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

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS: THREE NEW AMERICAN WORKS AND TWO ANTHOLOGIES

The three new American works reviewed here are extremely different in subject matter, musical materials, and style; thus the title "A Study in Contrasts." They are representative of the eclecticism of American song, especially in this twenty-first century. The two anthologies, also, are in stark contrast, representing the two streams of American music that have always existed in our culture: classical and nonclassical, in this case recital and music theater.

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BISCARDI, CHESTER (b. 1948).

SAILORS & DREAMERS (Shirley

Kaplan, Lyrics) for Voice and Piano

(also for Voice and Chamber Ensemble).

Biscardi Music Press, 2010. Tonal; A₂-

D₄; Tess: mL-M; moderate to slow

tempos (♩ = 48-72); V/E-mD, P/mE-D;

53 pages. Baritone.

"Head Out" [introduction]. G centered; D₃-D₄; Tess: mL; 4/2, 3/2, 2/2, 3/4, 6/4, ♩ = ca. 60 or slightly slower; V/mE, P/E; 1+ pages.

1. "You've Been on My Mind." D major-E minor; A₂-C₄; Tess: M; 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 7/8, ♩ = ca. 72; V/M, P/M; 3 pages.

2. "Play Me a Song." C major-C₄ major; B₂-C₄; Tess: mL; 4/4, 5/4, 5/8, 9/8, 11/8, etc., ♩ = ca. 72-69 tenderly, but firm *con rubato*; V/M, P/M; 8 pages.

3. "Seven O'Clock at the Cedar (Ode to Kline/deKooning)." Tonal; B₂-D₄; Tess: mL; 2/4, 7/4, 11/8, 9/8, etc., ♩ = ca. 66; V/M, P/M-mD; 7 pages.

4. "Do You Remember?" Tonal; D₃-D₄; Tess: M; 7/4, 5/4, 6/4, 4/4, ♩ = ca. 48; V/E, P/mE; 1 page.

5. "I Dance the Tango." Tonal, A minor; C₃-D₄; Tess: M; 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, 5/8, 7/8, 7/4, 11/8, etc., ♩ = ca. 50; V/M, P/D; 8 pages.

6. "Falling Fast." X; C₃-D₄; Tess: M; 3/4, 5/4, 3/8, 2/4, 13/8, etc., ♩ = ca. 58-62; V/M-mD, P/M-mD; 8 pages.

"Slow Wings" [reprise]. C centered; D₃-C₄; Tess: M; 4/4, 5/8, 9/8, 11/8, etc., ♩ = ca. 60 tenderly but firm; V/mE, P/mE; 2½ pages.

7. "It's Time to Feel Alright Now." G centered; C₃-D₄; Tess: mL, M; 4/2, 3/2, 2/2, etc., ♩ = ca. 60, or slightly slower; V/M-mD, P/M-mD; 11 pages.

"The Edge" [coda]. G centered; D₃-C₄; Tess: M; 4/4, 5/4, 3/4, 6/4 ♩ = ca. 54, or slightly slower; V/E, P/mE; 1½ pages.

Commissioned by The Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation in the Library of Congress, and dedicated to the memory of Serge and Natalie Koussevitzky, this work was written for *Sequitur*, a music ensemble formed in 1996 to present contemporary music that crosses artistic boundaries. In a review in *Time Out New York*, a calendar of events in New York City, *Sequitur* was described as the "perfect ensemble" for theater music. In keeping with the nature of such an ensemble, the singer's vocal line is short ranged, jazz influenced, and conforms to word stress, possibly to accommodate the long text as well as to provide the intimacy needed by the narrative.

The narrative text is fashioned after figuratively exchanged "notes in a bottle" between the composer and the lyricist, friends who are living in Bogliasco and Majorca, respectively, and who converse, sometimes in poems, about the memories of times gone by. The lyricist Shirley Kaplan is a theater director, painter, actor, and writer, and brings all these facets into the text. The narrative is made up of seven numbered poems plus three unnumbered poems that serve as an introduction, a reprise of an earlier song, and a coda that ends the work.

The central theme that "no thoughts or times/ are ever lost/ but/ are recalled/ Melting maps/ memories" threads its way through all the individual texts. The recalling of spending much of one's life away from "the edge" (the shore), out in the sea of life, like sailors and dreamers, and then coming back to the safety of "the edge," where "Stories, people,/ Times/ Right now/ Start to find their place" suggests the approach of a change of direction as years pass.

Indeed, it becomes time once again to “Head out./ It’s time./ Pull back from shore./ Ready to sail/ bright and early/ before/ stars are gone” in order to “Start a new way,” to make new memories.

