announcer asked everyone to look in their program for a little red ticket; Zachary’s father’s program contained that ticket. Robert quickly shoved the ticket into Zachary’s program, and Zachary was invited

\(^{1}\) Zachary Wadsworth, interview by author, Staunton, VA, August 19, 2016.
to the stage along with several other children from the audience. Zachary was given a stage seat in the middle of the violin section, and the orchestra began to play Symphony No. 5 by Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1827). Even though he had heard this work many times before, the sounds and feelings of this experience intrigued him.

...It was like I was hearing it for the first time because I was seeing it; I was inside of the orchestra. It was an amazing experience. These violin bows moving together, it is like a school of fish or a flock of birds, it’s an amazing thing to see; from inside, and being totally surrounded by the music, it’s an amazing experience. And what it was showing me, which I hadn’t experienced before as an eleven-year-old, was these emotions that I had no words to express. These emotions that would, in fact, be cheapened by words...How can we put that music [Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony] into words? It is communicating emotions that all of us feel, but that none of us can verbally describe; partly, because we all experience them differently. Above all the day-to-day clutter, we have the ability to connect with one another on a profound emotional level, and we do not even need words to do it.²

After the concert, Wadsworth remembered questioning how Beethoven made him feel that way and asked the life-changing question, “How could I make other people feel that way? How could I move people without using words?”³

Zachary’s passion and drive for music and composition became apparent the following year when he began his formal musical training on the piano with Suzanne Malkemus. Zachary states that the roots of his musical intuition and training stem from Malkemus’ instruction to write everything down. Whether it be simple melodies or improvised accompaniments, piano lessons were imperative to his steps towards writing music. Some of the first ever compositions Zachary composed were what he called “New

² Wadsworth, interview.
³ Ibid.
Age⁴ pieces, as per the style of pianist Jim Brickman (1961).⁵ As Zachary progressed as a pianist, Beethoven sonatas, Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) piano solos, and Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) suites became normal exercises and training works; Wadsworth started composing in a neo-classic and neo-romantic idiom. His training with Malkemus ended at the age of sixteen when she decided that her teaching was not challenging or serious enough for Zachary.⁶ Within a month, he began studying in the city of Richmond at the Virginia Commonwealth University with faculty piano instructor, Melissa Marrion.

She pushed me hard to learn a lot of repertoire and to always sing through and intimately know all my music. She always wanted me to know theory, to be able to sing any of the lines in the piano music that I played and to bring a real sense of connection and expressivity to all music, new and old. She also helped me get into Tanglewood, which had a huge effect on me as a composer and musician.⁷

In high school, Wadsworth began seeking opportunities to study music outside of his normal lesson and school activities. After watching a PBS special on Leonard Bernstein’s (1918-1990) time at Tanglewood Music Festival, Zachary became interested in the festival and submitted what he called a “Mahler-like” string quartet with his application. He thus found himself in Massachusetts in the summer of 2000, studying at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. While there, Wadsworth’s musical vocabulary expanded, and the music of the modern world began seeping into his writing style. In an interview, he joked around saying, “That was really where the switch was turned on of ‘oh, there’s this thing called modern music, and there has been music written

⁴ Wadsworth, interview.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Zachary Wadsworth, e-mail message to composer, January 3, 2016.

⁷ Ibid.
since 1900, and it is worth listening to’ or some of it makes me angry, and some of it really catches my fancy.”8 Zachary began listening to composers like Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), whose music he first experienced while in the audience at his mother’s performance of Britten’s War Requiem with the Richmond Symphony Chorus. Zachary recalls his obsession with Britten and Bernstein through Bernstein’s The Final Concert album, in which he conducted the “Moonlight Interlude” from Britten’s opera, Peter Grimes. “I was falling for [Benjamin] Britten while getting through Tanglewood, [and was] expose[d] to a lot of really wild and different stuff. That was the beginning of steering me on a path that would lead me to conservatory.”9

At this point, Wadsworth started writing in a more “angular, Bartok style,”10 and began introducing atonality into his work. Wadsworth noted that this was an exciting time in his life because he started experimenting with new musical techniques, including twelve-tone serialism. One of the first works he considers “his music,”11 and the composition that eventually helped him gain acceptance into the Eastman School of Music, was a sonata for violin and piano. Between his first and second year at Eastman, Zachary participated in the composition studies program at the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado under the tutelage of Sidney Hodkinson (1934), an American composer. As a composition major with a concentration in piano, Zachary excelled in academics, graduating with honors, and continued to strengthen his musical voice.

8 Wadsworth, interview.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.
While at Eastman, Wadsworth’s composition professor Robert Morris (1943) was a vital influence in terms of assisting him in discovering and synthesizing his individual compositional identity. This discovery process was focused in the answering of six fundamental questions; Who am I? What am I doing? Is it ok what I’m doing? Can I be myself? Can I write music that is pretty? Is it bad that I’m doing that?

I think the most important moment...in my undergrad, was [when the] Eastman [community] was really big into minimalism. A lot of the students were performing Steve Reich, Phillip Glass, John Adams, Arvo Pärt…and so there was a lot of that kind of music around, and I really started falling for Steve Reich and his Desert Music, and tackling these pieces for voices and ensemble. I love those pieces to this day, but especially then, I was obsessed. I went into this lesson with Robert Morris…on an aesthetic and stylistic front he and I couldn’t be more different. However, as a teacher, he was so open-minded and so interested in just improving my style and not imposing his, which is such an important thing for a composition teacher to do. I went to him one day and said, ‘I love the music of Steve Reich, and I don’t understand why. If I love it that much, why am I not writing minimalist music? Obviously, because I love it so much I should be writing it, but I’ve tried, and it doesn’t work. I don’t seem to be able to write good minimalist music.’ And I just remember he said, ‘Do you like dogs?’ and I said ‘yes,’ and he said, ‘Do you want to be a dog?’ And that cleared it up, I was like ‘ok,’ I can like a lot of different music, and I do not have to be any of it. So that was a great moment; those are the things that stick with you as a composer. It’s ridiculous because it is never the moments where a composer will say, ‘Oh, shouldn’t that be a C-sharp or whatever, because you know it shouldn’t, it’s more of the broad moments where you are trying to construct a narrative for yourself as a composer, which we all do. How does this fit into my sense of self or what the music is doing?’ To have someone free you from having a whole mid-20s crisis is a great interception. He saved me a lot of times.

Graduating from Eastman with a growing confidence in his compositional ‘voice,’ Wadsworth earned his Masters of Music degree in music composition from Yale. During his two years in Connecticut, Wadsworth studied with composer Martin Bresnick (1946) and sang with the Yale Schola Cantorum under the direction of Simon Carrington.

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12 Wadsworth, interview.

13 Ibid.
one of the original King’s Singers. This internationally renowned chamber choir performs sacred music from the sixteenth-century to the present day around the world and is sponsored by the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. Through the experience of performing and working with the premiere ensemble, Wadsworth became interested in counterpoint and began experimenting with intricate textures.

One of the most memorable works to come out of his time at Yale was his song for soprano and piano, *deep inside the woods* (2006), with poetry by Ivy Wang, a fellow student at Yale University, and with whom he took a class on collaboration. “The class paired poets with composers so that they could collaborate to write new songs together.” While taking these rigorous classes, Wadsworth made money singing in paid choirs at Yale. However, due to his academic and work responsibilities, his compositional output was not as large as some semesters at Eastman.

Graduating from Yale in 2007, Wadsworth immediately began his Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. At Cornell, Wadsworth began to write more and more art songs. “My advisor, Steven Stucky (1949-2016), encouraged me to embrace vocal music, as he seemed to have thought that I had a talent for it, and he knew that there weren't many serious composers my age writing in this area.” Works such as *Three Lullabies*, *La Corona*, and *Nativity* were some of the works written during his three-year period at Cornell. *Pictures of the Floating World*, among the many, was commissioned by the Lotte Lehmann Foundation as the first-prize winner of the 2007 ASCAP/Lotte Lehmann Foundation Art Song Competition.

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14 Wadsworth, interview.

15 Ibid.
Wadsworth remained at Cornell until December 2010. Before the 2011-2012 academic school year, Wadsworth joined the Emerging Composers program at the Staunton Music Festival in Staunton, Virginia, about two hours west of Richmond. His experience and achievements there proved to be great as two years later he was invited back as a Composer-in-Residence. Since then, he has returned many times, both performing and having his commissioned works performed at the festival by professional musicians from all over the world.

In fall 2011, Wadsworth taught music courses at the University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada in music theory, ear training, orchestration, and several music appreciation classes for non-music-majors. While teaching, Wadsworth completed his doctoral dissertation, titled, “Britten's Fixed Triads: Tonal Stasis and Arpeggiation in Three of His Operas.” In his dissertation, “Wadsworth approaches the music of Benjamin Britten through a new analytical framework, describing and attempting to relate ignored instances of tonal, harmonic, and contrapuntal stasis in his works. Using Arvo Pärt’s Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten (1980) as a point of entry into Britten’s employment of stasis, the analysis then identifies instances of stasis in three of his operas: Peter Grimes (1945), Albert Herring (1947), and Gloriana (1953).”

Other accolades during Wadsworth’s graduate years include the Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2007), three Morton Gould Young Composer Awards from ASCAP (2002, 2007, 2008), a one-act opera, Venus and Adonis presented by Long Leaf Opera (2007), the Pacific Chorale (2007), the 2007 Boston Choral Ensemble Composition Award, the King James Bible Composition Award

(2011), the Magnificat Project Composition Award in 2012, and The Esoterics' 2012 Polyphonos Choral Composition Competition.

By the beginning of 2012, Wadsworth’s music was becoming more known internationally. Notable performance venues include the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., Takinogawa Hall in Tokyo, and Westminster Abbey in London. His works were performed in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles, and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Not only was 2012 a big year for Wadsworth, in terms of composition, he also exchanged vows and married Tim Pyper, an organist from Toronto, Ontario whom Wadsworth had met in 2001 at the Eastman School of Music.

During the 2012-13 season, Wadsworth was a recipient of the Douglas Moore Fellowship for American Opera, which placed him in residence throughout North America at performance venues like the Metropolitan Opera, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, Minnesota Opera, Central City Opera Theater, and the Seattle Opera. At these venues, Wadsworth observed how the companies worked and watched them put together new opera productions. The 2014 season opened many doors for the composer, including his Carnegie Hall debut in March with a performance of his choral work, To the Roaring Wind. Along with this debut, his first major work for chorus and orchestra, The Far West, was premiered in November at the Cathedral Church of the Redeemer in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. In 2015, he began teaching as an Assistant Professor at Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Currently, at Williams College, Wadsworth teaches composition classes, music theory classes, twentieth-century music history classes, and media studies courses.
Chapter Two

The Expression of Text through Composition Style

One would have little argument with the fact that the text is paramount in the art song composition process. “When a composer sets a poem to music, the words acquire another format. They are encased in musical sound, which adds its own pitch, rhythm, and textures to those the poem already possesses.”17 While art song expresses facets of art, poetry, and music, the texts are the foundation upon which the music is derived. Wadsworth agrees with this notion,

So, the text is always first. It must be first. I can't even conceive of an accompaniment or the harmonic world until I know what the text is all about. Because even if I am looking for a poem about love; where does the poem begin, what mood is at the beginning of the poem? So, I must have the text first.18

This chapter will explore Wadsworth’s process of both selecting texts and setting texts, focusing specifically on his creation rhythmic text settings and accompaniments as well as his creative use of melody, motive, and centricity as they relate to expressing the text.

Text Selection Process

In some cases, the process of finding a text for Wadsworth’s songs took longer than the actual writing of the music itself. “Finding the text can take as short as four months to as long as eight months…Once the text is there, I know what to do...If it is a


18 Wadsworth, interview.
piece I am compiling a bunch of different texts to try to create a story that didn’t exist before, [that] takes a lot of time.”

When selecting texts, Wadsworth is open to diverse styles of writing, gravitating to works that have an initial impact on him as a reader. As someone who loves to read poetry and discover new poems, Wadsworth understands how to unearth previously unknown poems using contemporary resources. He uses online sources, including Google Books as well as hard copies of anthologies. The poets whose texts were used for some of his most prized works, Amy Lowell (1874-1925) and John Donne (1572-1631), were found when stumbling through online anthologies and family-owned poetry books.

An example of unfamiliar texts can be seen in Wadsworth’s *for nothing lesse than thee*, with poetry by John Donne. During the search process for this composition, Wadsworth stumbled upon the texts in one of his mother’s poetry books back home in Richmond, Virginia.

I had no real plan to write a song cycle when I opened that anthology of Donne's poems, but when I saw the first lines of ‘The Legacie,’ I knew I wanted to write a piece with them. From there, it was just a matter of days before the three poems were selected and ordered… [The songs] provided the opportunity to explore different emotions about love - anger, excitement, loss, etc. These were all moods that I was experiencing at the time.

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19 Zachary Wadsworth, e-mail message to author, March 2, 2017.

20 Wadsworth, interview.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.
Wadsworth selected these poems from the Renaissance poet’s writings about love. In these three works, Wadsworth explores the ideas of love’s desires; whether it be the presence of love, the need of love, or the reflection of a lost love. All three works come together to create an overarching set that takes the audience on a journey through the processes of love throughout a lifetime.

Parallel to his investigation of unknown texts, Wadsworth is also fascinated by discovering new poets. In his catalog, one will not find iconic poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) or James Agee (1909-1955). These frequently-set texts are of little interest to Wadsworth, for a realistic reason.

I am not so interested in setting poems that have been set well before, and there are instances where I have done that. I think of doing another setting of *Sure on the Shining Night*, but I ask myself, ‘Why would I do that? I would I put myself in direct competition with Barber when all I am thinking about the whole time is Barber. Why would I do that?’

Although Wadsworth typically strays away from iconic poems, nonetheless, if compelled by a well-known text, he will set it to music. In fact, Wadsworth used Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* sonnet for his first opera as well as a selection from his *Three Lullabies* song cycle. His philosophy is that the most important aspect of a song is what the music can do for the poem and how they interact with one another. An outstanding quality of his music is that it remains faithful to the texts while at the same time enhancing their intrinsic messages. For Wadsworth, the music functions in servitude of

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24 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
the text. "I am sort of agnostic; I don't care where they came from as long as the poetry works and is in English."25

**Rhythmic Text Setting and Accompaniment**

Establishing textual rhythm begins after determining the poetic and musical form. Once Wadsworth understands the material and content, he starts searching for pivotal points in the text and begins to form a musical structure. “I look first for the pivotal words – often, it's a single word or phrase that will be a point of climax, of textural change, etc.”26 Wadsworth then maps out the structural components of the text, deciding what musical forms or structures would best enhance the poem. Wadsworth confessed that "If a poem has internal repetition, that is great, [that] means it provides structure for me in the song."27

As Wadsworth reads through a poem, he listens for natural speech rhythms and notes where musical rhythms such as triplets, duplets, or dotted rhythms would make sense. To note rhythms that work, Wadsworth will write them in next to the poem and will highlight the text where those rhythms can or may recur. Wadsworth never intends to create a replica of natural speech patterns.28 Wadsworth analyses how a character might ‘deliver’ the words, rather than how a reader might simply ‘recite’ them. Two of his favorite settings of text come from Benjamin Britten operas, “Now until the break of

25 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.

26 Ibid.

27 Wadsworth, interview.

28 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
day” from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the opening of Benjamin Britten’s *Peter Grimes*. In both cases, natural speech is not the primary focus, rather how the development of the characters is reflected in the rhythms of the character’s text.

[Britten] manages to perfectly paint the different characters' moods through their speech inflection. I particularly love the way he sets the oath, where Hobson sings "I swear by Almighty God" with military precision, and then Grimes echoes him in a way that suggests his traumatized state.²⁹

Britten uses the rhythms in this section to immediately set the mood for both Hobson and Peter. Hobson’s text rhythm is patter-like and features fast eighth-note and sixteenth-note figures that suggest a stately and enunciated swearing in of the truth before the witness, Peter Grimes is brought to the stand to testify. Peter’s rhythms suggest a more nervous, straightforward recitation as he repeats Hobson’s words with a static, augmented note values.

²⁹ Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
Figure 1. Mm. 22-32 from the opening of Britten’s *Peter Grimes*.\(^{30}\)

The influence of Britten’s thoughtful rhythmic characterization can be seen in Wadsworth’s *for nothing lesse than thee*. The text of the third song, “The Dreame,” expresses the character’s state of mind and emotions.

```
For nothing lesse than thee  
Would I have broke this happy dreame,  
It was a theame for reason,  
Much too strong for Phantasie,  
Therefore thou wak’dst me wisely;
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Yet My Dreame thou brok’st not,  
But continued’st it. 

In this text, the character has woken from a dream about his lover to find his lover in the room with him. The rhythms in Figure 2 suggest a bit of a confused half-woken state as if startled by his lover, through the use of dotted figures and syncopated rhythms. Considering solely the rhythmic structure of this work, the text flows naturally for the singer. When simply speaking the text, as if you were the character, triplets, duplets, or dotted note rhythms may seem natural when speaking in a fantastical state, similar to the character. When asked about setting a text exactly as one would speak it, Wadsworth replied, “I'm never aiming for absolute realism in my text setting, but rather for an expressive musical reflection of the rhythms of ‘normal’ speech.”

![Figure 2. Mm. 14-20 of “The Dreame” from Wadsworth’s for nothing lesse than thee.]


32 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.

33 Wadsworth, for nothing lesse than thee, 15-16.
Accented words can be found throughout Figure 2, i.e. *nothing, dreame, theame, reason, strong, phantasie, wak’d’st, continued’st*, that suggest phrase structure. Wadsworth doesn't necessarily separate the text into even meters; within seven bars, he features four meter shifts. Wadsworth, in a similar style to Britten, creates organic phrases that are not only rhythmically satisfying in terms of recitation, but also highlight the emotion and mood of the character or song.

Another example of Wadsworth’s careful consideration for rhythmic text setting is in his piece *After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok*, with poetry by Amy Lowell. In this work, the character is reflecting on his decision to kill another man because of a woman. The exasperation in the singer’s spoken voice lends itself well to what the text is trying to convey. The text recitation provides the character with a driving, fanciful speech pattern. The text’s rhythms seem nervous, agitated, and unsteady between interjections of light piano accompaniment. Wadsworth creates the text’s rhythmic pattern by using various versions of the standard waltz rhythm which reference the title of the work. In Figure 3, we see several versions of the waltz rhythm in the voice; the standard three eighth notes with an accent on one, dotted eighth notes and sixteenth notes in various patterns also reflect a spontaneous waltz mood.
Figure 3. Mm. 16-31 from Wadsworth’s *After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok.*

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Text painting is a preferred compositional device for Wadsworth in terms of emphasizing and expressing song lyrics. Wadsworth incorporates text painting in his first song of *Pictures of the Floating World*, “The Garden by Moonlight,” when in the poem, a cat shakes a branch causing a leaf to fall from the tree and break the still water below. The musical depiction of the text involves a single melodic line given the marking of “cantabile” as it descends downward, evocative of a falling leaf. The leaves are imagined through broken chords descending as if leaves were falling off a tree. Leaves falling in spontaneous fashion from the branch are notated with dotted eighth notes and sixteenth note ties.

![Figure 4. Mm. 48-50 of “The Garden by Moonlight” from Wadsworth’s *Pictures of the Floating World*.](image)

Creating this moment in the piece allows for the text to be brought to the forefront of the work while the music sets the text’s tone. This indicates that Wadsworth can adapt and connect to the piece on a more intimate level as he allows the text to speak for itself. He states, “Whenever a composer uses rhythm in a way that deepens a musical gesture, I'm impressed.”

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35 Wadsworth, interview.
Wadsworth is greatly influenced by the rhythmic integrity of several composers spanning several historical eras, specifically Steve Reich (1936), Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), Edgard Varèse (1883-1965), Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992), as well as Britten. Among his many art songs, and usually based on the text, Wadsworth sometimes uses rhythms to evoke a specific period. “I like when rhythm can evoke the feeling of a specific time-period. Sometimes, for example, the quickest way to make music sound more like ‘Renaissance’ music or ‘Baroque’ music is to use a repeating rhythm taken from that period.”36 This trait can be best seen in *Eurydice*, a work for soprano, two violas, and two cellos. In this work, Wadsworth uses Renaissance dance rhythms with the ostinato rhythm in the lower part and the higher parts featuring similar rhythms that imitate one another.

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36 Wadsworth, interview.
Figure 5. Mm. 262-266 of “III. Saffron from the fringe of the earth” from Wadsworth’s *Eurydice*.\(^{37}\)

Melody

Each melody of Wadsworth’s is well thought-out and serves a much grander purpose than what is simply on the page. When composing melodies, Wadsworth is solely focused on ameliorating what the text itself has already presented. "Whatever the text seems to demand...I'm always looking to reflect, amplify, or (at times) complicate the text's meaning with the melodies that I write. Every text is different, so my approach to melody is always changing."\(^{38}\) This is one of the most genuine aspects of Wadsworth as a composer; writing what he believes the text is telling him to do, a truly organic way of


\(^{38}\) Wadsworth, interview.
composing music. Because of this, Wadsworth’s melodic intuition is a bit more obscure and pushes the boundaries of tonal melody, sometimes in a jarring and angular way.

With some melodic settings, Wadsworth uses visual signs that shape a text to form his melodies. In *Under the Night Forever Falling*, a song with text by the mystic poet Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), the poet uses the shape of an X as the text’s layout.

![Figure 6. Text from Dylan Thomas’ Vision and Prayer. Shape poem.](image)

This shape has significant meaning not only to the text’s content but also to how Wadsworth shapes the text throughout this composition. Dylan Thomas uses shape poetry to reinforce the meaning of the text, in this case, the days before Jesus’ crucifixion. “We are reminded by this [X shape] of traditional constructions of this letter as the shape of a

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naked man spanning the globe or the four corners of the earth, whose center is his navel.”

Figure 7. Representation of the letter X in Dylan Thomas’ Vision and Prayer.41

Wadsworth reimagines the symmetry of the X shape of the poem as a melodic palindrome.42 As the text comes together to meet at the word “Rock,” it expands out and finishes in the same syllabic structure it did when it began. A through-composed melody is heard throughout the first half of the text. At the word, “Rock,” the intersection of the X, Wadsworth uses the spoken voice to emphasize its importance. Following the central word, Wadsworth takes the melody heard in the first section and reverses it, creating a palindromic ending with the melody first heard at the beginning. The following figure illustrates the melodic contour of this palindrome.


41 Ibid.

42 Zachary Wilder, e-mail message to author, January 9, 2017.
Figure 8. Breakdown of the melodic palindrome in Wadsworth’s *Under the Night Forever Falling*.

In some cases, Wadsworth is looking for a straightforward, well-structured text that would focus on a simple, beautiful melody rather than an intricate, modernized interpretation of a poem. His solo song *Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love* features a melody that fully embraces the beautiful text with its long lyrical line in step-wise motion. The song remains in the key of E major throughout the entire piece. This gives the audience an opportunity to listen to the words without being distracted by dissonant harmonies and accompaniments, among other things.

Figure 9. Mm. 4-6 from Wadsworth’s *Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love*.43

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The melody remains the focal point, while the accompaniment encompasses the melody, lightly commenting on what is being said and sung in the text presentation.

**Motive**

Motives can be seen throughout Wadsworth’s work in the form of exact repetition and manipulation creating continuity within the piece and song cycle. Wadsworth introduces a set of character pieces directed towards children in *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*. Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953), the author of these short poems, is also used in Wadsworth’s songs for tenor and piano, *Cautionary Tales for Children*.

The first song in the set is titled, "The Whale." From the start, the piece is *forte* using the three lowest C’s on the piano. Immediately, under the voice, we get polychordal arpeggios that move in contrary motion both ending on D's. This motive represents harsh rolling waves as the whale is swimming through the water and the idea of catching it and “boiling his blubber for oil.”

![Figure 10. Mm. 1-3 of “The Whale” from Wadsworth’s *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*.](image)

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Structurally, Wadsworth uses these arpeggiated triads to move the work forward into the next section. Throughout the first main section, mm. 6-33, Wadsworth uses sequential material in each hand of the piano and creates a descending line with the arpeggiated triads and added sevenths. Figure 11 looks at three sequential measures, mm. 6, 10 and 12. The measures in between are repeats of the measures shown. Figure 11a shows an F major seventh in the left hand and D major seventh in the right as it sequences over an octave down, ending on the downbeat of measure 34 with a C.

Figure 11. Mm. 6 (a), 10 (b) and 12 (c) of “The Whale” from Wadsworth’s *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts.*

In “The Dodo,” Wadsworth creates a dull wander-like motive representing the long-gone existence of the Dodo bird. A simple ostinato line underpins the entire piece. The original, playful melody in the right hand is heard under a repeated ostinato in the left hand representing what the living Dodo once was.

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Figure 12. Mm. 1-4 of “The Dodo” from Wadsworth’s *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*.46

Starting at measure 6, in the right and left hand, we hear a secondary harmony emerging through the G driven ostinato. As the melody in the piano accompaniment wanders in the right hand, the secondary left hand accompaniment progresses along with the melodic line, changing the left hand intervals along the way. Structurally, this creates a miniature palindrome as the intervals of the left hand mirror each other. As the first verse ends, the first part of the palindrome is stated. Once the introduction of the second verse begins, the mirroring of the palindrome takes place.

Figure 13. Breakdown of mm. 6-21 of “The Dodo” from Wadsworth’s *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*.47

46 Ibid., 5.
The palindrome concludes along with the G driven ostinato at measure 24. The remaining measures feature a wandering pattern of major and minor chords with the right and left hand in contrary motion of each other.

Motives are exceptionally well-executed in Wadsworth’s work. As illustrated above, Wadsworth uses patterns of exact repetition and manipulation to provide further support to the text’s context and underlying message. One can consider Wadsworth’s use of motive to piece together songs and their related cycles.

While many of Wadsworth’s accompaniments reference the text or scene, in some cases, the harmony is meant to depict a mood rather than represent anything concrete. An example of this is found in Wadsworth’s After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok. While there are numerous examples of harmonies mimicking the text, the waltz rhythms, the measures in question feature an E-flat minor chord with a C diminished ninth chord at a mezzo piano dynamic marking. While one could assume it is about the heavy dead body referenced in the text, Wadsworth states that this polychord was simply meant to paint a quiet sense of unease.48


48 Wadsworth, e-mail message to composer.
Centricity

When approaching twenty-first-century music as a singer, one ought to understand underlying key schemes that inform performance of the repertoire. Pitch centers help in recognizing tonal areas upon which the singer is able to focus on while performing repertoire that may be outside of the tonal spectrum. Centricity is a central aspect in the shaping of Wadsworth’s musical language.

I’m very interested in centricity in my music. Almost all my music is preoccupied with creating a sense of ‘home’ and ‘away,’ especially in ways that don’t rely too heavily on traditional theory-class harmonic progressions (though, of course, there’s a place for those). ⁵⁰

Centricity focuses on a pitch-class and the way other pitch-classes work around it, creating the sense of a pitch center that may not be visually apparent. Key schemes come into play when looking at the overall structure of a piece or entire work and finding

Figure 14. Mm. 246-251 from Wadsworth’s After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok.⁴⁹

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⁵⁰ Zachary Wadsworth, e-mail message to composer, January 3, 2017.
relationships between the different pitch centers. Robin Wharton and Kris Shaffer’s online journal, *Open Music Theory* features common ways of finding centricity in music.

Centricity in post-tonal music can be established in a variety of ways, often simply by emphasis. When a pitch-class is regularly the lowest, highest, loudest, or longest in a passage, that pitch-class becomes something like a tonic.51

Early twentieth-century composers such as Béla Bartók (1881-1945), Igor Stravinsky, Witold Lutoslawski (1913-1994), György Ligeti (1923-2006), and Edgard Varèse composed in this centric musical language.

In the textbook, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, author Joseph Straus brings attention to the fact that tonal music is always centric, but centric music does not always have to be tonal. He states,

> Even without the resources of tonality, music can be organized around referential centers...In the absence of functional harmony and traditional voice leading, composers use a variety of contextual means of reinforcement. In the most general sense, notes that are stated frequently sustained at length, placed in a registral extreme, played loudly, and rhythmically or metrically stressed tend to have priority over notes that do not have those attributes.52

Wadsworth’s music incorporates centricity as they relate to key schemes in his music. These techniques create an underlying structure to the texts and inform the singer and accompanist in performance.

One of Wadsworth’s finest works of music for soprano and piano and winner of the Lotte Lehmann Song Competition, *Pictures of the Floating World*, embodies the


function of centricity in Wadsworth’s output. When creating a world of imagery using Amy Lowell’s Imagist texts, Wadsworth’s use of centricity ties each piece together.

At the start of “The Garden by Moonlight,” the accompaniment creates a dream-like atmosphere with extended harmonies broken by an ascending, arpeggiated line from A₂, the pitch center, to a minor third figure of D₅ and B₄ (Figure 15). To create an Impressionistic atmosphere, Wadsworth connects two chords together creating a polychordal effect: A minor and B diminished. The polychords change in mm. 1-3 from A minor and B diminished to an inverted F-sharp diminished and B diminished, keeping the F-natural in the right hand of the piano. Even though the polychords change to color the accompaniment throughout the A Section, mm. 5-12, A is still heard as the pitch center.
The transitional section that occurs at measure 20, surrounding B-flat, leads us into the B Section starting at measure 31. Here the pitch center is C. While reflecting the text (“Dreaming the opium dreams of its folded poppies”) throughout each transitional section, Wadsworth uses a “falling leaves” motive with major and minor thirds (see Figure 4). The descending arpeggios start on an E₅ and land on A₂ which is the pitch center for the return of the A Section. The motive used in Figure 4 leads into the created pitch center.

Wadsworth uses text painting as a tool to create pitch centers. The transition in and out of the B Section repeats, leading into the final A Section. In clever fashion, Wadsworth modifies the major and minor third descent enough to bring back the opening motive (Figure 15) as a pick-up into the postlude ending with a pitch center of A.

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Wadsworth sustains A as the pitch center throughout the following song, “Opal.” The extreme polarity in the range is evident in this piece and represents fire and ice. Wadsworth uses the entire range of the piano at the opening in mm 1. The right hand plays a C7, the highest key on an eighty-eight-key keyboard and A1, the lowest, mm. 16-18.

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54 Wadsworth, Pictures of the Floating World, 3.
Here, we see clear direction towards A. In the following section, starting at measure 19, the accompaniment reinforces A in the bass preceding the flourishing thirty-second note figures. A is also reinforced with G-sharp introduced in the main motive of the ascending thirty-second notes landing on a G-sharp and continuing the pattern.

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**Figure 17.** Mm. 16-19 of “Opal” from Wadsworth’s *Pictures of the Floating World*.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{56}\) Ibid.
Following the A Section, an interlude surrounds the dominant pitch center of E. The dominant pitch center works as a motion towards the resolution of pitch center A. The B Section begins with a new accompaniment pattern and a variation of the melodic line while maintaining A as its pitch center. Opal finishes the way it started with the thirty-second note motif ending on the highest and lowest notes of the piano.

In the next song, Wadsworth leaves pitch center A and moves to its upper neighbor of B-flat. The picture painted by the accompaniment again involves sixteenth-note figures creating the beautiful Impressionistic colors. In “September, 1918,” the melodic line reinforces the B-flat pitch center and creates a contour that resolves to B-flat at the end of the Section, measure 20. The new, quasi-recitative B Section with the prominent E-flat4 in the accompaniment create a segway into the Largamente section at measure 33 as the pitch center “modulates” and becomes B-natural.

Concurrent with centric elements, Wadsworth employs motivic continuity in “September, 1918.” It is important to point out the relationship to the first song, “The Garden by Moonlight.” Wadsworth uses a similar rhythmic and intervallic structure at the Largamente starting at measure 33 in Figure 19a. Through this section, the left hand is lilting back and forth from a B major chord to an inverted A minor chord. In the first song, Wadsworth uses C major and B-flat minor with open fifths along with a similar rhythmic pattern (Figure 19b). Creating these accompaniment relationships confirms Wadsworth’s use of motives to capture images and sounds that can connect songs throughout an entire song cycle.
Figure 19a. Mm. 30-37 of “September, 1918” from Wadsworth’s *Pictures of the Floating World*.

Figure 19b. Mm. 43-45 of “The Garden by Moonlight” from Wadsworth’s *Pictures of the Floating World*.

Wadsworth maintains this pattern through the *poco accelerando* in measure 41. The singer can center herself on B-natural, as the accompaniment provides a clear B major chord in the left hand, making what seem like daunting jumps in the voice much easier.

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58 Ibid., 3.
The "falling" motive as heard in measure 21 returns with a varied melodic line. The melody ends on the pitch E-flat as the accompaniment leads back into the starting pitch center of B-flat. Using intervallic inversional symmetry, the pitches come together in contrary motion concluding the song on a unison B-flat, this is called a contracting wedge.

This feature of Wadsworth’s is a fortunate benefit for a singer who may be unfamiliar with atonal tendencies in harmonic writing.

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"Storm-Racked" starts with a pitch center of B, having hinted at this pitch center in the previous song at the *Largamente* section. Wadsworth confesses, "It's worth noting that I added this song after the cycle's premiere. It seems like it needed an additional fast song, and I wanted to prepare the delicacy of ‘Aubade’ with the wildness of this poem."

The fast storm-like feel is certainly executed with the whirling sixteenth note septuplets. Wadsworth introduces a unique underlying structure to this piece that one may not see at first glance. The polychordal accompaniment found in section A (mm. 1-27) illustrates a descending line from B down to E in the lowest register of the left hand.

The section continues for thirteen measures centered around the pitch E. Wadsworth begins the descending line again in the final measures of the piece, this time starting on an E in the accompaniment. The right and left hands are separate this time through and work in contrary motion both making their way to E.

The final piece in this set, "A Dream in Wartime," suggests the key center of E and concludes in A where it first started. Throughout this section, the accompaniment uses F major and E-flat minor enharmonic equivalent, D-sharp. Vocally, this recitative section is not entirely demanding regarding tonal ambiguity. Each phrase is easily

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identifiable in finding the vocal pitch within the changing chords. It is important to note that while the harmonies change between E-flat, E and F, the centralized pitch remains E. The section ends on E, acting as a dominant pitch center leading into the “Funeral” section at m. 24.

**Table I.** Outline of the pitch centers in Wadsworth’s *Pictures of the Floating World*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Pitch Center</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I The Garden by Moonlight</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Opal</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III September, 1918</td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV Storm-Racked</td>
<td>B → E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Aubade</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI A Dream in Wartime</td>
<td>E → A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The outline featured in Table I is a key component when studying Wadsworth’s score. While these pitch centers may not be easily identifiable upon first reading, the progression throughout the cycle is quite traditional: I – ii – V – I. Tonal continuity is then discovered and developed throughout the piece. When studying a work, the singer and accompanist can plan climactic moments as they fit within the song cycle as well as separately within each piece. A pitch center outline can also inform the singer and accompanist of pitch accuracy. The pitch center gives the vocalist a musical audiation point to adhere to, ensuring that sung notes are performed in reference to and in tune with the internally audiated center.

In summary, in terms of his compositional process, the works of Wadsworth merge an intuitive sense of deep messages expressed in his poetic text sources with
considerable conscious thought in terms of the application of compositional devices. His careful analysis of the texts and clear creative methods lead to a cohesively constructed piece of music. Wadsworth’s strong sense of melody and organic, musical flow of the text allows his rhythms to be either imitative of natural speech or exaggerated in a way that furthers the character’s meaning and delivery of the text itself. Wadsworth’s rhythmic setting embraces Britten’s sensitivity to text setting.\textsuperscript{61} Rhythms are composed to create continuity between the text’s natural patterns and its accompanied music. Wadsworth uses key schemes as a way of creating large-scale structure and continuity. “I like the story-telling that can happen with designing key schemes…Having a clear plan for keys allows me to chart out meaningful pitch areas and pitch relationships to the piece.”\textsuperscript{62} Understanding Wadsworth’s use of centricity, in terms of pitch centers and key schemes, allows the ensemble to note overarching harmonic structures that not only tie an entire work together structurally but also integrate separate individual pieces as well. Within a song, the ensemble can pick out elements and pitch centers that represent specific emotive qualities which can then be carried into the next piece. Wadsworth encourages performers of his works to both explore these options and discover what works best for the performance at hand, while at the same time to sincerely embrace the text and what the musical message should offer.

\textsuperscript{61} Wadsworth, interview.

\textsuperscript{62} Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
Chapter Three

An Annotated Catalog

This annotated catalog organizes Wadsworth’s songs alphabetically according to song cycle. Published song cycles and solo art songs composed between 2002 and 2015 are included, totaling forty-five songs. These sets are: Abendländisches Lied, After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok, The Amber Hand, The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts, Cautionary Tales for Children, La Corona, Days of Innocence, deep inside the woods, for nothing lesse than thee, The Golden Key, Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love, Nativity, On the Death of Claude Debussy, Pictures of the Floating World, Present and Future, Three Lullabies, Under the Night Forever Falling, and What to Do When Lost in the Woods.

Songs published after 2015 have not been included in the annotated catalog, but are listed in Appendix IV. These forty-five songs represent the majority of Wadsworth’s art song output. They are some of his most frequently performed and readily available pieces. The inclusion of an interpretive guide for each song or song-cycle is inspired by Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature by Carol Kimball. This chapter is a resource for singers, pianists, coaches and teachers who strive for quality performance. This chapter provides comprehensive background information on these songs for use in program notes, repertoire selection, and performance preparation. The annotated catalog provides background information on each song; including the nature of the work, date of composition, source of score for analysis, publisher, voice, range, length, duration, meter, tempo, mood, subject, author of text, source of text, premiere, and musical and text incipit. The annotation further discusses the genesis of the song, details any changes made to the poetry and addresses performance variations in tempo. The annotated catalog