In his notes on the work, Biscardi states that *Sailors & Dreamers* “is a tribute to the tides and currents that carry us toward the new and the unexpected.” Also in the notes, the composer defines each song, and it is useful here to paraphrase him. Taking these texts as “notes in a bottle,” “Head Out” is introduced by seven bells (ship’s bells?); “You’ve Been on My Mind” is a reminder; “Play Me a Song” is a request, later reprised in “Slow Wings”; “Seven O’Clock at the Cedar: (Ode to Kline/de Kooning)” is a story of a famous painter in a bar from 1967; “Do You Remember?” uses the image of a dream flickering under a new moon; “I Dance the Tango” is a toast to life that goes on; “Falling Fast” takes us into the ocean of space and stars; “It’s Time to Feel Alright Now” depicts ships moving in the wind; and “The Edge” signifies coming home where stories, people, and times start to find their place.

In general, the music is a hybrid work that crosses the boundaries between classical, jazz, and music theater techniques, creating an eclectic setting for both text and vocal line. The primary images reflected in the music are the bell sounds of the introduction and coda, the movement of the sea, the suggestion of a tango, the flickering of stars and galaxies as “the piano keys move into space,” and the holding power of “the edge.” Some of these images are reflective or expressive of the text, while others are illustrative. Everything is somewhat blurred, like memories, by the constant use of the damper pedal throughout the entire work.

The introduction “Head Out” begins with a “bell-like” G₄ on the piano

repeated seven and then four times at ♩ = 60, alternating in groupings, indicating that it is time to “Pull back from shore./ Ready to sail/ bright and early.” The vocal line sets up a melodic motif of narrow range (thirds and seconds, alternating between major and minor) that will be heard in some form throughout the work. The last measure raises the bell tone to A₄ and its higher octave and “Sub. Più Mosso” ♩ = 72 leads directly, *attacca subito*, into “You’ve Been On My Mind.” Set in music theater style with the piano doubling the vocal line, this song reflects the closeness of friendship: “Time flies by/ and/ days disappear./ But my dear friend/ you’re always near./ You’ve been on my mind.” Changing meters accommodate the irregular line lengths of the text.

“Play Me a Song,” again in music theater style with some syncopation in the vocal line, is a request to “Sing me the words/ Of places/ we’ve been/ and/ people we’ve loved.” Here, in the first reference to notes in a bottle thrown into the sea to float toward the shoreline of the distant friend, the music moves along in regular and irregular changing meters that suggest the bobbing of the bottle on the waves. The vocal line is tuneful and makes use of the narrow intervals of thirds and seconds, with an occasional triad, to move the text along in its speech-like patterns. The phrase “Play me a song” is repeated three times at the beginning of sections, the second time slightly altered, and the third raised a half step. The description of sending a note in a bottle is also repeated. The song ends in a sort of suspended animation.

“Seven O’Clock at the Cedar” begins “tentatively at first” in setting the scene in the bar where a famous painter (Willem de Kooning) is sitting and drinking and not talking about paint-

ing, but about Space and Mars and stars—and thinking about how it feels “To be famous and suddenly old.” The bar is quiet, and “The girls from New Jersey/ Are looking for/ Somewhere/ To feel that life matters.” They wonder whether the man really is the famous painter and why he doesn’t talk about painting. The music settles into a patterned accompaniment that changes meters to accommodate the conversational vocal line as well as reflecting the passage of time. This story from the Cedar Bar is said to be from 1967, but the painter Franz Kline, presumably the man sitting in the booth (“who paints black and white”) to whom de Kooning talks—not about painting but about “baseball,/ the moon/ and the eclipse”—died in 1962; so the story is apparently told from a memory of an earlier time.

“Do You Remember?” is a one-page song of a memory of “The old moon’s shadow/ in the new moon’s arms” when “The dream/ flickers by/ and you hold me.” The vocal line is recitative-like, with the piano entering on a cluster chord, a snatch of melody in the bass, and a crystalline staccato figure high in the treble.

“I Dance the Tango,” the most difficult of the songs for the pianist, finds the speaker saying “I dance the tango/ like I always did/ . . . I still look good.” He recounts his liking of bull fights and good cigars, but “The hour’s coming/ for all new things / the joke’s on me then . . . the clock is moving/ catch it/ quick.” The vocal line stretches out into longer phrases and a wider range while the piano suggests the rhythm of the tango.

“Falling Fast” takes thought and imagery into the realm of space: “the piano keys/ move into space/ artists think of white/ between/ shooting stars/ falling/ falling fast.” The space imagery

suggests the truth that “no thoughts or times/ are ever lost/ but/ are recalled/ Melting maps/ memories.” Here, too, is the first reference to oceans holding “the edge” where things begin to find their place. The vocal line moves quite freely over sustained chords at first until a staccato pattern high in the treble leads into a more or less regular moving eighth note pattern. At the change in the text—“There are other lights/ We cannot see/ except perhaps/ the one/ dim star/ that comes and goes/ like us”—the accompaniment again is static with sustained chords, ending the section with a form of the crystalline figure heard earlier in “Do You Remember?” The song ends quietly and slowly with “Oceans hold/ The edge/ Stories, people/ Times/ Right now/ Start to find their place/ Melting maps/ memories.”