may explain any non-standard indications in the score, and identify performance difficulties. The guide is informed by extensive live and online conversations with the composer and several prominent professional musicians associated with Wadsworth’s songs. Explicit suggestions by Wadsworth are found within the chapter. These suggestions are based on recorded recordings, performance experience, and composer opinion.

In general, Wadsworth’s songs range in level of difficulty. A delineation of beginner, intermediate, and advanced repertoire has been given in Appendix III. The songs vary in range and dynamics, as well as timbres and dramatic colors. Interpreting Wadsworth’s choice of texts requires a comprehensive understanding of the text and acting skills; displaying extreme and real emotions. Complex rhythms, shifting meters, and challenging textures necessitate disciplined musicianship, and a strong sense of ensemble between singer, pianist and singer and ensemble are also essential in putting on a performance of Wadsworth's works. For the most part, these songs are intended to be performed by professional musicians. However, several are approachable for an advanced beginner. Audiences of all levels appreciate these pieces due to Wadsworth’s text setting, beautiful melodies, and intriguing harmonies.
**Name of the work:** *Abendländisches Lied*

**Date of composition:** July 2014

**Ensemble:** Baritone, oboe, B-flat clarinet, horn in F, and harp

**Publisher:** ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267

**Meter:** 2/2

**Tempo:** *Triste e poco agitato* HN = ca. 58, *Brutalmente* HN = ca. 80, *Dolce* HN = ca. 72, *Triste, libero* HN = ca. 52, *Intimo* HN = ca. 52

**Length:** 178 measures

**Vocal Range:** B-flat⁰ - A-flat⁴

**Tessitura:** B-flat³ - D-flat⁴

**Duration:** 6:30 minutes

**Theme:** War

**Subject:** Death

**Author of text:** Georg Trakl (1887-1914)

**Source of text:** *Sebastian im Traum* (1915). Public Domain

**Premiere:** Kevin McMillan, baritone; Sivan Magen, harp; Shawn Welk, oboe; Jared Davis, clarinet; Ian Zook, horn at Central United Methodist Church, Staunton, VA on August 23, 2014.

**Level of Difficulty:** Advanced

*Sebastian im Traum* features a collection of lyrical poetry by Austrian poet, Georg Trakl, published posthumously in 1915. His poems, initially set to be published in 1914, were postponed due to the outbreak of World War One. As a pharmacist, Trakl was sent into war as a medical official and would write war poetry evoking the sad political state of Europe at the time. *Abendländisches Lied* brings the images of struggles and despair into view as Trakl describes the men fighting in the First World War. “Men of war now, waking from wounds and dreams about stars.” Having dealt with depression, Trakl attempted to commit suicide but was stopped by close friends. He died of a cocaine overdose in Kraków, Austria-Hungary (now Poland) at the age of twenty-seven while hospitalized his depression. Known for his “strikingly visual style,” Trakl incorporated a dark, introspective personality in his poems developed from his education in French
symbolism. His style would further influence expressionist poets like Gottfried Benn and Else Lasker-Schüler.63

According to the composer, “...finding the larger phrase groupings is essential. For example, mm. 50-67 are full of a lot of different thoughts and images, but it's essential that a singer not try to sing each one individually. If I had composed different music for each image, it would have shattered the lyrical sense that I was striving toward. So, the singer needs to group ideas into one larger frame; like painting a still-life, instead of one painting of an apple, etc. [It is the singer’s job to] gain an intimate understanding of the text, and the music will fall into place. By embodying that emotional state (in a world of political upheaval), the music and the text will make so much more sense.”64

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64 Zachary Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
Name of the work: *After Hearing a Waltz by Bartók*
Date of composition: August 2013
Ensemble: Baritone and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: \( \frac{3}{8}, \frac{2}{4}, \frac{7}{16} \)
Tempo:
- Starting tentatively DQN= ca. 56, *Con moto* DQN= ca. 72, *Adagio* DQN= ca. 56, *Waltz* DQN= 56, *Con fuoco* DQN= ca. 69, *Lento* DQN= ca. 80
Length: 351 measures
Vocal Range: A\(_2\) - G-\(\text{flat}_4\)
Tessitura: G\(_3\) - D\(_4\)
Duration: 7 minutes
Theme: Murder
Subject: Demised love
Author of text: Amy Lowell (1874-1925).
Source of text: *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914). Public domain
Premiere: John Taylor Ward, baritone; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Central United Methodist Church, Staunton, VA on August 20, 2013.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced

*After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok* is an inverted refrain poem. An inverted refrain poem is set in an *ABABBA* rhyme scheme where the last two lines of each stanza are reversed. The waltz motives in this song, with the prominent interval of a minor 9th, represent the atmosphere set by the text (ex. “morbid, melting call of the dance”).

Common in earlier waltzes is a perfect octave rather than the added semitone. Wadsworth creates an uneasy atmosphere throughout the entire piece as the narrator describes the murder he commits during a ball. We get a sense, from the text, that the conflict is over a relationship with a woman, “And the wail of the violins stirred my brute anger with visions of her.”

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This work requires a baritone with a wide range and strong acting skills, as the narrator dramatically describes the killing of his victim and the emotional rollercoaster and hallucinations that come from it. Interpretively, it may help to think of this scene as the baritone version of the mad scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti.

The plot concerns the manipulations of Lucia’s brother, Enrico, who is trying to steal the inheritance of Ravenswood Castle from its rightful heir, Edgardo, who is Lucia’s lover. Over the course of the first two acts, Enrico arranges for Lucia to marry Arturo, a man whose wealth will ensure his overtaking of the castle. Enrico is aided by his friend Normanno, and by the chaplain Raimondo, in arranging their engagement and encouraging Lucia to renounce her vow to Edgardo. Because they forge a letter telling her that Edgardo has found another lover, she finally agrees to sign the marriage contract to Arturo. In the act of doing so, Edgardo bursts in and thinks she has betrayed him. He curses her and tramples on the ring that she gave him. Enrico challenges Edgardo to a duel in the graveyard the following morning. At the beginning of Act III, the wedding guests are celebrating when Raimondo bursts in and tells them of Arturo’s horrific murder by Lucia in their wedding bed. She stumbles upon them and descends into madness before surrendering to an untimely death.  

The delusional state of Lucia matches the intense delusion of the narrator in Wadsworth drama. His constant changes in emotion and thought are similar to the extreme character changes in that of Donizetti’s work. The recitative and spoken sections of the song are of interest as well. They must be connected to sung lines in a very smooth way. Practicing the recitation of the text it the best way to find this connection. Tempo markings should be taken literally, along with the dynamic markings, as these serve to create the atmosphere behind the text. It is important for the singer and pianist to be clear with the dotted eighth-note sixteenth-note waltz motive, emphasizing it each time it appears.

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66 Jessica Spafford, Program notes, “It’s a Mad, Mad World” (James Madison University, February 26, 2017).
Name of the work: *The Amber Hand*
Name of song: New Moon
Date of composition: March 2005
Ensemble: Soprano and four-hand piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{5}{4}$
Tempo Marking: *Adagio* $QN= ca.$ 76
Length: 39 measures
Vocal Range: F-sharp$^4$ - B$_5$
Tessitura: D$_5$ - F$^5$
Duration: 3 minutes
Mood: Mysterious
Subject: The first lunar stage
Author of text: D.H. Lawrence
Source of text: *Pansies* (1929)
Premiere: Annemarie Zmolek, soprano; Zachary Wadsworth and Nathaniel Adam, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on March 25, 2005.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced

Name of the work: *The Amber Hand*
Name of song: The moon is distant from the sea
Date of composition: March 2005
Ensemble: Soprano and four-hand piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{7}{8}$
Tempo: In free rhythm
Length: 25 measures
Vocal Range: A-flat$^3$ - G-flat$^5$
Tessitura: B-flat$^4$ - D$^5$
Duration: 2:15 minutes
Mood: Somber
Subject: The moon’s control
Author of text: Emily Dickinson
Source of text: “Part Three: Love XXI” from *Complete Poems* (1924)
Premiere: Annemarie Zmolek, soprano; Zachary Wadsworth and Nathaniel Adam, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on March 25, 2005.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced
Name of the work: *The Amber Hand*
Name of song: At a Lunar Eclipse
Date of composition: March 2005
Ensemble: Soprano and four-hand piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 6/8, 9/8, 4/4, ¾
Tempo: DQN = 72
Length: 46 measures
Vocal Range: F-sharp⁴ - C-sharp⁶
Tessitura: C-sharp⁵ - F-sharp⁵
Duration: 2 minutes
Mood: Disturbed
Subject: Lunar Eclipse
Author of text: Thomas Hardy
Source of text: Sonnet
Premiere: Annemarie Zmolek, soprano; Zachary Wadsworth and Nathaniel Adam, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on March 25, 2005.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced

Name of the work: *The Amber Hand*
Name of song: Upon her fluent route
Date of composition: March 2005
Ensemble: Soprano and four-hand piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 2/4, 4/4, ¾, 5/4,
Tempo: QN = ca. 60
Length: 20 measures
Vocal Range: C⁴ - G⁵
Tessitura: G⁴ - C⁵
Duration: 1:25 minutes
Mood: Mysterious
Subject: The idea of a higher power
Author of text: Emily Dickinson
Source of text: “Part Five: The Single Hound LIX” from *Complete Poems* (1924)
Premiere: Annemarie Zmolek, soprano; Zachary Wadsworth and Nathaniel Adam, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on March 25, 2005.

Level of Difficulty: Advanced

Name of the work: *The Amber Hand*
Name of song: Southern Night
Date of composition: March 2005
Ensemble: Soprano and four-hand piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 7/8, 3/4
Tempo: QN=80
Length: 47 measures
Vocal Range: E₄ - B₆
Tessitura: D₅ - F-sharp₅
Duration: 5:30 minutes
Mood: Spell-binding
Subject: Red Summer Moon
Author of text: D.H. Lawrence

“Growing up as a boy in Virginia, I always took a moment on warm summer nights to look up at the moon. Especially on those nights, when the tree frogs and cicadas provided a warm background drone, the moon was a shocking presence: silent, ever-present, ineffable.” These words by Wadsworth provide an excuse for the striking effects of double piano used in *The Amber Hand*. With text by three prized poets, D.H. Lawrence, Emily Dickinson, and Thomas Hardy, Wadsworth examines different aspects of the moon. The pianos open the set with open fifths using simple syncopated rhythms

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as the soprano voice soars in the upper register with a beautifully alluring vocalize. Wadsworth states, “I wanted the songs to have a primordial, natural quality to them, as so many of them deal with wide-open spaces of the sky and space. The perfect fifths are there to support that idea.”

The text starts as the singer describes the first lunar phase, which is the new moon; the phase of the moon when it is in conjunction with the sun and invisible from earth, or shortly thereafter when it appears as a slender crescent. The piece concludes with an ascent to a D-flat 7th chord maintaining its unsettling sonority while reflecting the text “brings a fresh fragrance of heaven to our senses.”

“The moon is distant from the sea” comes from Emily Dickinson’s Complete Poems (1924). From the section titled Love, Dickinson casts light on the idea of the moon and its powerful control over ocean tides. The moon acts as a mother while watching her child, the tides, from afar. The vocal line is freely sung by the soprano as the piano is controlled with open chords throughout the entire piece reflecting the tides inability to escape the moon’s pull.

In Thomas Hardy’s text for the third song, “At a Lunar Eclipse,” he compares the moon’s peacefulness to the earth’s chaotic misery. Wadsworth uses the piano as a background for the earth’s chaos with intricate Palestrina-like counterpoint with atonal features. At the start of the B Section, measure 14, as the text describes the moon with “imperturbable serenity,” each piano part is completely symmetrical between their own right and left hands, like the idea behind a lunar eclipse where the sun, the earth, and the

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68 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
moon need to be perfectly aligned, or the eclipse will not occur. The final section of the piece begins like the opening section.

The fourth piece, “Upon her fluent Route,” features light accompaniment with only one piano notated to play. The text and vocal line evoke a mysterious and complex image of the moon, quietly pondering the meanings of eternity and higher powers. The text is certainly at the forefront of this piece and should be incredibly articulated.

“Southern Night,” the final song in the set, evokes the summoning of a red summer moon. The repeated motives in the accompaniment celebrate the moon’s rise as the soprano voice ascends with it. The cycle comes full circle as the soprano sings the beginning vocalise with a closing three bar finish. Wadsworth shares in an interview, “This was the first time I tried writing a cycle where the texts came from many different authors, so the vocalize sections were meant to imply continuity from one to the other. After all, the poems are all about the moon, so I wanted the singer to be free and celestial at times.”

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69 Wadsworth, email message to author.
Name of the work: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*
Name of song: I. The Whale
Date of composition: July 2014
Ensemble: Contralto and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 2/4
Tempo: Broadly QN= ca. 80, With motion QN= ca. 92, Gaily QN= ca. 108
Length: 48 measures
Vocal Range: G₃ - D₅
Tessitura: E₄ - A₄
Duration: 1:22 minutes
Mood: Stately
Subject: A whale’s blubber
Author of text: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)
Source of text: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* (1896)
Premiere: Sara Couden, contralto and Zachary Wadsworth, piano at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton, Virginia on August 16, 2014.
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Name of the work: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*
Name of song: II. The Hippopotamus
Date of composition: July 2014
Ensemble: Contralto and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 2/4, 6/8
Tempo: Mysteriously QN= ca. 88, With fire QN= ca.120 / DQN = ca. 80
Length: 22 measures
Vocal Range: G₃ - A₄
Tessitura: C₄ - F₄
Duration: :30 minutes
Mood: Aggressive
Subject: A hippopotamus’s hide
Author of text: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)
Source of text: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* (1896)
Premiere: Sara Couden, contralto and Zachary Wadsworth, piano at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton, Virginia on August 16, 2014.
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate
Name of the work: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*
Name of song: III. The Dodo
Date of composition: July 2014
Ensemble: Contralto and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: $\frac{3}{4}$
Tempo: Musingly QN= ca. 60, Slightly slower QN= ca. 58, Yet slower QN= ca. 56
Length: 31 measures
Vocal Range: A$_3$ - E$_5$
Tessitura: G$_4$ - C$_5$
Duration: 2:13 minutes
Mood: Emotionless
Subject: The Dodo’s extinction
Author of text: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)
Source of text: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* (1896)
Premiere: Sara Couden, contralto and Zachary Wadsworth, piano at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton, Virginia on August 16, 2014.

Level of Difficulty: Intermediate
Name of the work: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*
Name of song: IV. The Marmozet
Date of composition: July 2014
Ensemble: Contralto and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 2/4, 6/8
Tempo: Mysteriously QN= ca. 88, With vigor QN= ca. 120 / DQN= ca. 80
Length: 33 measures
Vocal Range: G$_4$ - G$_5$
Tessitura: B$_4$ - D$_5$
Duration: 4:2 minutes
Mood: Flighty
Subject: The marmozet compared to a human
Author of text: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)
Source of text: *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts* (1896)
Premiere: Sara Couden, contralto and Zachary Wadsworth, piano at the Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton, Virginia on August 16, 2014.

Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Similar in effect to Cautionary Tales is Hilaire Belloc’s The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts. In this set of songs, Wadsworth has taken four animals, some extinct, some still alive, and created beautiful depictions of the in the music. The first song in the set is The Whale. The piano and voice enter in a bombastic manner, and the piano paints the scene of rolling waves. This piece requires the singer to have a strong chest register as it sits low at a forte dynamic.

The second piece, “The Hippopotamus,” starts off in a mysterious way as the trills in the left hand trigger an unsettling feel. It is almost as if you are being set up for something extreme. At first listening, one might expect the opening prelude to represent the hippo underneath the water waiting to come up. Unexpectedly, the piano and voice enter “with fire” in a military-like style as the text describes the strength of a hippo’s hide and how if you were to use any bullet other than platinum, his hide would flatten them. This short piece, with only twenty-two measures, is the perfect way to precede the next piece, “The Dodo.”

Wadsworth use of ostinato throughout “The Dodo” is important. He describes the ostinato as a “neutral” sounding device. The ostinato is simply eighth-note A’s and G’s going back and forth. The right hand of the piano represents the Dodo as it was before it went extinct. The melody is also quite beautiful, and unlike the two pieces before, its range is very comfortable for a mezzo-soprano.

The final piece in this set is “The Marmozet,” a small species of monkey that is flighty, jumping from tree to tree. The accompaniment reflects this characteristic. To
connect the set together, Wadsworth introduces the mysterious music played before “The Hippopotamus.” This time, one may see it as looking up at the tops of trees to see if they can see a marmozet, and, with vigor, the music begins with jump accompaniment and arpeggiated chords. The melody and meter are the same as “The Hippopotamus” as well, but with the accompaniment pattern manipulated, it sounds completely new. “The Marmozet” ends the set in a finite way as harmonies are fairly clear, ending with a strong V – I cadence.
Name of the work: *Cautionary Tales for Children*
Name of song: I. Henry King, who chewed bits of String, and was early cut off in Dreadful Agonies
Date of composition: January 2012
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: $\frac{3}{4}, \frac{2}{4}$
Tempo: Simply and with humor $\text{QN} = \text{ca.88}$, Decisively $\text{QN} = \text{ca.80}$, Length: 48 measures
Vocal Range: C-sharp$^3$ - G$^4$
Tessitura: B-flat$^3$ - D$^4$
Duration: 1:38 minutes
Theme: Comedic Life Lessons
Author of text: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953).
Source of text: *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907). Public domain
Premiere: Tony Boutté, tenor; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Trinity Episcopal Church, Staunton, VA on August 18, 2013.
Level of Difficulty: Beginner

Name of the work: *Cautionary Tales for Children*
Name of song: II. Hildebrand, Who was frightened by a Passing Motor, and was brought to Reason
Date of composition: January 2012
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: $\frac{4}{8}, \frac{6}{16}, \frac{2}{8}, \frac{3}{8}$
Tempo: Steadily $\text{EN} = \text{ca.112}$, Breezily $\text{DEN} = \text{ca. 92}$, Martial $\text{EN} = \text{ca.92}$
Length: 74 measures
Vocal Range: E$^3$ - G-sharp$^4$
Tessitura: B$^3$ - E$^4$
Duration: 2:37 minutes
Theme: Comedic Life Lessons
Author of text: Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953)
Source of text: *Cautionary Tales for Children* (1907). Public domain
Premiere: Tony Boutté, tenor; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Trinity Episcopal Church, Staunton, VA on August 18, 2013.
Level of Difficulty: Beginner
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the work:</th>
<th>Cautionary Tales for Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of song:</td>
<td>III. Rebecca, who slammed Doors for Fun and Perished Miserably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of composition:</td>
<td>January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble:</td>
<td>Tenor and piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher:</td>
<td>ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meter:</td>
<td>11/16, 4/8, ¾, 4/4, 5/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempo:</td>
<td>Briskly QN= ca.108, Dignified QN= ca.96, With fire QN= ca.108, Slower QN= ca.96, Much slower than before QN= ca.108</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length:</td>
<td>70 measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocal Range:</td>
<td>E₃ - A₄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessitura:</td>
<td>B₃ - E-flat₄</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme:</td>
<td>Comedic Life Lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author of text:</td>
<td>Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of text:</td>
<td>Cautionary Tales for Children (1907). Public domain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Premiere:</td>
<td>Tony Boutté, tenor; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Trinity Episcopal Church, Staunton, VA on August 18, 2013.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Difficulty:</td>
<td>Beginner</td>
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</table>

Popular as a children’s book at the turn of the twentieth-century, the English children’s author Hilaire Belloc wrote a collection of twelve short poems titled *Cautionary Tales for Children: Designed for the Admonition of Children between the ages of eight and fourteen years*. These poems humorously teach children lessons in good behavior; whether it is never to slam doors or simply to do as you are told. Belloc creates morbid storylines such as Jim, who ran away from his nurse at the zoo and was eaten by a lion, or Matilda who told a lie and was burned to death in a fire, which may seem humorous to adults, but terrifying to children. Wadsworth, using three of these poems, creates a clever limerick-like flow throughout each piece. Imagined as character pieces, Wadsworth brings these poems to life with text painting. He uses rolling sixteenth notes as Henry King chews bits of string, like that of Schubert’s “spinning music” in *Gretchen*.
am Spinnrade. We can hear low rumbling sounds in the piano in Hildebrand’s motorcar scare along with sounds resembling an old-fashion ambulance siren with the repeated eighth note pattern at the beginning. The loud accented beats represent Rebecca’s habit of slamming doors.

Stylistically, each piece offers a unique glimpse into Wadsworth’s theatrical writing. The composer suggests in his performance and score notes of the three pieces that “Certain lines of the songs’ texts, originally coupled with illustrations, require theatrical gestures from the singer. One such moment occurs in measure 41 of the third song, where the tenor should somehow illustrate the flatness of the recently squished protagonist (It laid her out! She looked like that.).” 70 Wadsworth suggests that the singer’s presentation of the songs should be informal and chatty-sounding. Aside from a few, comically overblown moments, the text and the humor will come across much better from a parlando style than a pure bel canto approach.

The opening sonnet of Donne’s “La Corona,” a collection of divine poems, is the text for Wadsworth’s work of the same name. The sonnets follow the sequence of events in Christ’s birth, life, and death. Donne’s devotional writing features deep devotion and intense anxiety as his religious path was driven by the fear of death and the ultimate judgment. Wadsworth describes the piece as “drenched in nervous, energetic seal.” The rhythmic variety and disjunct melodies provide a sense of anxiety naturally expressed in the text. “I wrote this poem at a time of great personal difficulty, and that comes through in the piece's nervous energy. There's such an explosive, rage-filled quality to the opening invocation. I don't know if it's faithful to the spirit of Donne, but it felt good at the time to write it this way.”71 To compose La Corona as a chamber piece, Wadsworth adds a violin. The violin ebbs and flows between the voice and piano, syncing with one or the

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71 Wadsworth, email message to author.
other throughout the entire piece. Wadsworth envisioned a heavier, more dramatic sound for this piece. It is highly expressive and to Wadsworth, “The climactic B-flat requires a lot of volume and weight.” Following the soprano’s final note is a unified finish to the piece with the violin and piano playing in octaves the same accented quarter note figure. Wadsworth confesses that when a piece climaxes, his instincts are to find unity within the instruments creating a musically exciting effect as the ensemble “comes crashing down” from the built-up tension.

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72 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.

73 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the work:</th>
<th>Days of Innocence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of song:</td>
<td>I. who are you, little i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of composition:</td>
<td>November 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble:</td>
<td>Soprano and piano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher:</td>
<td>ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267</td>
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<td>Meter:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Very freely, with simplicity QN= ca. 76</td>
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<td>Length:</td>
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<td>A₄ - C₅</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
<td>1:15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mood:</td>
<td>Childish Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>A November sunset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author of text:</td>
<td>E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of text:</td>
<td><em>Selected Poems</em> (1923)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiere:</td>
<td>Annamarie Zmolek, soprano, and Cory Bonn, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on February 20, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Difficulty:</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the work:</th>
<th>Days of Innocence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of song:</td>
<td>II. in Just-spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of composition:</td>
<td>November 2002</td>
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<td>Ensemble:</td>
<td>Soprano and piano</td>
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<td>Publisher:</td>
<td>ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267</td>
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<td>Meter:</td>
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<td>1:30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Springtime</td>
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<td>Author of text:</td>
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<td>Source of text:</td>
<td><em>Selected Poems</em> (1923)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiere:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Difficulty:</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
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Name of the work: *Days of Innocence*
Name of song: III. if now our sun is gone
Date of composition: November 2002
Ensemble: Soprano and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 6/4, 7/4, ¾, 2/4, 9/8, 5/4
Tempo: QN= 50
Length: 48 measures
Vocal Range: F₄ - F-sharp₅
Tessitura: A-sharp₄ - D-sharp₅
Duration: 3:42 minutes
Mood: Content
Subject: Childish Reflection
Author of text: E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)
Source of text: *Selected Poems* (1923)
Premiere: Annamarie Zmolek, soprano, and Cory Bonn, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on February 20, 2003
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Name of the work: *Days of Innocence*
Name of song: IV. maggie and millie and molly and may
Date of composition: November 2002
Ensemble: Soprano and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 3/2, 2/2, 5/2, 12/8, 15/8, 13/8, 11/8, 11/4, 4/2
Tempo: HN= 72, Faster DQN= 66, Largo EN= 92, HN= 66
Length: 27 measures
Vocal Range: E-flat₄ - A₅
Tessitura: G-sharp₄ - C-sharp₅
Duration: 2 minutes
Mood: Childish Reflection
Subject: A day at the beach
Author of text: E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)
Source of text: *Selected Poems* (1923)
Premiere: Annamarie Zmolek, soprano, and Cory Bonn, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on February 20, 2003

Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Name of the work: Days of Innocence
Name of song: V. who were so dark of heart they might not speak
Date of composition: November 2002
Ensemble: Soprano and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 3/4, 5/4
Tempo: Calm, meditative QN= 80
Length: 38 measures
Vocal Range: E₄ - A₅
Tessitura: B₄ - E₅
Duration: 2:54 minutes
Mood: Childish Reflection
Subject: The innocence of youth
Author of text: E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)
Source of text: Selected Poems (1923)
Premiere: Annamarie Zmolek, soprano, and Cory Bonn, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on February 20, 2003

Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Wadsworth brings E.E. Cummings texts to life in this five-movement song cycle.

With texts set in a child-like language imagined by the poet's childhood memories,

Wadsworth also selected texts of religious innocence and ethical meditation. The first piece sets a beautiful tone as the speaker reflects upon a November sunset as the most beautiful way to end the day. The second song features an uplifting, sprightly text balanced with a flirtatious melodic line and disjunct accompaniment. The text sheds light on a child’s excitement for spring, especially the mud. The third song brings a youthful air to religious experiences. The text introduces the sharpener, who is God, and how he sharpens knives that are dull, represented by the close disjunct chords, or heals the
wounded soul and reminds us that even when a soul needs repair, the sharpener will always come and sharpen their blades. Wadsworth suggests that the pianist create a clear distinction between the mortal terrestrial sounds as voiced in the lower register of the piano in contrast to the immortal, heavenly sounds written for the upper register. The fourth song, “maggie and millie and molly and may,” grabs at the heart of our human experiences with the simple and jovial setting of a day at the beach. The quirky light-hearted accompaniment sets the “watery” tone for the speaker to sing above. The fifth and final song, “who were so dark of heart they might not speak,” brings the set to a complete close with a meditative text about the ways in which being a little innocent can change one’s life. The music features a light accompaniment with a recitativo-like vocal line and suggests that the singer takes their time as the words reflect on how one can always be a little more innocent. Soprano Annamarie Zmolek, a friend of Wadsworth’s during their time at the Eastman School of Music, reflects on this set,

I love these songs so much. They truly reflect the innocence of [Wadsworth] as a sophomore undergrad composer, a perfect picture of his youthful style...These songs helped me learn to read music better and be more rhythmically accurate. It was also good ear training since some of the accompaniment was so sparse but always gave you something to hang on to, tonally. I actually kept an occasional diary of that time and wrote about the performance: ‘I loved hearing the sound flow, it felt very suspended and lovely. We created something.’

All five pieces require a simple, clear vocal production, a flexible voice, a good ear, and a good sense of rhythm, but fall within a comfortable range in terms of tessitura.

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74 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.

75 Annamarie Zmolek, e-mail message to author, January 23, 2017.
Songs two and four provide some challenge due to the fast tempi and vocal leaps. Zmolek believes that all but the first song can be stand-alone pieces.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{76} Zmolek, e-mail message to author.
Name of the work: *deep inside the woods*
Date of composition: February 2006
Ensemble: Soprano and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: ¾, 4/4, 2/4
Tempo: Always freely, with intensity QN= ca. 60
Length: 43 measures
Vocal Range: D₄ - C₆
Tessitura: A₄ - E₅
Duration: 3:30 minutes
Mood: Mourning
Subject: Longing for a lost love
Author of text: Ivy Wang (b. 1984)
Premiere: Abigail Haynes, soprano; Trevor Gureckis, piano at Bethesda Lutheran Church, New Haven, CT on April 26, 2006.
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

As one of the most prized songs to come out of Wadsworth’s years at Yale, “deep inside the woods” offers the collaborative team a chance to create a wide range of colors with Ivy Wang’s non-traditional poetry using objects and images to tell the story. The juxtaposition between “hollowness and horror and homage and hope” comes through in the piano accompaniment with its wandering motives, the light muted piano string, and its “lush evocation of music long past.” The speaker of the poem is mourning the loss of a loved one, and as she walks through the house, no one is found. The loss becomes too much while intensity builds during “In death my quiet friends become noisy, rocking the rooms on their hinges. And then I say a name and no one comes. What can I do but sit as the house grows louder, lonelier?” The final line offers a bitter hopefulness as the speaker asks to be free from this house of lonely and sorrowful imprisonment. Wadsworth suggests that the singer should create a somber, mysterious mood throughout the piece.⁷⁷

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⁷⁷ Zachary Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
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<tr>
<th>Name of the work:</th>
<th><em>for nothing lesse than thee</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of song:</td>
<td>The Legacie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of composition:</td>
<td>August 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble:</td>
<td>Tenor, B-flat clarinet, and piano</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mood:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Lost love</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author of text:</td>
<td>John Donne (1572-1631)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of text:</td>
<td><em>Songs and Sonnets</em> (dates unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Difficulty:</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of song:</td>
<td>The Sunne Rising</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ensemble:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>A$_3$ - E$_4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
<td>3:35 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mood:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Sarcastic insults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author of text:</td>
<td>John Donne (1572-1631)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of text:</td>
<td><em>Songs and Sonnets</em> (dates unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Difficulty:</td>
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</table>
Name of the work: *for nothing lesse than thee*
Name of song: The Dreame
Date of composition: August 2003
Ensemble: Tenor, B-flat clarinet, and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 5/4, ¾, 5/2, 2/2, 3/2, 2/4
Tempo: Wistful QN= ca. 66, Driving forward HN= 72 / QN= 144, In free time, entering in order ca. 12”
Length: 95 measures
Vocal Range: D₃ - G₄
Tessitura: A₃ - E₄
Duration: 6:30 minutes
Mood: Seductive
Subject: Hopeful love
Author of text: John Donne (1572-1631)
Source of text: *Songs and Sonnets* (dates unknown)

Level of Difficulty: Advanced

The selections taken from John Donne’s love poetry set a thematic focus of lost love, love desires and the uncertainty of its future. *For nothing lesse than thee* opens with “The Legacie,” in which Donne’s loss of love brings the metaphor of death to mind and the time that has passed feels like an eternity. “His cold temperament is set with a bare, open, unmoving musical texture.” In the second stanza of the poem, Donne declares that it was his lover who ended their love and ‘killed him’ multiple times. It ‘killed him again’ in realizing that even though he had been faithful to her, he should have never let his heart become so vulnerable. In the third stanza, the more reserved musical material returns and Donne confesses that he wishes he could have sent an artificial heart so that

78 Zachary Wadsworth, Program notes, “for nothing lesse than thee” (Eastman School of Music, August 10, 2003).
his “real” heart wouldn’t kill him, but, his “real” heart did not only belong to him.

“Throughout the song, the clarinet and piano stay in separate, unsynchronized orbits until they meet briefly at “and therefore, for our losses sad…” They then separate once again as the poem ends.”

“The Sunne Rising” opens with a clarinet mimicking the playfulness of lovers before the sun rises. The piece is quickly overpowered by the abrupt dynamic change in measure 5 as the piano and clarinet enter forte representing the sun as it interrupts the lovers. The narrator compares the daybreak to an intruder who stops him from remaining in bed with his lover. Insults emerge as the vocalist declares, ‘Busie old foole, unruly Sunne, why dost thou thus, through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?’

“Interspersed among these outbursts are several small recitative-style sections, in which the singer examines the nature of love and honour.”

To adequately present the ethos of this poem, each member of the ensemble may consider interpreting their individual parts in a flighty and uncontrolled manner. The frivolity of this piece is found in all parts of the ensemble. There are staccato markings, triplets and little time to slow down. The singer must consider staying on the breath, always, to access the top of their voice successfully. There is an ironic contrast when in measure 31, the ensemble shifts to a slower homophonic texture and the voice is sarcastically asks the sun, ‘if you ask about the kings he shined on yesterday, you will learn that they all lie in bed with me.’

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79 Wadsworth, Program notes, “for nothing lesse than thee.”

80 Ibid.
The last song, “The Dreame,” starts quietly with an altered motive from Schumann’s “Im Wunderschönen Monat Mai” from his *Dichterliebe* song cycle. “This is intended to evoke a reminiscence of love’s beauty, tinged by an uncertain future.”

The narrator is woken from an erotic dream by the lover about whom he was dreaming. He begins to entice her and describes reality and fantasy. In a modern translation, the narrator seduces his lover by saying, “You are so true that the thought of you is enough to make a dream true, and fables [factual] history; enter my arms, for since you thought it was best, for me not to dream, let us act out the conclusion of that dream.” The music begins to pick up its pace during the seductive sections, however, when his lover rises and begins to leave, the music begins to quicken with an agitated quality. This does not last long as the narrator become saddened by the prospects of his love leaving and again, as in “The Legacie,” his disheartened state becomes depressing and deathly. Yet, the narrator remains hopeful that his lover will return, lest he should die. A final reference to Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* closes the piece on an unresolved minor 9th, suspending the narrator’s future.

Vocally, the pieces sit very well in the tenor range. Melodically, these works are not difficult and are individually conjunct. The difficult part is collaborating with the pianist and clarinetist. In “The Legacie,” the voice and clarinet lines dovetail beautifully between each other. In contrast, the alignment in “The Sunne Rising” is challenging as the ensemble plays off the beat at different times. “The Dreame,” feature difficult figures as well. The tenor, for whom this work was written, Zachary Wilder, explained, “I’d say

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81 Wadsworth, interview.

82 Wadsworth, Program notes, “for nothing lesse than thee.”
that this is a good challenge for a musically advanced undergrad. Vocally, it is not overwhelming for a young intermediate tenor. The musical and textual material in the piece is definitely a lot to chew on, even for an advanced singer.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{83} Zachary Wilder, e-mail message to author, January 9, 2017.
A pioneer of fantasy literature, George MacDonald’s poem “The Golden Key,” from his 1893 collection, is based off a fairytale of the same name written by MacDonald in 1867. The reimagined poem tells the story of a young boy’s journey in search of a magical golden key when it happened to be with his mother the entire time. Admiring the folk element of fantasy literature, Wadsworth incorporates a modal folk-like motive that is manipulated throughout the piece. Wadsworth imagined the motive sounding like a fantastical tune from a faraway land that generated the world for the child’s imagination. The glissandos in the harp part sustain the supernatural element and bring to life the atmosphere in which Wadsworth hoped to set. Themes of adventure, the natural earth, good vs. evil, and love are ever present in this piece. The bass voice and harp have a rare opportunity to create a world for the audience which steers away from traditional
ensemble combinations, text styles, and plots. Wadsworth encourages each collaborative
to answer the following question, “What is the golden key?”
Name of the work: *Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love*

Date of composition: July 2011

Ensemble: Tenor and piano

Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267

Meter: 3/2

Tempo: Tenderly HN= ca. 48, Slower than before HN= ca. 42

Length: 46 measures

Vocal Range: E₃ - E₄

Tessitura: A₃ - C₄

Duration: 3:30 minutes

Mood: Sentimental

Subject: Love

Author of text: Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947)

Source of text: *Beauty and Life* (1921)

Premiere: Scott Mello, tenor and Gabriel Dobner, piano at the Central United Methodist Church in Staunton, Virginia on August 26, 2011.

Level of Difficulty: Beginner

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*Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love* comes from the poetic style of Duncan Campbell Scott, a poet often sourced by Wadsworth. The song is strophic and features two sections. Each stanza uses the ballad poetic rhyme scheme of *abcb*, with lines two and four rhyming. The text offers a simple yet sincere sentiment to the speaker’s love before he leaves. Wadsworth sets this text to a beautiful melody saying, “it is a simple love song...the text has such a “sing-song” poetic style...there is only melody, and the piano hovers orbiting around this melody”[^4] with its open chords and stepwise bass movement. The piece transitions from not having a clear tonal center to ending in E major. The range of this piece is perfect for a young voice.

[^4]: Wadsworth, interview.
Name of the work: Nativity
Date of composition: May 2008
Ensemble: Countertenor and organ
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: $\frac{3}{4}$, 4/4
Tempo: Quasi-recitative QN= ca. 84, Arioso QN= ca. 72
Length: 102 measures
Vocal Range: B$_3$ - F$_5$
Tessitura: G$_4$ - C$_5$
Duration: 4:30 minutes
Mood: Devoted
Subject: Christ’s birth
Author of text: John Donne (1572-1631)
Source of text: La Corona, third sonnet
Premiere: Daniel Cabena, countertenor, and Tim Pyper, organ, at Dublin St. United Methodist Church, Guelph, Ontario, Canada on July 15, 2008.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced

This work is one of several devotional sonnets by Donne which portrays the nativity story in a paradoxical fashion. The unborn baby Jesus is described as ‘immense’ and ‘now leaves his well-beloved imprisonment.’ Wadsworth uses these images to his advantage as he creates polyrhythmic textures among vast chords representing glimpses into another realm or something greater than the common man. There are two instrumental versions of Nativity. Originally written for chamber ensemble, the premiere was performed for voice and organ.
Duncan Campbell Scott was one of the greatest of Canadian poets. Written on March 26, 1918, the piece is an ode to the early twentieth-century French composer, Claude Debussy. “The poem ‘On the Death of Claude Debussy’ is a free fine rendering of the imaginative reactions which music engenders in the consenting mind.” Composed for Canadian baritone, Kevin McMillan, Wadsworth offers support to baritones with easy access to upper range. The song is full of beautiful imagery and provides a canvas for the musical interpretation. “The outstanding moment in the piece is the heroic aleatoric passage at the words, ‘Then with a turn of illumination...Death and Debussy become

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France and all her heroes...’ The song is quite an amazing piece of writing.”86 As noted in the score, “This song features an extended aleatoric section, within which the pianist plays his/her repeating figures at the beginning of each new measures as the baritone sings in free rhythm above.”87 The piece concludes with Debussy’s “Des pas sur la neige” from his First Book of Preludes and is marked expressif et douloureux (expressive and painful). On the Death of Claude Debussy was performed in 2012 at The Kennedy Center on a Debussy-inspired program by James Madison University faculty.

86 Kevin McMillan, e-mail message to author, January 3, 2017.

87 Ibid.
Name of the work: *Pictures of the Floating World*
Name of song: The Garden by Moonlight
Date of composition: August 20, 2008, August 22, 2009 (revised)
Ensemble: Soprano and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 5/4
Tempo: *Adagio sognando* QN= ca. 72
Length: 70 measures
Vocal Range: B₃ - G-sharp₅
Tessitura: A₄ - D₅
Duration: 5:20 minutes
Mood: Thoughtful
Subject: Age and family
Author of text: Amy Lowell (1874-1925)
Source of text: *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919) and *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914)
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Name of the work: *Pictures of the Floating World*
Name of song: Opal
Date of composition: August 20, 2008, August 22, 2009 (revised)
Ensemble: Soprano and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: ¾
Tempo: *Presto con fuoco* QN= ca. 184, *Misterioso* QN= ca. 176
Length: 56 measures
Vocal Range: E₄ - A₅
Tessitura: A₄ - E₅
Duration: 1 minute
Mood: Conflicted
Subject: Conflicted love
Author of text: Amy Lowell (1874-1925)
Source of text: *Pictures of the Floating World* (1919) and *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed* (1914)
Level of Difficulty: Advanced
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<th>Name of the work:</th>
<th><em>Pictures of the Floating World</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of song:</td>
<td>September, 1918</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Meter:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempo:</td>
<td><em>Adagio luminoso</em> QN= ca. 66, <em>Largamente</em> QN= ca. 56</td>
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<tr>
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<td>A&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt; - D&lt;sub&gt;5&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Doubtful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>War and world peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author of text:</td>
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<td><em>Pictures of the Floating World</em> (1919) and <em>Sword Blades and Poppy Seed</em> (1914)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2/4, 3/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tempo:</td>
<td><em>Allegro comodo, ma sempre rubato</em> QN= ca. 80, <em>Lontano</em> QN= ca. 58</td>
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<td>A₄ - D₅</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration:</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Subject:</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author of text:</td>
<td>Amy Lowell (1874-1925)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The beautiful texts of Amy Lowell and their Impressionistic qualities characterize *Pictures of the Floating World*. The set starts with “The Garden by Moonlight.” Thick and alluring harmonies set the scene as the narrator describes what one would see at nighttime in a garden as asking their beloved, “Who will tend the garden when I am gone?”

“Opal” begins with extremes of range as the piano plays the highest and the lowest keys on the piano. The flourishing piano part is the height of the emotion as the narrator describes the pains her lover causes her. “September, 1918,” brings back the melodic and harmonic lines from “The Garden by Moonlight.” In this song, the narrator is describing war and questioning whether peace will return. Continuing with the war-like theme is “Storm-Racked.” In this piece, intense emotions pervade as the narrator asks how can one be happy (in the text ‘artist can sing…’) while the world is in turmoil.

The fifth song in the set, “Aubade,” the happiest out of the six, introduces erotic love. Lowell, who is said to have been a lesbian, met her longtime partner, Ada Dwyer Russell, approximately 1912.88 Because living openly as a lesbian was not possible, Amy hid her sensuality and inspiration in her work. Wadsworth sets this beautiful text with a simple homophonic accompaniment. It should be noted that the accompaniment features its own special contrapuntal activity, as the part writing is quite intricate. The clear key of

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E major sets a clear tonal center for the voice, allowing for easy access to all notes found in the vocal line. The final song in the set is “A Dream in Wartime,” where the narrator is digging a grave, realizing too late that it is her own, as expressed by the text, “My own face lay like a white pebble...Waiting.” We are left with the question of whether “waiting” is referring to love, war, or the passing of time. While presenting the soprano in her highest range, Wadsworth creates a beautiful scrapbook of songs appropriately placed to provide an emotionally driven, timeless portrayal of peace, love, and war.
Name of the work: Present and Future
Name of Song: I. A Bride Song
Date of composition: July 2011
Ensemble: Soprano (or mezzo-soprano) and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 2/4, 3/4
Tempo: Freely QN = ca. 120, Presto (Io stesso tempo)
Length: 175 measures
Vocal Range: C₄ - G₅
Tessitura: G₄ - C₅
Duration: 3:15 minutes
Mood: Joy
Subject: Marriage
Author of text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
Source of text: New Poems (1896)
Premiere: Margaret Lias, mezzo-soprano; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Trinity Episcopal Church, Staunton, Virginia on August 21, 2013.
Level of Difficulty: Beginner

Name of the work: Present and Future
Name of Song: II. Hand in Hand
Date of composition: July 2011
Ensemble: Soprano (or mezzo-soprano) and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 6/4, 4/4
Tempo: Sweetly, Largo QN = ca. 58
Length: 30 measures
Vocal Range: C₄ - G₅
Tessitura: G₄ - C₅
Duration: 2:45 minutes
Mood: Contentment
Subject: Companionship
Author of text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
Source of text: New Poems (1896)
Premiere: Unknown
Level of Difficulty: Beginner

Name of the work: Present and Future
Name of Song: III. A Smile and a Sigh
Date of composition: July 2011
Ensemble: Soprano (or mezzo-soprano) and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 2/4
Tempo: Brightly QN = ca. 88
Length: 50 measures
Vocal Range: E₄ - G₅
Tessitura: A-flat₄ - D₅
Duration: 1:15 minutes
Mood: Passionate
Subject: Intimate love
Author of text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
Source of text: New Poems (1896)
Premiere: Unknown
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Name of the work: Present and Future
Name of Song: IV. Pastime
Date of composition: July 2011
Ensemble: Soprano (or mezzo-soprano) and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, 11/16, 17/16
Tempo: Steadily QN = ca. 69, Slower QN = ca. 58
Length: 59 measures
Vocal Range: C-sharp₄ - G-sharp₅
Tessitura: G-sharp₄ - C-sharp₅
Duration: 3:45 minutes
Mood: Melancholy
Subject: Separation
Author of text: Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)
Source of text: New Poems (1896)
Premiere: Unknown
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Name of the work: Present and Future
Name of Song: V. Grown and Flown
Date of composition: July 2011
Ensemble: Soprano (or mezzo-soprano) and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Christina Rossetti, an English poet of the nineteenth century, wrote an array of poetry; namely romantic, devotional, and children’s poems. Her poetry exudes intense emotion, and in most cases despair. At a young age, Rossetti struggled with depression,
forcing her to face many challenges throughout her life; her parents’ poverty, her father’s health, her broken engagement, and a thyroid disorder called Grave’s Disease.

While facing these obstacles, Rossetti turned to writing. “Something impelled her feelings, or ‘came into her head,’ and her hand obeyed the dictation.”89 Wadsworth musical adaptation of Rossetti’s poetry describes the story of marriage. “Using poetry by Christina Rossetti, it passes from the excitement of a wedding day through the joys of marriage, the spark of intimacy, the sorrows of distance, the grief of separation, and the bravery of deciding to move on alone.”90 All six pieces are accessible for beginner, intermediate, and advanced singers and would program very well as a more dramatic set on a recital.