“Slow Wings” is a truncated reprise of “Play Me a Song.” “It’s Time to Feel Alright Now” begins by returning in cyclic form to the music of the first song with its seven bell tones, rounding out the whole work. This song develops the idea of starting a new way, moving quickly to salute the “life/ of sailors/ and dreamers/ who live without fear/ far from shore.” Though things remain the same, memories are passing, and “The map shows new land.” It is time to feel good about starting a new way. The music increases tempo and motion and changes to a new chordal pattern to show the new land ahead. The song ends with seven slow repetitions of the bell-like G_5 , which leads into “The Edge,” the coda song that also uses the original repeated G_4 and repetitions of the original chords in a moving pattern that ends the work with a suspended feeling.

The singer who chooses this work will need to have experience in non-classical singing styles, have a large enough voice to be heard without

singing full volume all the time, and be a superb stylist with words. A classical vocal approach will not serve this music well. If the voice is not big enough to be heard easily, especially over the chamber ensemble version, a microphone might be a consideration. The difficulties of the vocal line are mostly rhythmic. The difficulties in the piano score include many accidentals and thick and widespread chords and clusters requiring a large reach.

The chamber ensemble version of this work is scored for Flute/Piccolo, Clarinet/Bass Clarinet in B^b , Percussion (Chimes, Marimba, Glockenspiel, Suspended Cymbals, and Vibraphone), Piano, Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contra Bass. Since the piano in the ensemble score received for review is exactly the same as the piano/voice score, it appears that the instruments, which double various lines in the texture thinly and intermittently, are used primarily for color.

FOSTER, WALTER. *FIVE SONGS*

(Talal Haidar) for High Voice and Piano. Arabic poetry translated by Ghada Ghanem. Recital Publications, 2010. Traditional keys with many modulations; B_3 – B^b_5 ; Tess: M–mH, CR; regular meters; slow to moderate tempos; V/mE–M, P/mE–M; 21 pages. Tenor or soprano.

1. “I descended into a garden.” Mostly G major; B_3 – G^b_5 ; Tess: CR; 4/4, $\text{♩} = 54$; V/M, P/M; 5½ pages.
2. “Like ancient words.” $F^\#$ minor– E^b major; E^b_4 – A^b_5 ; Tess: mH; 4/4, 6/4, $\text{♩} = 66$ –72; V/M, P/mE; 5 pages.
3. “I miss seeing a dream.” E^b major (with many brief key changes, apparently to avoid accidentals); D^b_4 – B^b_5 ; Tess: M–mH; 6/8, 9/8, 4/4, $\text{♩} = 50$; V/M, P/M; 5½ pages.

4. “A Fool’s Nightmare.” Tonal; E^b_4 – A^b_5 ; Tess: M; 4/4, $\text{♩} = 60$; V/M, P/M; 4 pages.

5. “Beautiful as Aleppo.” G^b major; D_4 – A^b_5 ; Tess: M; 4/4, $\text{♩} = 60$; V/mE–M, P/mE; 4½ pages.

The poems of Talal Haidar, a well known Lebanese poet who lives in Beirut, are set here in an English translation by soprano Ghada Ghanem, who received her graduate degree in voice at Rice University and currently teaches at the Music Conservatory in Beirut. Arabic poetry is renowned for its richness and imagery, and those qualities come through in English translation. The images of nature, especially the moon, as well as of flowers, birds, sky, and sea, and images of dreams are a large part of the poems. These are often used in relation to the beloved person of the poem.

“I descended into a garden” appears to bear some relation to the act of creation: “I descended into a garden to pick flowers for you my Soul/ And I saw dreams for you, dreams more beautiful than an opened moon . . . When I picked the earth, it began to turn on its own.” The second song, “Like ancient words,” begins “Like ancient words on papyrus leaves she slept, and after her no one ever had a dream.” Its meaning is elusive but perhaps refers to something once beautiful that has disappeared but is still loved. The third song, “I miss seeing a dream,” recalls someone beautiful “like the moon refilling herself”; but the poet regrets that he was not there when “Night passed through day.” “A Fool’s Nightmare” is from the viewpoint of a woman who wishes “for my darling to sleep, so I could share his dreams.” When told that he was leaving, “The road and I were afraid.” “Beautiful as Aleppo” presents several images of passing beauty,