In the first piece, “The Bride’s Song,” Wadsworth incorporates a fast ostinato rhythm in the accompaniment with eight 16th notes evoking an excitement and nervousness about love and marriage. The voice, in a simplistic diatonic fashion, creates repeated figures with the ascending triplets found at the beginning of each stanza. The second piece, “Hand in Hand” focuses on the companionship of marriage. While the accompaniment remains quite simple and light with open fourths and fifths, Wadsworth incorporates a four-note motive with three sixteenth-note triplets and a quarter-note. The motive evokes bird song as the “two doves are upon the selfsame branch.” Leading into the next song, “A Smile and a Sigh,” Wadsworth reignites the lover’s sexual passion with a brightly scored accompaniment, again featuring a sixteenth-note figure, this time in a descending four-note pattern. Wadsworth uses syncopated triads in the right hand to


90 Zachary Wadsworth, Program notes, “Present and Future,” (March 2015).
evoke the lover’s sexual tension. The singer has the opportunity to slide through several directed notes where Wadsworth marks glissando; emphasizing words of importance, i.e. ‘smile,’ ‘measure,’ and ‘sigh,’ and ‘dying.’

Wadsworth’s fourth song, “Pastime” creates a somber mood as the physical and emotional distance of the marriage takes a toll on the narrator. The syncopated writing for the piano right hand, juxtaposed with triads rocking back and forth in the left hand bring to life the aching pain of ‘two idle people, without pause or aim…’ The repeated accompaniment continues throughout the piece as the text provides metaphors for the dull state of married life until the narrator decides, ‘Better a wretched life than a life so aimless.’ In Wadsworth’s setting of the poem, we hear both the focus found in the text as well as the narrator’s decision to leave the marriage. The syncopated rhythm of the right hand is now accompanying the syncopated rhythms in the voice as the left hand maintains a strict quarter-note line underneath. The piece flourishes with arpeggiated dominant chords at a heightened dynamic marking of fortissimo. The repeated syncopated rhythm returns for half a measure, culminating finally on a soft piano dynamic marking. This can be interpreted as the singer second guessing herself.

“Grown and Flown” is a short, simple piece that focuses on the painful realization that her love which once was sweet is now bitter and dead. Wadsworth uses a pulsating major triad with ghostly accents in the left hand of the piano to destabilize the harmony. While the voice and left hand do not align the entire time, it is important for the singer to connect with the left hand piano writing whenever possible. The ensembles connection throughout the piece will help with pitch accuracy.
In the final song, “Present and Future,” the narrator reflects on the previously sung piece and the decision to look towards the future with hope and joy. This piece would appropriately be considered a healing song. “The closer harmonies at the beginning suggest an unsettled character, and the D-flat major settles into a much less complicated emotion of hope and joy.” Wadsworth uses a white key and black key division in this piece which is reflected in the accompaniment as the pianist uses the right hand for black keys and left hand for white keys creating tone clusters with the eighteenth-note figures going back and forth in the piano. The final verse relieves the singer of any sorrow and guides her to a more fulfilled life singing, “And the darkness shall flee from us, and the sun beam down upon us ever glowing more and more.”

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91 Wadsworth, Program notes, “Present and Future.”
Name of the work: *Three Lullabies*
Name of song: Rockaby, lullaby
Date of composition: October 27, 2007
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: \( \frac{3}{4}, \frac{4}{4} \)
Tempo: Gently flowing QN= ca. 69, Slower QN= ca. 60
Length: 76 measures
Vocal Range: E-\flat_3 - G_4
Tessitura: B_3 - E_4
Duration: 4:30 minutes
Mood: Somber
Subject: Rocking a child to sleep
Author of text: Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881)
Premiere: Zachary Wadsworth, tenor; Sezi Seskir, piano at Barnes Hall, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York on November 11, 2007.
Level of Difficulty: Beginner

Name of the work: *Three Lullabies*
Name of song: You spotted snakes…
Date of composition: October 27, 2007
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: \( \frac{3}{8}, \frac{4}{4}, \frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{4}, \frac{2}{4} \)
Tempo: Dreamlike EN= ca. 92, *Furioso, ma comico* QN= ca. 69
Length: 73 measures
Vocal Range: E_3 - G_4
Tessitura: C_4 - E_4
Duration: 3 minutes
Mood: Restless
Subject: Heroic conquest
Author of text: William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
Source of text: Act 2, Scene 2 from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1605)
Premiere: Zachary Wadsworth, tenor; Sezi Seskir, piano at Barnes Hall, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York on November 11, 2007.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced
Name of the work: *Three Lullabies*
Name of song: Under the silver moon
Date of composition: October 27, 2007
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: \(\frac{3}{4}, 4/4, 2/4\)
Tempo: Gently, always unsettled QN= ca. 58, QN= ca. 50, QN= ca. 69
Length: 68 measures
Vocal Range: C-sharp\(_3\) - A\(_4\)
Tessitura: B\(_3\) - E\(_4\)
Duration: 4:30 minutes
Mood: Restful
Subject: A Father’s lullaby
Author of text: Lord Tennyson Alfred (1809-1892)
Source of text: Part II of *The Princess*
Premiere: Zachary Wadsworth, tenor; Sezi Seskir, piano at Barnes Hall, Cornell University in Ithaca, New York on November 11, 2007.
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Three lullabies taken from completely different texts create the foundation for this song cycle. Wadsworth proclaims that underneath the ‘simple and tender surface’ lies “a more complicated emotional landscape, steeped in parents’ anxieties about the safety of their child in a dangerous world.”\(^{92}\) The first song, with text by Josiah Gilbert Holland, an American poet of the nineteenth-century, introduces a beautiful modal-like melody (suggesting Phrygian mode with minor variation) in triple meter, very identifiable as a lullaby. Underneath the melody is a wandering accompaniment creating obscure sounds corresponding with the wonderland-like imagery from the text. The second song, from William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, features a more operatic accompaniment and requires a more robust sound than the other two songs in the set.

\(^{92}\) Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
Compared to Benjamin Britten’s opera arias, Wadsworth uses flourishing piano lines with rhythmically complex vocal phrases. Wadsworth states, “Its extravagantly nightmarish symbolism and momentary lapses into dreamy melody paint a picture of heroic conquest, where sleep is only won through gallant defense from the many fearsome creatures lurking close by.”93 The final lullaby, a bit murkier than the two previous pieces, expresses a mother’s anxiety over her husband’s return from sea. The dotted eighth-note and sixteenth-note figure in the accompaniment evokes the unpredictable, yet consistent, ocean wind and the perilous fate of the husband. The rhythmic figure passes through the accompaniment and voice. “Despite her fears, the mother, with great hope, sings her restless child to sleep.”94

An interview with Zachary Wilder, a frequent performer of Wadsworth’s works, describes the most intriguing aspect of the work, “The anxiety in the texts and vocal writing make for a really interesting contrast to the concept of a lullaby which allows for a dynamism [in the music].”95 The challenge is finding and balancing both levels (the nature of a lullaby verses the context of the poem) within each piece.96 These works are among the most vocally challenging in Wadsworth’s compositional oeuvre; however, the ensemble writing is straight forward. Zachary Wilder admits one of the challenging parts of the piece is singing long sustained legato lines through the passaggio.97

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94 Ibid.
95 Wilder, e-mail message to author.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid.
Name of the work: *Under the Night Forever Falling*
Date of composition: September 30, 2004
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4
Tempo: *Grave* QN= ca. 44
Length: 38 measures
Vocal Range: D₃ - G₄
Tessitura: B₃ - E₄
Duration: 4 minutes
Mood: Reflective
Subject: Jesus’s crucifixion
Author of text: Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)
Source of text: *Vision and Prayer* (1945)
Premiere: Zachary Wilder, tenor; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Kilbourn Hall, Eastman School of Music, Rochester, NY on October 14, 2004.
Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

*Under the Night Forever Falling* is taken from Dylan Thomas’ poem *Vision and Prayer*, a collection of several poems together which create a larger work. The poetry is some of the most difficult to both conceptualize and perform. The mysticism and biblical references found in this work refer to the days before and after Jesus’s crucifixion. One of the most notable aspects of this piece is its geometric shape. The poetry is set in shape poem form, a type of poetry that describes or suggests an object and is shaped the same as the object the poem itself is describing or suggesting. In Wadsworth’s piece, the melodic line is set in the same manner as the text is designed. It is centered around the word “Rock,” creating a mirroring effect, or melodic palindrome.
Name of the work: What to Do When Lost in the Woods
Date of composition: January 2015
Ensemble: Tenor and piano
Publisher: ZRW Publishing, 96 School Street, Apt. 11, Williamstown, MA 01267
Meter: 4/4, ¾
Tempo: Brightly QN= ca. 152, Quietly, slower QN= ca. 116
Length: 45 measures
Vocal Range: C₃ - A₄
Tessitura: A₃ - D₄
Duration: 4:30 minutes
Mood: Bewildered
Subject: A “how to,” if you lost in the woods
Author of text: Adaptation by Zachary Wadsworth
Source of text: Ladies’ Home Journal (October 1902)
Premiere: Tony Boutté, tenor; Zachary Wadsworth, piano at Clarke Recital Hall, Frost School of Music at the University of Miami, Miami, Florida on February 20, 2015.
Level of Difficulty: Advanced

When approached by tenor Tony Boutté with this text, “Wadsworth could hear it set to music.” This ‘blast to the past’ text is a silly jab in reference to magazine articles published in the 1902 Ladies’ Home Journal, one of the leading women’s magazines in the twentieth-century, concerning getting lost in the woods. Similar to other character pieces in Wadsworth’s repertoire, What to Do When Lost in the Woods features a bright, frantic-like atmosphere. Wadsworth’s quirky adaptation of this text features a main melody that returns in a simple naïve fashion following disjunct motives that function as wandering interludes. Throughout the piece, subtle changes in mood are indicated. When writing “light” music, Wadsworth likes to add moments of calm, seriousness, or even of sadness, creating contrast in the overarching mood. The section starting with the text,

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98 Wadsworth, e-mail message to author.
99 Ibid.
“When you do miss your way…” is an example of where the performers can play around with a more agitated, nervous mood. “This is a place for things to be a bit more anchored in seriousness before the bombast returned.” The music and text unfold in a formal ABA fashion until the last pages. The text becomes a funny, cautionary tale of everything that could go wrong in the woods and ultimately kill you. The piece pivots suddenly with a dark, driving accompaniment with the final text, “Only keep cool, and all is well.” Due to the nature of the text, Wadsworth encourages the performers to approach the song with a “sense of lightness and theatricality.”

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100 Zachary Wadsworth, e-mail message to author, April 10, 2017.

101 Ibid.
Conclusion

A burgeoning genre that “should be valued and celebrated,” contemporary American art song is a rejoicing of eclecticism; a genre replete with an array of musical styles that successfully embrace American idioms in both popular and classical culture. Composers such as Jake Heggie (1961), Libby Larsen (1950), Tom Cipullo (1956), John Musto (1954), Ricky Ian Gordon (1956), and Ben Moore (1960), create inspiring works that express America’s postmodern eclectic style. It is an earnest focus of both conservatory composition programs as well as independent composers, teachers of voice are encouraging in-depth study and performance of this literature.

Zachary Wadsworth has created a name for himself in modern American art song and continues to provide us with new and exciting material that compares favorably with his peers among American art song composers today. Wadsworth’s output, while still developing, has already shown a mature innovative catalog of repertoire whose art songs compete with some of the most influential music in the world. Every one of these composers writes in an individual language, and Wadsworth does as well.

I think what I am after is something that is more serious...I think if there is one thing I am after it is to create or try to carve out a space in America for just serious deep, meaningful art song and we should be sharing music and poetry in that way.103

This Doctor of Musical Arts Document has carefully examined Wadsworth’s musical upbringing, compositional process, and detailed many aspects in the genesis of his songs. Specific musical devices central to Wadsworth’s style, including textual and


103 Wadsworth, interview.
musical rhythms, melody, motive accompaniments, and centricity, have been identified and analyzed in numerous works to inform performance practice. Through this analysis, and extensive interviews with the composer himself, it is evident that Wadsworth carefully selects every note in the hope that it will highlight and/or add new meaning to the text.  

Despite his relative youth, Wadsworth’s catalog of art songs is already substantial, as evidenced by the catalog in Chapter Three of this document. It is the hope of this author that in some small way, this Doctor of Musical Arts Document will serve to increase accessibility to this important catalog of songs, as well as inform both teachers and students of American art song of the rich, unique, and contemporary compositional oeuvre of Zachary Wadsworth.

104 Wadsworth, interview.
Appendix I

In-Person Interview with Zachary Wadsworth

On August 19, 2016, at the coffee shop, By and By, in Staunton, Virginia, between the author and Zachary Wadsworth.

Jordan Davidson: OK, so, let’s see here, I wanted to do two recordings, um…

Zachary Wadsworth: They’ll just be making smoothies the whole time while were talking to each other.

JD: That’s ok. OK, so, I guess the first question I have is kind of like, Chapter One.

ZRW: Right.

JD: Is the overview of your life and musical career, now in some of the interviews that you sent me and I’ve read online, you know, it kind of gives me the basic idea. You’re from Richmond, I love your TEDTalks video that you did, um, and so I got some facts from that, like the Richmond concert, and so on, if you could kind of just start by giving me a little bit of info about that, music that influenced you, how you got into this field, and stuff like that.

ZRW: Yeah, so first I sang in choirs as a kid in elementary school, middle school, and high school, I was in choir the whole time, uh, so I was really singing first. But, I didn’t get serious about music until I started taking piano lessons in my early teens. That was when I started composing or improvising which led to composing. I had a piano teacher who forced me to write everything down that I improvised which was a big step towards writing music and so piano lessons were really important to my development at first and the earliest music is quite new age in style like if you think of Jim Brickman or these kinds of new age piano kind of easy listening kind of style. As I continued with piano lessons and was playing more and more classical music and harder classical music, getting into Beethoven and Rachmaninoff and Chopin I became very enamored with romantic music as we all do and fell in love particularly with Mahler and was listening to a lot of Beethoven and Mahler and started writing more in a kind of neoclassical or just classical idiom, neo-romantic maybe. At that time, there were PBS documentaries about the lives of American composers, and there was one about Leonard Bernstein, and I remember that it focused very much on Tanglewood on the music festival in
Western Massachusetts. And so, I looked into that and applied as a teenager to the Boston University Tanglewood Institute which is their high school division and got in with my little like Mahler string quartet, and that was really where the switch was sort of turned on of “oh, there’s this thing called modern music, and there has been music written since 1900, and it is worth listening to” or some of it makes me angry, and some of it really catches my fancy. And around this time, I was getting, my mom sang in the Richmond Symphony Chorus, and they did the Britten War Requiem, which totally blew me away, and I had to get a CD and listen to it every day. It was that kind of obsessive thing that teenagers do. And so, I got really into Britten, and through Leonard, there was a CD of Leonard Bernstein’s last concert at Tanglewood, the last time he conducted, and on that CD, there’s a Britten, one of the Sea Interludes from his opera Peter Grimes, the pretty one, the moonlight one. And so, I was really falling for Britten while getting through Tanglewood, exposure to a lot of really wild and different stuff and so that was really the beginning of like steering me on a path that would lead me to conservatory. This was really just the year before my senior year of high school, so this was the summer of 2000, and I was I immediately started pivoting in my writing away from a kind of romantic style and into a very Bartokish, angular, atonal style--

JD: So this was pretty early?

ZRW: Yeah, so I was just 17, and it was just that kind of thing was like I had learned what a 12-tone row was, you know, and of course you must try it out and you want to explore these things, so it was an exciting time, but I still didn’t really know, I guess I still don’t, you know, obviously matured as an artist, you’re still sort of reaching around trying a bunch of different styles. The first piece I wrote after Tanglewood was one of the first pieces that feels like “my music,” it was a sonata for violin and piano and that, it’s very jagged and very angular, and I sort of role my eyes when I listen to it now, but that piece got me into Eastman. That was how I got into the Eastman School of Music for undergrad. And I know it was that piece because one of my teachers at Eastman told me, “there were 6 bars of this that shows me you should be here” or something like that, because I had written an atonal sequence and I thought that was a silly idea and they thought we need to meet this person who would do a tonal thing with atonal sounds like treat it like a sequence. I didn’t know any better, I probably didn’t know what I was doing, but anyway, whatever works, right

JD: Right!
And so, yeah, I went to Eastman and moved on from there. So that is sort of, I would say the origin that gets me into like how I became a composition major at least in undergrad.

So you were solely composition at Eastman?

Eastman requires all its composers to have a primary instrument, so I forget exactly what the terminology was. It wasn’t a full double major, but it was composition with a focus in piano. So, we did have to do like piano juries and things like that, play scales and stuff, but yeah, piano was my instrument there. Though I continued to sing in choirs.

You talked about teachers at Eastman, and I have here, you mention 5 in an interview, were there any, was there any one particular one that helped you move towards this sound more than others or.

Yes, they all, of course, helped in different ways, and composition teaching is always a bit of--- It trains a lot in sort of euphemism, and it’s a really hard thing to teach. Often, big ideas are communicated through little tiny euphemisms or metaphors. I think the most important moment if I could isolate one, in my undergrad, was, I continued to love Britten to this day, and I was continuing to love Britten more and more as a student at Eastman, but I also, Eastman was really big at that time into minimalism. A lot of the students were performing Steve Reich, Phillip Glass, John Adams, these types of composers, Arvo Pärt, and so there was a lot of that kind of music around, and I really started falling for Steve Reich, in particular, his Desert Music, and tackling these pieces for voices and ensemble really, I just love those pieces to this day but especially then was really obsessed so yeah. I went into this lesson with Robert Morris, who still teaches there now. His personal style, he’s a serial composer and still writes 12 tone music, essentially and is exploring new avenues for that but on an aesthetic and stylistic front he and I couldn’t be more different and yet as a teacher he was so open-minded and so interested in just improving my style and not imposing his, which is such an important thing for a composition teacher to do, but, I went to him one day and said, “I really love the music of Steve Reich, and I really don’t understand why, if I love it that much, why am I not writing minimalist music, obviously because I love it so much I should be writing it. And I’ve tried, and it doesn’t really work like I don’t seem to be able to write god minimalist music. And I just remember he said, “Do you like dogs?” and I said “yes,” and he
said, “Do you want to be a dog?” And that cleared it up, I was like “ok,” I can like a lot of different music, and I do not have to be any of it. So that was a really big, really great moment. That’s like things that stick with you as a composer. It’s ridiculous because it is never the moments where a composer will say, “oh, shouldn’t that be a C-sharp or whatever, because you know it shouldn’t,” it’s more of the broad moments where you are trying to construct a narrative for yourself as a composer, which we all do. We all try, how does this fit into my sense of self or what the music is doing. To have someone free you from having a whole mid-20s crisis is a great interception. He saved me a lot of times.

JD: So what, from all of your teachers and just you as a composer what do you strive for in your music. You talk about influences and stuff like that but putting it all together, what are your hopes for your music. It doesn’t have to be about your career, just your focus.

ZRW: I think the sole purpose that I am ever am looking for in composing music is to communicate something to somebody, and idea or emotion to someone. I do not know why I would do it otherwise. I’m not interested in the idea of exploration for exploration’s sake. I like new sounds when they communicate new ideas and not when they are merely new sounds. And so, I think communication is key for me, and the beauty of that vagueness of my answer is that a lot of my pieces will explore very different things, very different ideas, emotions. But, I’m always hoping to, through the performer, allow for some idea or story to be told even in intimate music.

JD: I love your TED talks video when you were introducing The Last Words of Ophelia. What was that group of people? Was it mostly students from the university?

ZRW: Yeah.

JD: I figured by your terminology and the introduction. So, going into your style and your process, what is your process when going into a piece to compose.

ZRW: So, the text is always first, it must be first. I can’t even conceive of an accompaniment or harmonic world until I know what the text is all about. Because even if I am looking for a poem about love, where does the poem begin, what mood is at the beginning of the poem? So, I must have the text first. So, like about half of the compositional time is finding text. From beginning to end its like find the text for the first, if I have a year for the piece, it’s like find
the text for the first 6 months searching sometimes even 8 months or 4 months. Once the text is there, I know what to do. And especially if it is a piece where I am compiling a bunch of different texts to try to create a story, that didn’t exist before, like where you are putting poems into a very specific order for a very specific reason, that takes a lot of time. Because you might know that as sometimes do I need a poem here and I know what I need it to do but I don’t know where to find it. So, anyways, text comes first always, and it varies from song to song what happens after that.

With some songs, like *Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love* which is a tenor or soprano song, and there it is like, let the melody be first. Find the text, and it has such a “sing-songy” poetic style I thought, you know, why not write a really simple love song with a great melody and not worry about reinvented anything. And so, in that one, there really is only melody, and the piano sort of hovers around in this way but it is all tied and orbiting around this melody, whereas in a song cycle like *Pictures of the Floating World*. Those poems don’t suggest such a clear melody like Duncan Scott Campbell’s *Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love*. For the Amy Lowell songs, that is much more like creating this Debussy-like world, in those ones the piano texture comes first and then the melody of the voice or just the pitches of the voice are laid over and in conversation with the piano structure. So, for those songs, and you can see it in the way they are written, there is always a bit of piano intro first, and it’s about creating the world for the poem first and then laying the poem over that. As far as the harmony melody question is concerned, it really depends on the text and what the text demands.

**JD:** When you are composing for a specific piece, do you intend for it to be for that specific voice type or are you open to other voice types performing the piece?

**ZRW:** I am open to other voice types singing. This came up with a collected songs edition that was just published by E.C. Schirmer where it was very much in their business interest to normalize several of my songs to soprano when a lot of them were written for high mezzo or tenor, but ultimately, I think of these as high voice songs anyways I will always have a preference that they be sung by the original voice types but I have heard them sung successfully by the other voice types. And I’ll always prefer the person that they were written for too, but that is the kind of fantasy that no composer can ever— just because when you are writing for people who you already know, like here in Staunton, I know these singers now, well enough that somehow if I write a song for Jessica Petrus, the soprano here, it feels weird to hear someone else sing it and
sometimes weird sometimes bad so when I am writing a song I am always writing for that particular voice. Then, hopefully, that translates into other people’s voices, but it has led in interesting directions. Occasionally, like, when I have written pieces for Kevin McMillan, he has such a high baritone, the highest, and would go out of his way to ask for G (G4’s), big G’s and occasionally I will show some of these pieces to other baritones and they will say, “Ooh… I can’t really sing that,” but that is not something I feel spiteful about actually because it was designed for Kevin. So, there are and will be more baritones who want those things, so if you write it for one person there will be more people, but I am very happy for people to sing songs in different octaves and different keys unless in a very particular circumstance there was a gender quality to the song. I think I still wouldn’t care because you can sort of play with that, it changes the meaning of the piece, like in *Pictures of the Floating World*, so much of that is about lesbians and feeling affection towards other women, if a man were to sing that it would feel in a way a bit strange. It’s funny, no one has ever tried to sing that, they just know to stay clear of that, anyways, but no, generally I do not object to that.

**JD:** I am thinking of *After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok*, was that for Kevin?

**ZRW:** No, that was written for Tyler Ward, who was here for a few summers and he runs the Great Lakes Music Festival, a Yale graduate, baritone, very performance, I mean it’s [pretty] out there.

**JD:** It is, and I keep listening to it. At JMU we just had Eric Grendahl, who sang it on his recital, he was incredible.

**ZRW:** I would love to hear that! That is another interesting gender question too, it is such a different piece from *Pictures of the Floating World*, but it is also a completely different poem. I forget what the theme was of the concert that I was writing that for, I think it had a waltz component to the program, but I think some of the audience was mystified by it but at the same time it is just such a great ridiculous poem, and I would love to see that. To see a really lived inside of that kind of song you must be--

**JD:** Are you familiar with Tom Cipullo?

**ZRW:** No, is he a composer?
JD: He is an American song composer but he has a piece called “A Death in the Family,” and it reminds me of that. It’s just crazy, sporadic; it’s part of a song cycle called The Land of Nod.

ZRW: Cool, I will have to look it up.

JD: So, in one of your interviews you say that when you are composing, you’re ultimately aiming for emotional resonance and structural elegance if you could just expand upon that.

ZRW: I feel like, I may be building up a false dichotomy here, but I feel like there are composers who are primarily focused on surface elements of “prettiness,” music that is fundamentally concerned with being “pretty”. Especially in the choral realm, I know a lot of pieces like this where once you’ve heard it once you appreciate its prettiness and every time you hear it after that, it’s the same response. And then, there is music where on the first listening it seems very ugly, but then on repeated listening or on studying you realize it’s structure is very satisfying so that might be music by Webern or Schoenberg. And I think my interest is sort of walking a line between those two extremes and again, I don’t think those are the two extremes but it is to write music that has surface beauty and can be appreciated in a shallow way but then also music that can be better understood through analysis and repeated hearings where it can at least reveal more of itself on repeated listening’s to people that’s my goal and so when I say structural elegance, I essentially mean is just has form in structure that are recognizable and that are rewarding in some sense to someone who looks at it. In some of my songs, I do this better than others. Songs like After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok that are primarily about performance; I think that is one of my less well-structured pieces, and Pictures of the Floating World those are very Schubert like in structure and so it always depends on how the text is shaped. My primary goal is to just not write things that are pretty for prettiness’s sake. Or at least where I feel that the prettiness is justified. Cause we still must pretend that we are not supposed to do this.

JD: So, you say that Bach is a huge influence, specifically Bach’s counterpoint and how does it influence your counterpoint?

ZRW: It really came to me after Eastman. At Eastman, I was still really batting around questions of style. At Eastman, I was primarily concerned with who am I, what am I doing, is it ok what I’m doing, can I be myself, can I write music that is pretty, is it bad that I’m doing that? When I left Eastman, I feel like I started batting around the structural parts of music with like can I write
counterpoint? What actually makes music interesting? How can I make my music more interesting? So, I began a long (period of) “if I’m listening to Classical music, there is a 50% chance that it is Bach, 25% chance it is Handel, and the other music is the remaining 25%.” I think, with Bach, I am always taken by the way his music sounds inevitable but expressive and when you think of the inevitability it seems machine like but with Bach, I always feel like his counterpoint is so inevitable but it is so human, and that was something I wanted to emulate, and it shows up differently in every piece. Some pieces I am trying to channel Bach in a very “Bachian” way. Like at the beginning of The Far West, a new cantata at the beginning, that is me pretending to be Bach. Let’s take the “Aubade” from Pictures of the Floating World. Soft and a love song, that is on the surface very much a romantic lied. It is a love song; it has a repetitive piano texture with a simple melody, the soprano enters. But under the hood the way that the four voices of the pulsing piano accompaniment work if you reduce it, if you just make them whole notes and you play them on stringed instruments, you would see a very carefully considered stepwise motion. The voice leading is always carefully considered, and each voice has a melodic independence if you treat it like that. Counterpoint that is dressed up in Romantic clothing. And there are times when I just say “No Counterpoint,” there doesn’t need to be, like in the Waltz song, that song isn’t so concerned with the careful interweaving of lines, it’s like a chopped up confetti style, where it is like there is a waltz, and we chop it up, we throw it all over the place and sing in between it. So structurally that is very different. In your average sort of just pitches song, to me, the counterpoint and the Bach influence means that each line has expressive meaning and that all of the instruments or voices that are playing have identities and could be sung, that is interesting to me.

JD: How does your experience as a songwriter alter the way you interpret other composer’s songs?

ZRW: One thing that I am always looking out for in other people’s songs that took me a long time to admit I was doing in my own songs is when composers create something that was never there in the original poem. When a composer will take a poem that means one thing and changes its meaning to the musical setting or adds to the meaning through the musical setting, and that is always what I am on the lookout for. This is the reverse answer to your question because it’s something I noticed first in other people’s songs and then going back and realized I had been doing it all along. This is one thing art song does because if it was just the poetry, there was
a song at Staunton a few days ago about a wedding, and the music starts off with this like death march, and you think, “ok,” but that is the extreme example. So, I think I am now always looking out for these moments in songs. What has the composer brought to this that is outside of the text and how do I amplify that? Because I think those are the moments where art song is elevated above like we’re singing pretty poetry and music. It’s where the text says one thing and the musical world around it enriches it and take it to a new level, a different level or just and extreme version of itself. So I think now when I compose songs, I am often looking for moments like what is the text saying am I going to be faithful to it or is it actually going to be something else.

JD: So, talking about the poetry, you have a wide variety of poetry that you use, and I’ve noticed that you use a lot of English poetry. How do you find it, is that what you focus more on?

ZRW: I find poetry a lot of different places, and it is always a struggle, so I am not so interested in setting poems that have been set well before, and there are instances where I have done that. I think of doing another setting of like “Sure on the Shining Night,” am I’m like, why would I do that? I would I put myself in direct competition with Barber when all I am thinking about the whole time is Barber. Why would I do that? So, then the challenge becomes like a lot of the best poems have been set and where do you go to look so, I mean, luckily the internet exists, and for a long time I was just doing Google Books and going and looking for poetry anthologies and reading them and if there was one poem that wasn’t right for the project but was a really good poem, that is how I found Amy Lowell actually. I was looking through poetry collections, and I found one of her poems which was completely not right for Picture of the Floating World and what ended up becoming Picture of the Floating World which at the time was just I must write a song cycle, and I had no idea what to do. And I thought that was really interesting, it was by a woman, it was by an American woman, and then, looking for more of her books, and then thinking, I’ve never heard of this person, I’ve never read poems by this person and this poetry is incredible and trying to create a song cycle out of that. So that is how that particular one happened. I keep a file on my computer called Texts to Set where if I found a poem on the way I’ll just hoard it there and wait. There are probably 60 poems in there right now with things I have found over the years. But I try to always avoid looking for poems in other people’s music and I try to find people I have never heard of like Trench or Duncan Campbell Scott or Amy Lowell, these things, and a lot of times to, I feel like young composers will say, well
who are the best poets and they will go to those best poets when in fact some lyrics have rarely been the best poems or the things that have held up as the best poetry with a lot of songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, you look at the poem and you think, that’s not much of a poem, but again it is what the music does to the poem and how it interacts because sometimes a text that is too perfect gets in the way of interpretation, gets in the way of adding, like, how do you add to Shakespeare? I’ve tried it many times, how to you add to Donne and these poets? We’ve all tried, and sometimes it’s actually really liberating to just find a simple verse poem that would never be taught in poetry class. So, something by Duncan Campbell Scott or similar, *Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love* is a great example. That is a pretty straight forward poem but, so often I am looking for length, for subject, and built-in musicality. If a poem has internal repetition for example that is great, that means it provides structure for me in the song. So, I am working on a piece right now for Trinity Wall Street. It’s a choral-orchestra piece, but the text is still very important. This poem is about child laborers [recites poetry]. That is great, I had never ever heard of Margaret Whitmer before but the moment I saw this I thought it is perfect for musical setting because it is back and forth it has refrain of “Turn Wheels Turn” and that’s the stuff I am looking for and it is a long search, every time! For the American or British angle, I am sort of agnostic; I don’t really care where they came from as long as the poetry works and is in English.

**JD:** Is there a poet you are more drawn to or is it you just find the right one?

**ZRW:** Every piece needs a different thing, but there are poets I keep coming back to. So, like Amy Lowell and Christina Rossetti are two people I come back to a lot. Rossetti more for choral music and Lowell more for art song, just because I feel like with Amy Lowell for example, there are several books full of poems that have never been set to music by her, and they are all good. So, part of it is more people need to know about this poet, a lot of good poetry there and if I am in a rush to find something, I know I can find something in her work. I have done a fair amount of Shakespeare and Donne settings, just because they are great. But it is different for every project, what I am looking for.

**JD:** Are there other composers or other non-music related things that influence you when you are writing?

**ZRW:** Yes, definitely. I am always soaking up other people’s music, like the Staunton Music Festival where we are in 2 concerts a day for
10 days, a number of times during a concert I am like, yeah, that is a really cool piano texture or chord or something where it is always active listening of what can I use and what can I gain inspiration from. So to say it is just Bach is false of course, like Bach and Britten are the two biggest influences, but I have learned so much from Schubert and Schumann, I love Schumann, and I love early music, I love renaissance polyphony I have taken a ton from renaissance polyphony from singing in groups like Thomas Tallis and William Byrd and that kind of style, in a piece that was just premiered a couple days ago, this *Eurydice* piece for solo soprano and string quartet, that piece is all about renaissance counterpoint about how those early church motets work and so for that topic for that text that kind of thing I needed and so I went to Byrd and Purcell and these kinds of composers instead of Schubert or Britten, but for living composers there are some composers I basically like every piece I hear. Jonathan Dove is a great English composer, who I have really loved listening to, Thomas Ades another British composer now living in the US, who I was in residence at the Met for his opera *The Tempest* and is amazing. Musically I love what he is doing. I do love John Adams; I love his operas and a lot of his music and Steven Stucky, my most important teacher at Cornell, and my most important teacher anywhere. He just died of brain cancer just recently it was all very sudden. He was my doctoral advisor; I took a lot from him too. His music style is... he did not write a lot of vocal music at all, a few choral pieces for Chanticleer but mostly orchestral, but his music is so, it’s like Ravel’s music, it’s so brilliant on the surface and so satisfying once you listen to it more and more that I was so inspired by him.

**JD:** I could go on a rant about how much I love Ravel.

**ZRW:** There are moments where I have stolen from Ravel, judiciously, from these people because there is too much good stuff out there to not listen to it with open ears to not use it when you can.

**JD:** So, going into your contribution to the development of American Art Song I feel like this is a question that I will hopefully be able to answer myself about you and your music but where do you see yourself fitting into this modern art song in America.

**ZRW:** It is such a hard question because I have no perspective on myself at all. But it is an interesting question, too, because I do not know what the state of art song is in America and I wonder if it is a healthy state or if it is just limping along.
JD: So, from what I have read, American art song is picking up a lot of speed. It is becoming more well-known, and I think documents like this, and that continue to be written are incredibly valuable and important. You know, you can barely find anything right now because people are starting to write about it, so I really think it is coming to its own, but the thing is, American music, in general, is just so eclectic, and there is no definitive style for it. Each composer is different from each other. I think that is one thing I am trying to figure out.

ZRW: Where does it fit in?

JD: Exactly.

ZRW: I guess I can only answer it for what my hope is. Like, so there is a lot of great work going on especially on the entertaining side. I think of Gabriel Kahane’s *Craigslister* and I think of what a great idea that is and how well executed they are, and they come across sort of as these like witty cabaret songs for now. And I totally love that. I think what I am after is something that is more serious than that. Because even in the After the Waltz piece, that piece is sort of funny but also really about rage, violence, and mental illness. Like it’s not really meant to be a true joke. So I think if there is one thing I am after it is to create or try to carve out a space in America for just serious deep, meaningful art song and we should be sharing music and poetry in that way. So really that is all I can say. And if you do get in touch with the performers they may have a better perspective.

JD: So those are really all the questions I have for you right now.

*The following paragraph was recorded after the initial meeting, the same day.*

ZRW: Just a quick story on that, the *Dichterliebe*, so it was literally that I had been listening to “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai” and loving it so much as one does and was sort of sick and had this fever dream of what it should be something melded and strange and I had been listening to it so much but had never played it before and so I had this idea of sitting down at the piano and just play the gesture and whatever notes happened those would be the notes, and that’s what happened, and they ended up not being bad notes but anyways it was the only time I really ever thought to do that, and it was probably because I was sort of sick and in a weird mental space.
Appendix II

E-mail Messages to Musicians and Zachary Wadsworth

E-mail Messages in Chronological Order

*Abendländliches Lied*

Friday, December 30, 2016, with baritone, Kevin McMillan

JD: What are your overall thoughts? What do you find interesting about the piece? What do you find challenging? How does the text inspire you or challenge you? How much say did you have in the piece? Are there any parts in the piece that specifically speak to you? Vocally, how would you describe this piece?

KM: *Abendländisches Lied* was a great experience for me! It was hugely successful, and all of us performers really appreciated both its structure and how evocative it was for the audience.

Unlike some of the other pieces Zach composed with me in mind, I didn't really have a say in the selection of the poem, but I grew to really appreciate the depth of its melancholy as I worked into it. A very sad poem - colored so much by the horror of WW1 - and pining for things past. Very touching.

It wasn't without its challenges to put together in the compressed rehearsal schedule of the Staunton Festival, but it ultimately made very good sense and worked well.

It was an interesting mix of instruments - the sustaining of the winds/brass punctuated by the ethereal and 'vertical' nature of the harp. Unique and very successful combo.

Vocally, Zach was very kind to me. He kept me largely in mid to high range so that the balance with the winds was relatively easy to achieve. His text setting - as always - seemed to unfold perfectly - even in German - and it was very easy to make the flow of the sentences come to life. What was most memorable for me was his election to make the 'Ruh des Abends' section unaccompanied, high and in mixed voice (falsetto). Very striking and poignant moment.

Does that help? Let me know if you have any other questions about it. Great piece!
On the Death of Claude Debussy:

Tuesday, January 3, 2017, with baritone, Kevin McMillan

JD: Thank you!!!! I am curious about On the Death of Claude Debussy as well. What are your overall thoughts? What do you find interesting about the piece? What do you find challenging? How does the text inspire you or challenge you? How much say did you have in the piece? Are there any parts in the piece that specifically speak to you? Vocally, how would you describe this piece?

KM: On the Death of Claude Debussy was a little more connected to me in personal terms...in that Zach and I did consult about the poem...at least in that when he asked about something I felt appropriate, I replied: 'Well, something Canadian would be nice?' Zach did all the research and found this fascinating poem by Duncan Campbell Scott - a poet we all studied in school in Canada - but with the unexpected connection to Debussy. It was very timely since that year was the 150th anniversary of Debussy's birth.

Here is what I put in the program notes at the Kennedy Center recital where it was performed in an all-Debussy program by JMU faculty:

“When the Staunton Music Festival introduced 2011 composer-in-residence, Zachary Wadsworth, to me with the idea that he might compose a song for me to premiere at the Festival, we mused about texts he might set to music. When I discovered that Zachary now resides in Calgary, we thought it quite appropriate that we honor my country and his newly adopted country by setting the words of a great Canadian poet. Duncan Campbell Scott was, indeed, one of the greatest of Canadian poets, and, without any prior plan for this evening’s program, we were both entranced by his wistful and profound poem written on March 26th, 1918: ‘On the death of Claude Debussy’ from his collection ‘Beauty and Life’. It is pure serendipity that Zachary's song fits so seamlessly into our program this evening.”

Again, vocally, Zach played to my vocal strengths, concentrating on my upper range, and giving me lots of expressive text-painting. The outstanding moment in the piece is the heroic aleatoric passage at the words 'Then with a turn of illumination... Death and Debussy become France and all her heroes...' Really quite an amazing piece of writing.
Musically, Zach's willingness to incorporate one of his favorite pieces of Debussy's piano writing at the end: *Des pas sur la neige* (Preludes, Book I) was a stroke of genius. Very touching. Gabe really loved playing it!
Questions About Songs

Tuesday, January 3, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

*Abendländisches Lied*

JD: What drew you to the text of George Trakl?

ZRW: Carsten Schmidt asked me to write a piece for Kevin to sing on a Staunton Festival concert called "Austro-Hungarian Relations." So, I started a very long search for intriguing texts that captured something of this political and cultural intersection. I loved the rich and vexing imagery in Trakl's text, and I liked that he was Austrian, but his father was Hungarian. I also liked that he was a war poet and that this work was dripping with sadness for the political state of Europe at the time.

JD: Where do you hear the climax of the piece? Listening to it, I get a sense it is around page 13 with the text, “O, ihr Jagden und Schlosser.” What are your thoughts?

ZRW: The word "climax" is a funny one. In a lot of my music, I find that the loudest moment is not always the most emotionally impactful one. Often, the emotional climax comes after the loudest moment. I hear the emotional climax arriving in 147, with the image of the lovers. The highest point for volume, though, is absolutely "Jagden und Schlösser."

JD: I love the chamber trio (oboe, clarinet, horn). Is there any significance to these parts? Do they represent the lovers (in the text) as “one body”?

ZRW: Thanks. When they play together at 147, I am definitely building a musical image of the lovers becoming one.

JD: What do the colors of these particular instruments mean to you? How did you decide what instruments to use?

ZRW: As for why I chose the instruments, I was taking advantage of their built-in associations. The oboe and horn both have pastoral qualities that seemed to fit the text and subject really well. But I wanted to be able to have at least three sustained notes at a time in the ensemble, so I added a clarinet. The harp is soft and lovely, and it seemed a more lyrical fit than a piano would have in this instance.
George Trakl has an interesting story. Critics have said his poetry is disjointed, fragmented in nature, often repetitive in theme and motif without consistent meaning. What do you find is the most important aspect in conveying this piece?

I think finding the larger phrase groupings is essential. For example, mm. 50-67 are full of a lot of different thoughts and images, but it's essential that a singer not try to sing each one individually. If I had composed different music for each image, it would have shattered the lyrical sense that I was striving toward. So, a singer needs to group ideas into one larger frame (like painting a still-life, instead of one painting of an apple, one painting of an orange, etc.).

What would be one word of advice for musicians performing this piece?

Gain an intimate understanding of the text, and the music will fall into place. This poem is so desperate, so sad. By embodying that emotional state (in a world of political upheaval), the music and the text will make so much more sense.

Any interesting things to know about the piece?

This is my first musical setting of a German text.

Cautionary Tales for Children

Are you interested at all in setting music to the remaining poems in the collection poems?

I think it would be fun to expand the set. My main concern, though, is that a lot of the poems in the set are quite politically incorrect to the modern reader. In choosing these three, I was trying to steer clear of texts that might offend certain groups.

What are you looking for from the singer and pianist? Do you imagine this as a character piece or something that should be taken seriously?

These are absolutely character pieces. I'm looking for color and energy from the pianist and comedy from the singer.

Your text painting is obviously incredible in all three pieces. What specifically were you drawn to in your poem selections?
ZRW: Thanks. There were so many wonderful images in the text to tease out in settings, and I also enjoyed adding references that weren't inherent to the text. In the first song, since there is a mention of string, I wrote a piano part that mimics Romantic "spinning songs." In the second song, rather than having the piano sound like a simple "motor car," I had it mimic an old-fashioned ambulance siren. Those extra layers were a lot of fun to write.

JD: Any particular thoughts about performance or ensemble that you feel are important to address?

ZRW: I think it's vital in these songs for the singer to be informal and chatty-sounding. Aside from a few, comically overblown moments, the text and the humor will come across much better from a parlando style than a pure bel canto one.

*The Amber Hand*

JD: Was it originally for two pianos or a string quartet?

ZRW: It was originally for string quartet, but it premiered with the two piano version.

JD: What is the significance of the open fifths in the piano part throughout the majority of the piece?

ZRW: I wanted the songs to have a primordial, natural quality to them, as so many of them deal with wide-open spaces of the sky and space. The perfect fifths are there to support that idea.

JD: “New Moon:” Does the D-flat7 chord at the end have any significance?

ZRW: I wanted to keep this ending open so that it would flow easily into the next song (think "half cadence," except not a V chord). So, this unsettled, non-tonic sonority seemed like the right one in the moment.

JD: “The Moon is Distant:” I love this piece! Again, you use open chords. What color or mood are you trying to convey?

ZRW: Thanks! I was very sick with the flu when I wrote this song. I find this poem extremely disturbing. At first, there is a gentle control (of the moon over the tides). But then, at mm. 50, the "Signor"
enters, and we discover that he is controlling her from afar. The piano's incessant short-long pulses are an expression of fate – just as the tides can't escape the moon's pull, this character is helplessly controlled by this "Signor."

JD: “At a Lunar Eclipse:” mm. 1-6 are incredibly intricate. What was your theoretical process behind this?

ZRW: I would call this an attempt at imitative counterpoint (like Palestrina, but much less tonal). I was taking a counterpoint class at the time, and singing a lot of Renaissance music, so I think I wanted to try it out. In hindsight, I'm not sure that it makes too much sense with the text.

JD: I love how there are vocalise sections throughout the set. My favorite is the final return of the first vocalise at the end. In your opinion, how does this tie the piece together?

ZRW: This was the first time I tried writing a cycle where the texts came from many different authors, so the vocalise sections were meant to imply continuity from one to the other. After all, the poems are all about the moon, so I wanted the singer to be free and celestial at times.

La Corona

JD: Donne has several devotional poems. What struck you about this piece?

ZRW: I loved this set of poems because the last line of each poem becomes the first line of the next. These kinds of structural connections (where the poems are woven together, like a crown) are immensely appealing to me, for the musical opportunities that they provide.

JD: I have read a lot about Donne’s paradoxical attitude about religion and his anxiety driven devotion. I get a sense there is this sort of nervous energy in this particular piece. What are your thoughts on this?

ZRW: Yes, yes, yes. I wrote this poem at a time of great personal difficulty, and that comes through in the piece's nervous energy. There's such an explosive, rage-filled quality to the opening invocation. I don't know if it's faithful to the spirit of Donne, but it felt good at the time to write it this way.
JD: Ideally, would you suggest a lighter or heavier voice for this work? I could see the reasoning for either.

ZRW: Probably a heavier voice. The climactic B-flat requires a lot of volume and weight.

JD: Do you think the violin is more in sync with the voice, the piano, or equally both?

ZRW: These instruments ebb and flow throughout the piece, so I'm not sure if I could make a single decisive statement on this point.

JD: Mm. 147-end the violin and piano are in unison. What are your thoughts on this unity?

ZRW: I like when, in a climax, voices come together. It feels like the exact wrong thing to do, but I find it so musically exciting. Here, such tension has been built up, and it finally comes crashing down, but in an orderly and unified way.

**Days of Innocence**

JD: If now our sun is gone: This piece clearly talks about God and how the “sharpener” sharpens dull blades or people who believe. What are your accompaniment goals in this piece? What do your close-knit chords represent?

ZRW: Yes – this is absolutely religious. The pianist's job is to alternate between mortal/terrestrial and immortal/heavenly. The close chords are the "dull" sounds, that will then be "sharpened" into the more open, sacred, chiming bell sounds in the piano at the end.

JD: Do you see the fifth song as a meditation on children’s innocence or on oneself to be more innocent?

ZRW: This poem feels universal to me, not specific. So, I hear it as applying to everyone and everything.

**Deep Inside the Woods**

JD: I notice a motive, mm. 1-2, that is manipulated throughout the piece. Is it safe to call this a “wandering” motive?
ZRW: Yes. That's a good name for it.

JD: What intrigued you about this poem?

ZRW: I love its imagery. This was well before I wrote *Pictures of the Floating World*, but this poem has the same sense of vivid *mise en scene*. The story is told through objects and images, not through traditional means.

JD: What are your expectations for the singer and pianist?

ZRW: I don't have any specific expectations here, other than creating a mysterious mood.

JD: What is your take on the last phrase, “Let my heart become a stream, slipping like a cold blade deep inside the woods”?

ZRW: I interpret this line as a plea for a release from mourning, or from feeling in general. Something like, "free me from this house of loneliness and mourning, in which I am trapped." The only way to escape the house is by becoming cold.

**The Golden Key**

JD: How did you choose to write for bass and harp? It works so well but is an unusual pairing.

ZRW: Actually, I think it was an assignment! Carsten asked me to write a song for bass and harp, and yes, it turned out to be a beautiful pairing.

JD: In your thoughts, what is the golden key?

ZRW: That's a beautiful question that everyone can (and should) answer differently. I feel that the key is everything that mothers represent: love, safety, warmth, and home.

JD: What is the significance of the returning motive (mm. 1-7). It is heard in various forms throughout the entire piece.

ZRW: I wanted that to sound like a folk song, or some pre-existing scrap of a melody from a far-away land. So here, I use it as a distancing technique, to set the text in a fantastical world of a child's imagination.
JD: What about George MacDonald’s writing intrigues you?

ZRW: I love the little worlds that he creates in his poems.

*Lay Thy Cheek to Mine, Love*

JD: What does the accompaniment represent?

ZRW: I don't know. The essential recurring element is the two-quarter-notes-on-a-single-pitch idea. To me, now, this sounds like the throb of missing someone (even though the singer hasn't left yet)

JD: Unlike most of your pieces, this has a clear key signature? Does this have to do with its simplicity?

ZRW: Yes. I wanted this to be a simple love song. I wrote it out first in my customary way, with accidentals. And then, when I played through the whole thing, I just thought to myself: "This is in E major. Don't lie to yourself."

*Nativity*

JD: What are your favorite aspects of the piece?

ZRW: I like the harmony in this piece, and I remember spending a lot of time on it.

JD: Do you have a full score for the orchestrated version?

ZRW: Yes. *(provides pdf through Dropbox)*

JD: What does the repeated opening (mm. 2-4) represent to you? It seems to start each 4-line section.

ZRW: This is meant to sound like a glimpse into another realm ("immensity").

JD: This piece is absolutely stunning!!!!

ZRW: Thanks :)
On the Death of Claude Debussy

JD: Would you agree that this is sort of an Ode to Debussy? The text is so beautiful.

ZRW: Yes.

JD: Is Debussy’s “Des pas sur la neige” your favorite Debussy piece?

ZRW: No. My favorite is probably the String Quartet, or "La Mer."

JD: Do you see the climax at the Heroic tempo marking with the text “Clasped in the bosom of France…”?

ZRW: Yes.

Present & Future

JD: In terms of ability, would you rate this as a beginner, intermediate, or advanced song for singers and pianists to learn and perform?

ZRW: Beginner or Intermediate.

JD: Where do you think the climax of the text and music are?

ZRW: From measure 28 onward.

JD: Cluster chords (mm. 7-8, 24-25, 39) what does these represent?

ZRW: Actually, I don't know. They seemed right in the moment.

JD: Is there a recording of this piece?

ZRW: No - sorry!

Under the Night Forever Falling

JD: Does the chord in measure 3 (A minor chord with added sharp 6th and 9th) represent the night?

ZRW: Yes.

JD: What would be one word you would use to describe the mood of this piece?
ZRW: Dreamy.

*What to Do When Lost in the Woods*

JD: How did you come across this journal?

ZRW: Actually, the tenor, Tony Boutté, found it. He came to me with the text, and I thought it was hilarious.

JD: What do you believe is the most difficult aspect of this piece?

ZRW: This piece is much like the Cautionary Tales, in that it feels to me like a theatrical character piece. So, the biggest challenge is selling the story in a colorful and humorous way, without seeming mannered, overblown, or unfunny.

JD: Is there a recording of this piece?

ZRW: No, sorry!
Questions for Biography

Tuesday, January 3, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

JD: I have started writing a musical biography of you and had a couple of questions that I didn't seem to ask you in August. Please let me know if any of these questions are too much to ask. I appreciate your time and commitment to this document!!!!

JD: Date of Birth?

ZRW: July 10, 1983

JD: Mother’s Name: Occupation? Musical activities?

ZRW: Mary Ellen Wadsworth. Nurse and Administrative Assistant (retired). Choral singer (still sings with the Richmond Symphony Chorus)

JD: Father’s Name: Occupation? Musical activities?

ZRW: Robert Wadsworth. Psychologist (retired). Has played double bass, guitar, and hammered dulcimer. Currently spends the most time playing the hammered dulcimer in a variety of styles (Classical arrangements, Bluegrass, Celtic, etc.). He has a website: robertwadsworth.com

JD: Siblings? (Names and whether they are older or younger): Occupation? Musical activities?

ZRW: Older sister, Jennifer Love. Elementary School Teacher. No musical activities.

JD: Did you go to public school? Where?

ZRW: Yes. Reams Road Elementary School, Providence Middle School, and Monacan High School (all in Chesterfield County, Virginia).

JD: Piano teacher’s name who had you write everything down? How old were you when you started?

ZRW: Suzanne Malkemus. She died in 2013. I was 12 when I started piano lessons (in October 1995).

JD: How many piano teachers did you have?
ZRW: Two. Suzanne Malkemus (who taught out of her home) until January 1999. She then told me that I needed a teacher who could challenge me more seriously, and I began studying with Melissa Marrion, a piano professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in downtown Richmond, that same month.

JD: Did you take private voice lessons?

ZRW: No - I only sang in choirs.

JD: What was your concentration at Yale? Did anything happen at Yale that really helped refine your compositional writing? Is this where you were introduced to the Staunton Music Festival?

ZRW: I did my MM in music composition at Yale (2005-2007). The biggest things that happened for my compositional style at Yale were singing in the Yale Schola Cantorum (under Simon Carrington, one of the original King's Singers), singing in the choir of Christ Church, New Haven, and meeting and working with some fabulous musicians. I think Yale was where my interest in counterpoint really took off, and it certainly must be related to having been singing so much to pay my rent.

JD: Any standout pieces you composed during your time at Yale?

ZRW: I didn't compose as much as I would like to have during those two years. But I think the best piece that came out of that time is *deep inside the woods*, and I still have some fondness for my *Second String Quartet*, which I also wrote at Yale.

JD: When did you start your DMA at Cornell? How long were you there?

ZRW: I started my DMA at Cornell in 2007, and I left in December 2010. Then, I finished up my dissertation while I was living in Calgary, and I officially graduated in January 2012.

JD: Where does art song fit into your graduate education? What were you composing around this time?

ZRW: I wrote many art songs while I was at Cornell – *Three Lullabies, La Corona, Nativity*, and *Pictures of the Floating World*. So, art songs were the majority of what I wrote during that time. My advisor, Steven Stucky, encouraged me to embrace vocal music, as he seems to have thought that I had a talent for it, and he knew that there weren't many serious composers my age writing in this area.
JD: Did you immediately go into teaching after your DMA? Were there any years in between?

ZRW: Yes, these overlapped. I left Ithaca, NY in December 2010 to move to Calgary. Then I worked on my dissertation for several months and started teaching at the University of Calgary in September 2011. Then I formally graduated in January 2012. So, these things did overlap.

JD: What do you currently teach at Williams College? What have you taught in the past?

ZRW: At Williams, I teach composition classes, music theory classes (at the beginning level for non-musicians, and at higher levels for music students), music history classes (especially focusing on the twentieth-century), and media studies courses (a film composition class, a class about music and the internet, and a class about the films of Wes Anderson).

At the University of Calgary, I taught a graduate course on Benjamin Britten, several music theory and ear training classes, an orchestration class, and several music appreciation classes for non-music-majors.
Questions for Biography (2)

Monday, January 9, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

JD: I understand you did not have her as a Marrion for very long. What training did you receive from her that impacted you as a high schooler and young composer getting ready to go to college?

ZRW: She pushed me hard to learn a lot of repertoire, and to always sing through and intimately know all of my music. She always wanted me to know theory, to be able to sing any of the lines in the piano music that I played and to bring a real sense of connection and expressivity to all music, new and old. She also helped me get into Tanglewood, which had a huge effect on me as a composer and musician.

JD: At Yale, what do you mean by singing so much to pay your rent?

ZRW: I made money singing in choirs at Yale, and this was my primary source of income.

JD: What was the reason for not composing so much at Yale, I assume academics?

ZRW: Yes. Between classes and singing gigs, there wasn't much time or energy left. I also didn't have a huge or consistent commission schedule yet, so I wasn't being motivated by regular deadlines.

JD: How did you know Ivy Wang at Yale? Was she a student or a teacher?

ZRW: She was a fellow student, and we took a class together. The class paired poets with composers so that they could collaborate to write new songs together.

JD: Do you have a digital copy of your dissertation? I looked on the dissertation database and couldn't find it. I am very interested in reading it.

ZRW: Yes - it's attached. (Attached in e-mail)

JD: What have you been up to since graduation besides teaching? It says in your bio, your works have been performed all over the place and that you have been involved in some large programs, specifically as a Fellow of the Douglas Moore Fellowship for
American Opera and the Aspen Music Festival. Can you elaborate?

**ZRW:** I was, for one year (2012-13) a Fellow of the Douglas Moore Fund for American Opera. As part of this post, I traveled around the country to different opera companies, observing how they worked and watched them put together new opera productions. I went to the Met, New York City Opera, Minnesota Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Central City Opera Theater, and the Seattle Opera.

I spent one summer (2002) at the Aspen Music Festival as a composition student. There, I studied with Sydney Hodkinson.

**JD:** When did you meet your husband? When did you get married? What is his occupation?

**ZRW:** Tim and I met in 2001 at the Eastman School of Music. We got married in 2012. He is an organist.

**JD:** When did you win the young composer’s competition with Pacific Chorale?

**ZRW:** That was in 2007.

**JD:** You said you won the Morton Gould Young Composer Awards three times, 2007, 2007, and?

**ZRW:** That was in 2002, 2007, and 2008.

**JD:** I am interested to know about any important events that happened during 2014.

**ZRW:** In March 2014, I had my Carnegie Hall debut. And in November 2014, my "The Far West" was premiered.

**JD:** Sorry for these bio questions... Once I have the bio finished, I can send it to you to make sure everything is ok. Thank you for all your help!

**ZRW:** No worries. My pleasure!
Zachary Wadsworth Art Songs

Monday, January 9, 2017, with tenor, Zachary Wilder

for nothing lesse than thee

JD: Overall thoughts?

ZW: This is a work that Zachary wrote for me and is very dear to me. Donne is one of my favorite poets and Zachary had chosen some very rewarding and intense poems.

JD: What do you find musically interesting about the piece?

ZW: The returning tone rows which inform most of the material, the lambent lyricism that seems to battle the structural components, and the constantly changing relationship between the piano, clarinet, and tenor all really serve the text beautifully. The nod at the end to Schumann is quite beautiful as well.

JD: What was challenging about the piece?

ZW: Tone rows do not tend to sing themselves, but once you learn the rows out of context, which almost all the musical material is based on, you've essentially done all the most difficult melodic work for the piece. Otherwise, like any piece of chamber music, the challenge is in putting all the parts together with the other collaborators.

JD: How does the text challenge you or inspire you?

ZW: It's a very dramatic and direct set of texts that Zachary chose, and there is an arc to the story. The fact that the narrator is speaking directly to his lover can make for a very emotionally charged performance. Donne’s poetry is, however, dense material, so it may take a few readings to parse everything.

JD: What can you say about the way that Zachary sets texts?

ZW: Zachary finds rhythmic underlay that is both natural to speech, but not cumbersome or unwieldy. The music is definitely driven by the meter of the poetry!

JD: In terms of difficulty, where would you gauge each piece?
ZW: I'd say that this is a good challenge for a musically advanced undergrad. Vocally it is not overwhelming for a young intermediate tenor. That being said, the musical and textual material in the piece is a lot to chew on, even for an advanced singer.

JD: Any suggestions for interpretation?

ZW: Zachary gives you quite a bit of material here that guides you into a nuanced reading of the text. I think aiming for a cohesive performance with an eye on the dramatic arc is important.

Three Lullabies

JD: What are your overall thoughts about the piece?

ZW: These works are more of a thematic set of three miniatures rather than an overarching narrative such as with the Donne songs. There is an impressive variety that Zachary could find within the constraints of lullabies both musically and textually.

JD: What do you find musically interesting about the piece?

ZW: The use of modality and folk-like melodies along with the more extroverted vocal writing is what is most remarkable.

JD: How does the text inspire you or challenge you?

ZW: The anxiety in the texts and vocal writing make for an interesting contrast to the concept of a lullaby which allows for dynamism. The challenge is to find both levels (lullaby v. back narrative) within each piece.

JD: In terms of difficulty where would you gauge each piece? Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced?

ZW: Musically these works are less challenging than the Donne songs, but are vocally more difficult. The final movement requires quite a bit of legato and sustain, and the work lives more in the passaggio. I'd say these songs lie somewhere between intermediate and advanced.

JD: Any suggestions for interpretation?
ZW: Enjoy the unabashed lyricism and theatrics (especially in the Shakespeare song)!

*Under the Night Forever Falling*

*JD:* What are your overall thoughts about the piece?

*ZW:* It's a very cool moody concept piece. A sort of compositional etude based on the structure of the poem.

*JD:* What do you find musically interesting about the piece?

*ZW:* The structure which is based on the syllabic count of each line as well as the large-scale mirror-inversion of the melody. It is also a very twisty melody that garners its interest from the harmonic underlay.

*JD:* How does the text inspire you or challenge you?

*ZW:* The Christian-inspired text is much more opaque here, requiring some poetic and biblical analysis to wrap your head around.

*JD:* In terms of difficulty where would you gauge each piece? Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced?

*ZW:* Intermediate, though vocally, this sits very much in the middle-voice.

*JD:* Any suggestions for interpretation?

*ZW:* I would say that spending time with the poetry is important and not shying away from the mysticism and moodiness of the work.
Zachary Wadsworth Art Songs

Friday, January 13, 2017, with soprano, Annamarie Zmolek

Days of Innocence

JD: What are your overall thoughts about the piece?

AZ: I love these songs so much. They truly reflect the innocence of Zach as a sophomore undergrad composer, a perfect picture of his youthful style! I remembered being so excited and honored that my friend wanted to write a set of songs for me, yet nervous because my abilities to read complicated music and rhythms were still not very strong. But I knew that because Zach also sang, he wouldn't write anything strange or uncomfortable to sing. He gave me midi files of the music to study with, and I can still hear that buzzy sound in my head as I listen to the songs. The songs really helped me learn to read music better and be more rhythmically accurate. It was also good ear training since some of the accompaniment was so spare but always gave you something to hang on to, tonally. We coached the songs a lot together with Zach and the pianist, Cory Bonn. When it came time to perform the songs, they really came naturally because of how well-written they are and how hard we had worked on them. I actually kept an occasional diary of that time and wrote about the performance: "I loved hearing the sound flow, it felt very suspended and lovely. We created something. This music didn't exist before, and Zach wrote it, and Cory and I performed it, and it was the first time and so new." How innocent we were!

JD: What do you find musically interesting about the piece?

AZ: I love the piano motives that shape each piece. I love the way the text flows and sits in a speech-like manner. The way rhythm and syncopation are used makes it all feel a little unsteady in a good way, like a foal learning to walk. There are not grand romantic melodies for the voice, just little bits of flourish here and there. The piano and voice work together so charmingly, with water motives or the occasional chase, Song 4. I think it's the perfect way to set e. e. cummings.

JD: How does the text inspire you or challenge you?

AZ: These poems are really great. A lot of the invented words are so fun, like “mudluscious” and “puddle-wonderful.” I wish I had had better diction, especially for final consonants to make sure all the
wordplay came across! The third song was definitely confusing to me at first until I realized what was going on and learned about the whole knife-sharpener door to door guy. The diction on the last song was difficult because it was set so high, but it gives it an ethereal, innocent quality that is perfect. Also, the bit of spoken text on the first page was confounding to me. How to speak that line? I think simple always works for this piece.

Jd: Any interesting things you would like to add to the piece?

Az: I think I've said enough! :)

Jd: Regarding difficulty, where would you gauge each piece? Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced?

Az: I would say intermediate. They require a flexible voice, a good ear, and a good sense of rhythm, but they aren't so impossible in terms of range and texture. Songs 2 and 4 are a little harder because of the fast tempi and vocal leaps. I think all but the first song could stand alone outside the cycle.

Jd: Any suggestions for interpretation?

Az: For these songs, a simple, clear vocal production is good. There are moments of straight tone noted in the score. The words should always come first, though there are a few lines where the voice can blossom. So, it is nice to have, again, a flexible voice and a good sense of where to bloom and where to sing more straight tone/speech-like.

The Amber Hands

Jd: What are your overall thoughts about the piece?

Az: This is a gorgeous, luscious set of songs. The poems are so interesting and atmospheric. We see the moon from all sides: luminous and welcoming, red and violent, supernatural, free or fettered. Zach wrote these for my senior recital, and you can really see the contrast between the simpler, more innocent e. e. cummings songs. The intent was to have a string quartet, but it was a busy spring semester, and that didn't come together. So, Zach and our good friend Nate Adam played four hands at the piano. I would love to hear the songs with a strong quartet (which I think might since have happened?), but the percussive piano worked really well, in the end.
JD: What do you find musically interesting about the piece?

AZ: I think the thicker texture of the accompaniment and the dramatic setting of the poems are awesome. There is a real mood to each song, yet they flow together beautifully. I love the vocalize to start and end the set, drawing it thematically together.

JD: How does the text inspire you or challenge you?

AZ: The text is inspiring. This set has a higher tessitura, which I like, but can be challenging for diction. We had to play around with a little vowel modification here and there. I had never sung the word macula. Zach really found some great poems!

JD: What can you say about the way Zachary sets texts?

AZ: Zach really thinks about how the words are spoken. He has a great knack for using complicated-seeming rhythms which, once learned, flow beautifully with the words. The mix of triplets and dotted and undotted duplets allows for great flexibility. He just has such a natural way with words.

JD: Any interesting things you would like to add to the piece?

AZ: We were both ushers at the time, and I had figured out that there was a blue light you could turn on for the stage lights which just looked so cool. So, even though it made it hard for Zach and Nate to read the music, we used it. It was so great, these songs were last on the program, and we walked out and bowed and then as the silence fell, they switched on the blue light. Everyone gasped! It was a really cool moment and made it feel like we were outside under some blue moon. Zach's songs already set such a mood, but the lighting on top of that made things magical!

JD: In terms of difficulty where would you gauge each piece? Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced?

AZ: I would say these are pretty advanced. They require a big range and a strong, flexible upper passaggio. They also have some low notes that need a decent chest voice. The notes and rhythms themselves aren't too hard, but putting it together in a natural way and following all the dynamic markings makes it trickier. The third song might be standalone, but I think the other songs wouldn't be as strong outside the context of the cycle.

JD: Any suggestions for interpretation?
AZ: I think everything is there in the music. Follow the dynamic markings! I didn't always, in the recording, and in each case, it would have been better if I had! Speaking the words a lot could also help make the flow of the vocal line better and more natural.

*Pictures of the Floating World*

AZ: I also want to say, though they were not written for me, I have performed *Pictures of the Floating World* a few times in the last few years. I love that set of songs so much, especially the gorgeous, lied-like “Aubade.” The poems (and their setting) bring tears to my eyes, especially the two little boys in the third song, who may well be headed to war one day. The songs are just so timely in this troubled world of ours.

It has been an honor to work with Zach, and see him take his already considerable gifts and grow as a composer over the years. In all his vocal writing, there is that wonderful text setting, the flow of triple vs. duple meter, the blossoms of gorgeous melody here and there. His manner of setting text is an unmistakable musical watermark. His writing style can be everything from an ethereal supernatural atmosphere to an angry rhythmic screed and everything in between. He's just the best.

Thanks for a wonderful trip through some great musical memories. Let me know if you have any other questions and I would love to read your paper when it is done!
Document Questions

Monday, January 23, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

for nothing lesse than thee

JD: You said during our interview that there was an entire story behind this work. I would love to hear about it.

ZRW: That story is really about a relationship ending.

JD: In your opinion, what is the role of the clarinet? It fragments a lot of what the voice is doing, and I notice it weaving in and out of the voice and piano lines.

ZRW: Yes. At the time, I remember feeling like it was a juggling act. I didn't want the clarinet, which is higher, to overshadow the voice, so they do a lot of complimentary performance. If I were writing for the same group now, I would be less worried about that. But these were my first tenor songs, so I was still figuring out how to have a melody going in the middle of the musical texture.

JD: Do you purposefully use class sets in this piece? It might just be the particular motive that you like and use repeatedly. (I keep finding 0135 and sometimes with added 7 or 9)

ZRW: Yes.

JD: What are your thoughts on “The Sunne Rising?” Where did you get your inspiration? How did you structure it? I loved that this character in the text was deriding the sun for rising because he wanted to stay in bed with his love. As for the structure, it's somewhat modular. The gesture starting with the pickup to measure 5 keeps coming back, subtly changed to match the text. It's like he's lashing out with insults, and he keeps finding new ways to say the same thing.

ZRW: There are two motives that I can pick out in “The Dreame.” Both of which are the first two lines of the vocal line. The pitches that form the motive are found in chords throughout the piece. Are there any specific reasons for this?

I liked that gesture, because, if you collapse all of the notes into the same octave, you just get a rising scale. It provides a lift to the movement. And that song is really channeling “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai.”
JD: The way you align the text is perfect for the voice. How do you do about setting texts?

ZRW: I could probably write a whole book about just that.

When setting text syllabically, I always want to follow text stress, but not in a way that becomes too regular or predictable. When we say "morning," for example, I hear that as, under a triplet, a quarter note and then an eighth note. But when we say "longing," a very similar word, I hear it more as a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth. This alternation between triple and duple divisions of the beat is at the center of making an English text sound authentic.

Then there's the question of melisma. I tend to write melismas much less often than other composers because I worry about doing damage to a poem's sense of direction. But some words, like "love" in "The Dreame," are just begging to open up and flower into their own melodies.

JD: John Donne is a genius here with these texts. What themes are you trying to convey in these three pieces?

ZRW: This cycle has less of a unified theme than a lot of my later cycles. In the broadest sense, the first poem is about giving away a part of yourself to someone else, the second poem is about being so intensely in love with someone else that you never want it to end, and the third song is a meditation on where to go after that relationship is over.

The Bad Child's Book of Beasts

JD: Are you using modern techniques in these pieces? I am finding a lot of polytonality, centricity, and whole tone scales.

ZRW: Yes. These are all things I play with a lot.

JD: Does the 16th note motive in “The Whale” represent splashing?

ZRW: Maybe more rippling waves than splashing water.

JD: “The Hippopotamus” is so fun! What is your take on the first eight measures? I imagined it being like a hippo coming up out of the water slowly.
ZRW: It's such a short poem that I thought it needed a tiny bit of *mise en scene* before the animal barges in. I guess, if we're thinking picturesquely, that would be the calm scene before the Hippo barges in.

JD: Dodo: What does this ostinato bass line represent. Are you suggesting a tonal center?

ZRW: Yes. And that feels like an evocation of flatness, of neutrality, and of gray. This animal is gone forever, and I wanted that fact to be presented with a steely sadness.

JD: The bass line from mm. 6-21 create a sort of palindrome? Was this intentional?

ZRW: No! But intention doesn't always mean something didn't happen by accident.

JD: In your opinion, what represents the Dodo musically?

ZRW: I think the right hand of the piano, with its bright melody, represents a happier time that is now gone.

JD: “The Marmozet:” This piece seems the most tonal to me, and I am getting a prominent G tonal center. Do you agree?

ZRW: Yes.

**After Hearing a Waltz by Bartok**

JD: This text seems so different compared to her other texts in *Pictures of the Floating World*? In your opinion, how do they compare?

ZRW: This is quite different, and I love that. Amy Lowell can be delicate and sublime, or deliciously grotesque.

JD: What do your E-flat-D (minor 9th's) represent? They are so prominent and create this motive that I associate with the morbid air of the piece.

ZRW: These are definitely supposed to sound like a morbid, melted call to the dance. A lot of existing waltzes use that same rhythm, but usually just with an octave. The minor 9th makes it sound far more violent.
JD: You use this driving rhythmic motive that happens throughout the entire piece (mm. 1-4), any significance?

ZRW: This feels very waltz-like to me.

JD: At measure 206, does this chord represent the dead body?

ZRW: It's nothing that literal. Those chords are just meant to paint a quiet sense of unease.

JD: Do you have any tonal center that you think this piece might fit around? I am getting a lot of E-flat.

ZRW: I hear G as the tonal center (climaxing with the resolution in mm. 334-336).

**Pictures of the Floating World**

JD: “The Garden...” Does the melodic interlude represent falling leaves from mm. 42-50?

ZRW: Yes.

JD: I am getting a strong sense of the key of A, is this clear to you or do you find that is it centric?

ZRW: Yes, though it strays in the middle.

JD: There are a few instances throughout the piece where major 3\textsuperscript{rd}'s and minor 3\textsuperscript{rd}'s create a pattern in the accompaniment (mm. 27-30, mm. 56-59, and mm. 63-66) What were you going for in this section?

ZRW: A blurring effect, like in Impressionist painting.

JD: “Opal:” Again, with the piece surrounding the tone A, do you call this the key of A, or is it centric?

ZRW: I don't typically distinguish between "in A" or "starting and ending with A." But yes, A is certainly the important pitch center.

JD: Measure 21, you introduce a G-sharp into the melodic variation, which for me, helps confirm with centricity around A, what are your thoughts?
ZRW: That's a reasonable assertion. G-sharp is definitely pointing to A here.

JD: Any reason for taking out the scale degree 2 in mm. 52-55 (A-?-C-D-E-F-sharp-G-sharp-A)

ZRW: It fits the hands better this way, and leaving out the B allows for straight 32nd notes. Otherwise, it would have to be a 9-tuplet.

JD: “September, 1918:” Where does centricity fit into this piece, or doesn't it? I hear B-flat, what are your thoughts?

ZRW: B-flat is right.

JD: I love the B major section you throw into the mix. In my understanding of centricity, using semi-tones to surround the main tone is a great way of introducing centricity into a piece, do you agree? If not, what are your thoughts on this?

ZRW: Yes, I like that it is different, but still orbiting very close to home. B-flat is the music of war, and B major (at measure 33) is so much more hopeful, as it's a half-step higher.

JD: Mm. 63-65, ending on B-flat with a descending B-flat major arpeggio and an ascending E-flat minor arpeggio, what theoretical ideas did you have ending the piece like this?

ZRW: The left hand is the right hand, inverted. I liked the idea that the piano would, after avoiding the tonic and favoring F instead, then, like a laser beam, land on the home note in unison.

JD: “Storm-Racked:” Throughout the entire piece, the 16th note phrases are showing a descent from B to E, is this establishing E as a tonal center?

ZRW: This song modulates, I think. It feels like it starts in B (to me), and it ends on E, which prepares the “Aubade.”

It's worth noting that I added this song after the cycle's premiere. It seems like it needed an additional fast song, and I wanted to really prepare the delicacy of “Aubade” with the wildness of this poem.

JD: Also, mm. 60-64 starts with contrary motion leading into measure 64 four starting on E, is this again establishing E as the tonal center?
Yes, things expand out from E, and then they collapse back down to E.

“Aubade:” Such a beautiful work. What does this piece mean to you? The careful voice leading is apparent!

Thanks! This is a love poem, but it's subversive and very highly erotic. I liked the idea of creating a simple, careful, and expressive world, in the vein of Strauss's "Morgen," but all for this song that ultimately expresses same-sex attraction between women. The tonality and Romanticism here needed to express an idea that these feelings are genuine, and that they are natural.

This was the easiest song to write – I wrote it in one sitting,

“A Dream in Wartime:” on the first page, you stay very close, in terms of tonal centers. E, F, and E-flat. Is there any centrical value to this page of your work?

I suppose I thought of this as a recitative, leading into the next section. And like any recitative, it moves around harmonically before landing at measure 24.

The final two pages introduce again, which started the piece! One, it's brilliant! Two, please tell me you are using centricity?

Yes, it was important that the song cycle end where it began.

Centricity

What does centricity mean to you? Is this something that is intentional, or do you compose what sounds good and logically makes sense?

Every note is intentional, and I'm always looking to create connections, whether that be in scale, interval, central note, set-class, etc.

One of the characteristics of your works, specifically from these four pieces is your use of centricity. I am gathering that it may be intentional, at least from what I see structurally in some of these pieces. Would you agree? If I am crazy wrong, please let me know!

I like the story-telling that can happen with designing key schemes. In my The Far West, each movement is centered on a note a step
lower than the movement before. So, the whole piece is this gradual scale downwards. Having a clear plan for keys allows me to chart out meaningful pitch areas and pitch relationships to the piece.

JD: Who are your influences when thinking about how you are going to set something theoretically? Do you just write it out and see what happens, does it take long when thinking this stuff out?

ZRW: I always start the composition process with one or two ideas. Like in *Pictures of the Floating World*, "Opal" began from the idea that the pianist would play the highest and lowest notes on the piano, representing "ice" and "fire." Every other decision flows from the first decision.

Or in "if now our sun is gone," from *Days of Innocence,* that first measure in the piano, the [012345] pentachord, became the seed, but only expressed as the collision of two [024] trichords. Then, like a seed, the song developed through imitation, elaboration, and defiance (the chord in measure 5 is contrast, for example).

I don't start every song with a theoretical plan like some composers (especially serial ones) do. And if theory leads me to a place that doesn't sound right according to my ear, I will change it until it sounds right. But theory allows me to identify something as a motive and reuse it later in a song for expressive purposes.
Text Setting Questions

Thursday, March 2, 2017, with the composer, Zachary Wadsworth

JD: Can you walk me through your process of figuring out how you set texts. What do you look for? When spelling it out on paper, what do you do? Do you hear the rhythm in your head and write it down? How long does it take?

ZRW: I look first for the pivotal words – often, it's a single word or phrase that will be a point of climax, of textural change, etc. Then I map out the poem's form and try to imagine the musical sections that will work with each poetic section.

Then, I read the poem to myself and try to hear where it suggests triplets, duplets, or dotted rhythms. I'm never aiming for absolute realism in my text setting, but rather for an expressive musical reflection of the rhythms of "normal" speech.

If I have a rhythm that I want to recur, I will often write it next to the poem, and then I will highlight or circle moments when it might recur.

JD: Your settings are very similar to Britten's in the sense that you seem to really think about how one would speak it. Do you have any comments on Britten's work? Any one that stands out to you when reflecting on your own text settings?

ZRW: I absolutely love Britten's text-setting, especially because he isn't afraid to occasionally use a rhythm that works against "natural" speech (like in "Now until the break of day" from Midsummer Night's Dream - this kind of rhythmic rigidity is something I've mimicked many times). But as for the naturalistic text-setting in Britten, nothing can beat the opening scene of Peter Grimes. He manages to perfectly paint the different characters' moods through their speech inflection. I particularly love the way he sets the oath, where Hobson sings "I swear by Almighty God" with military precision, and then Grimes echoes him in a way that suggests his traumatized state.

JD: What is your favorite text you have set? Why is it your favorite? What did the text allow you to do musically and emotionally?

ZRW: This would have to go to the poems of Tim Dlugos that I set in The Far West. His poetry is raw and real, but it often still preserves older poetic forms, meters, and rhyme schemes. This sense of form
makes it beautiful to sing, but its subject matter and tone are more contemporary and modern than a lot of poems I've set. It allowed me to write music that felt true to my style but to also comment meaningfully on a huge emotional scar of the twentieth-century (the AIDS crisis).

**Texts of for nothing lesse than thee**

**JD:** How did you go about selecting these three particular Donne poems?

**ZRW:** They were all in a book of poetry that my mother had at my childhood home in Richmond. One uninspiring reason that I chose them is that they were all the right length for a song. But they also provided the opportunity to explore different emotions about love - anger, excitement, loss, etc. These were all moods that I was experiencing at the time.

**JD:** All three are about love and love's desires. Comparing the first and third with the second is quite interesting. “The Sunne Rising” is the only one in which we are confident that the narrator has his lover. The others suggest the loss of his love. What are your thoughts on the order and layout of these texts?

**ZRW:** I hear the second song as a memory of the initial sparks of romance. So, the first song is tinged with betrayal, the second with nostalgia, and the third with strange hope. In a way, I think this cycle is about the process of moving on after a relationship has ended.

**JD:** What was the finding process like?

**ZRW:** I had no real plan to write a song cycle when I opened that anthology of Donne's poems, but when I saw the first lines of "The Legacie," I knew I wanted to write a piece with them. From there, it was really just a matter of days before the three poems were selected and ordered.

**JD:** Were there other texts that were strongly considered, if so, what were they, and why did you conclude that these three worked the best?

**ZRW:** For every cycle I write, countless poems are considered. But once one is selected, they rarely get cut out. So, these were the first three that I settled on, and I stuck with them.
More Questions

Thursday, March 9, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

JD: Are you composing a lot on your own or are you usually commissioned to write a song or piece?

ZRW: I am almost exclusively composing to commission now.

JD: Have most of your songs been commissioned through Staunton Music Festival?

ZRW: Many but not all. I'm writing a cycle right now for a tenor in Illinois, for example.

JD: From my understanding, you are asked to compose a piece for a certain voice type with a certain instrument, and that is it. Everything else is up to you, is that correct?

ZRW: It varies widely from commission to commission, but I almost always ask the singer or commissioning organization what they are interested in, particularly when it comes to poetic theme or topic. In Staunton, for example, Carsten Schmidt almost always gives me a concert theme to work with.

JD: When writing out melodies, what do you think about? I know you have conjunct and disjunct melodies. Each one seems to have a special purpose for that piece, it is well thought out and flows perfectly in its own special way.

ZRW: In songs, vocal melodies always serve the text. So, I'm always looking to reflect, amplify, or (at times) complicate the text's meaning with the melodies that I write. Every text is different, so my approach to melody is always changing.

ZRW: Do you just decide beforehand whether you want the melody to be conjunct or disjunct? Whatever the text demands, is that correct?

JD: Exactly. Whatever a text seems to demand.

ZRW: What would you consider to be your rhythmic style? It is kind of a weird question... I feel like you do your best to stay true to the text and add to the rhythmic style depending on the intensity and emotional level of the piece. Are there any pieces of yours that stand out to you as being a piece that you rhythmically admire?
JD: This is a great question, and you're right that I tend to use a kind of modified, gently lengthened speech rhythm in a lot of my vocal writing.

ZRW: I like when rhythm can evoke the feeling of a specific time period. Sometimes, for example, the quickest way to make music sound more like "Renaissance" music or "Baroque" music is to use a repeating rhythm taken from that period.

As for composers I rhythmically admire, it's a long list: Steve Reich, Stravinsky, Handel, Varèse, Messiaen, Britten, and so on. Whenever a composer uses rhythm in a way that deepens a musical gesture, I'm impressed.

**Deciding on Musical Material**

JD: Knowing that Amy Lowell's poetry was part of the imagist movement during the early twentieth-century, how does your music influence this style and how did you decide what musical material to compose? How does your music depict the imagist qualities of the poem?

ZRW: With Amy Lowell, I tend to think a lot more about rich harmony as a way of painting her beautiful poetic moods and colors. To my ear, the harmony is where her poetic imagism lies.

JD: What piece in *Pictures of the Floating World* do you feel embodies the "aura" of the entire set? To me, it seems like “Aubade” is the most striking in terms of feeling, and I get a sense of relief after the piece has ended, of course then you have “A Dream in Wartime” following, which is incredible as well.

ZRW: I'm always hesitant to tell a listener which song carries the strongest impact, as I often suspect that different people have different responses to each song. “Aubade” has a very important dramaturgical role in the cycle, as this kind of musical oasis. But, I think the true spirit of Lowell's imagism, and of the title of the cycle, lies more in other songs (like the first song, or "A Dream in Wartime").
More Questions

Tuesday, March 14, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

JD: How did you work through the set class 0135(7, 9) in for nothing lesse than thee? I find it all over the place in “The Legacie” spread throughout the melodic line and accompaniment. What was the organization behind this, if any?

ZRW: I liked the idea of piecing together a melody gradually, which happens throughout the first seven measures of this piece. And yes, the 0135 tetrachord does keep coming back. I often enjoy using trichords and tetrachords to organize my melodic and harmonic language, and they appear throughout this cycle.

JD: Wondering if there are any patterns that would be beneficial for performance purposes that I am missing?

ZRW: In “The Sunne Rising,” there is this playful use of chromaticism in 4 to 5 note groupings.

JD: Are these set classes (0123(4)) and (0235) that you are writing here?

ZRW: I was thinking of these less as set classes and more as expressions of agitation (to suit the text).

JD: There are also a lot of third relations and tritones? Are there patterns to these, or anything I am missing? I have been trying to wrap my head around these pieces theoretically, and it just hasn't clicked yet...

ZRW: There's no master plan in these songs, unfortunately - a lot of my later stuff is much better-organized. I was still experimenting with set classes in a free way that led me to some unexpected places.

JD: In measure 59 of “The Sunne Rising,” the vocal line displays a twelve-tone row. Was this intentional?

ZRW: Huh! I've done 12-note games in pieces, but I'm not sure that I noticed this one. That's cool.

JD: In “The Dreame,” throughout the piece, you play around with motivic development, was this intentional?

ZRW: Yes, always.
JD: “The Dreame:” How do you determine where and when to put motivic material. Is it planned?

ZRW: Sometimes motifs are tied to specific things (like leitmotifs), but more typically, I use motifs as recurring gestures that amplify a mood but aren't meant to refer to any specific idea, character, or plot.

JD: Do you find for nothing lesse than thee to be centric? Are there any particular keys you were trying to suggest?

ZRW: No. I have a hard time identifying a specific "key" for any of these.

JD: I find that there is a sort of progression in pitch centers that takes place in *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts*: Whale: G, Hippo: B-flat, Dodo: G, Marmozet: G. Is there any of this that you disagree with?

ZRW: I love playing with key relationships (*The Far West* and *Spire and Shadow* do this in much more interesting ways than the cycles). I hear the Whale starting in C and modulating to G. The Dodo is, I think, more in C than in G. Otherwise, these look right.

JD: “The Dodo:” Mm. 25-end, what are you going for here? It’s really cool, but I'm not clear if there is a pattern set structure or scale or something...? It ties the entire song together perfectly with the wandering-like motion leading into the unknown, or better yet, leading into extinction.

ZRW: Exactly. This is meant to sound like the unraveling of time, as we imagine a species going extinct. There's no specific tonal organizing scheme here - I felt these ones out without any plan.
Present and Future and What to Do When Lost in the Woods

Monday, April 10, 2017, with composer, Zachary Wadsworth

Present and Future

JD: What about this Christina Rossetti’s poetry inspired you?

ZRW: I've always loved the emotional depth in her poetry.

JD: “A Bride's Song:” The sonore entrance of the accompaniment at measure 1 returns several times. It seems to be somewhat of an arpeggiated tone cluster with a central tone being G, do you agree? What does this motive represent?

ZRW: Yes, G is the central note here. It's a big, elaborated dominant chord. It doesn't represent anything literal, but I treat it as an important arrival point throughout the song.

JD: “A Bride's Song:” Does the accompaniment starting at measure 7 (16th-note figure) represent the happiness of marriage and its youthful energy?

ZRW: It definitely represents a kind of nervous agitation and excitement. As she travels to her own wedding, we can imagine how she feels, and I was hoping to portray this excited energy in the piano part.

JD: “Hand in Hand:” Does the triple 16th-note figure represent birds by any chance?

ZRW: It has a quality of bird-song, yes!

JD: “A Smile and a Sigh:” Do the descending thirds in the left hand represent anything in particular?

ZRW: No, I think they have more of a harmonic significance.

JD: “Grown and Flown:” Is there a significance to the right hand line in the accompaniment from mm. 17-end.

ZRW: I think you mean the left hand here? The right hand's part is so repetitive and stable that I wanted the left hand's notes to destabilize things. This fit with the text, which is all very dark.

JD: “Present and Future:” I know the piece ends up in D-flat, but you seem to set the singer up nicely with the D-flat's in the opening.
Any significance to the seconds and thirds in the left hand? What moods are you trying to evoke?

**ZRW:** The mood definitely changes in the middle of this song. The closer harmonies at the beginning suggest an unsettled character to me, and the D-flat major settles into a much less complicated emotion of hope and joy.

**JD:** Would you consider this piece to be polychordal?

**ZRW:** It suggests a white-key / black-key division, with the right hand playing mostly on the white keys and the left hand playing mostly on the black keys.

**JD:** What piece, to you, is the pivotal moment where everything starts to change for the narrator?

**ZRW:** "Pastime" is the pivotal song for me. When she sings "Better a wrecked life than a life so aimless," she is deciding to end her relationship.

**What to Do When Lost in the Woods**

**JD:** What is the significance of the ascending and descending arpeggiated line in the following measures? Do they represent something? A "getting lost" theme? (9-12, 21-22, 78-81, 122-124, 127-132, 135-141)

**ZRW:** Yes, I like the "getting lost" idea to those flourishes.

**JD:** What do you feel is the most important thing for a singer and pianist to take away from this piece? Would you suggest performing as a character piece or something a little more serious?

**ZRW:** It's definitely a character piece, so I hope the performers would approach it with a sense of lightness and theatricality.

**JD:** The section starting at measure 51 is so different from the other sections. What do you feel is the significance of this section, leading into the return of the "getting lost" figure at measure 78?

**ZRW:** Even when writing light music, I like the idea of including moments of calm, of seriousness, or even of sadness. So, this section was a place for things to be a bit more anchored in seriousness before the bombast returned.
JD: Do you sense a formal structure in this piece? We get this return of the A section, but it seems to wander off after the last time it appears. Any thoughts on this?

ZRW: Things unfold in a formally straightforward way (kind of $ABA$) until measure 110. I thought the text took a left turn here into this very funny cautionary tale of everything that could go wrong and kill you. So, I liked the idea of having the piece pivot suddenly into this dark, driving music.

JD: In terms of difficulty, where does this stand in your opinion? To me, it seems intermediate. It's a nice range with some interesting meter changes, seems pretty tonal. Thoughts?

ZRW: Yes, intermediate seems accurate.
Appendix III

Annotated Catalog Note Value Abbreviations and Level of Difficulty Breakdown

Note Value Abbreviations:
- DEN Dotted Eighth-Note
- DHN Dotted Half-Note
- DQN Dotted Quarter-Note
- EN Eighth-Note
- HN Half-Note
- QN Quarter-Note

Level of Difficulty Descriptions:

**Beginner**
- Novice
- Short and/or reasonable in length
- Tonal
- Rhythmic simplicity
- Little to no change in tempo and/or meter
- Realistic range for singer, comfortable tessitura

**Intermediate**
- Medium length, not necessarily long or short
- Hints of atonality
- Challenging rhythmic patterns

**Advanced**
- Atonal or lack of tonal center
- Difficult rhythmic patterns
- Obscure ensembles
- Longer in length
- Frequent changing of tempo and/or meter
- Expansive vocal range. Pushes vocal limits
Appendix IV

Songs and Vocal Works Not Included in this Document

Canticle II: "I made a song one morning"
May 2016
Contralto and piano
5 minutes
commissioned by contralto Sara Couden

Eurydice
July 2016
Soprano, two violas, and two cellos
12 minutes
commissioned by the Staunton Music Festival

Secret Songs
March 2017
Tenor and piano
18 minutes
commissioned by tenor Justin Vickers
Bibliography


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