

More Song Cycles by Women Composers



Sharon Mabry

"I feel terribly behind the times and want to add music by women composers to my recital repertoire. Can you give me some suggestions?"

This comment was made during a recent phone call received from a reader of this column. It is an often repeated concern and one that deserves attention. In the last issue of the *Journal*, "New Directions" began to address this subject, which is of importance to many singers and voice teachers today. Several general sources for repertoire were listed and specific information was given about six composers who wrote songs during the twentieth century. Each of those composers and the ones mentioned in this issue have written individual songs as well as song cycles. For the purpose of this overview, suggested repertoire will be limited to song cycles only.

Talented, creative, and intelligent women have added a wealth of worthy, singable, memorable music to the vocal repertoire of this century. Many have already received

recognition and repeated performances of some works, but others are less known and still need public exposure to their creative endeavors. This article and the next will continue to point out some of those composers whose works are available and have gained a high degree of interest in music circles. It is hoped that this information will help to fill the aforementioned gap in the recital and teaching literature felt by singers and teachers. There are numerous fine composers who cannot be included here. For further information about those listed and others, refer to the *Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*.

Miriam Gideon (American, 1906–) Music performed internationally. A prolific, versatile composer with a free, atonal, yet lyrical style. Each work uses its own idiom and design. Oftentimes, more than one language is employed in a given piece. Many song cycles, such as: *Sonnets from Shakespeare* (high or low v, tpt, str qrt); *Four Epitaphs of Robert Burns* (high or low v, pf); *Rhymes from the Hill* (med v, cl, mar, vc); *The Seasons of Time* (med v, pf); *Songs from the Greek* (high v, ob, cl, bn, pf). Principal publishers: ACA, Mobart, Peters.

Peggy Glanville-Hicks (Australian, 1912–1990) Received numerous awards, grants, honors. Widely performed and recorded. Several works con-

tain oriental or exotic themes. A champion of contemporary music and leader in producing recordings and performances of new works by other composers. *Last Poems* (v, pf); *Profiles from China* (t, pf, or ch. orch); *13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* (s, pf); *Letters from Morocco* (t, ch. orch). Publishers: Associated, Colfrank, Hargail, Peters, Schott, Weintraub.

Barbara Kolb (American, 1939–) First American woman to receive Prix de Rome. Major awards, grants, and commissions. Eclectic compositional style, using diverse idioms and extra-musical sources, including the visual arts and poetry. *Chansons bas* (s, harp, perc); *Songs Before an Adieu* (s, fl, gui); *Three Place Settings* (nar, cl, perc, vn, db). Publishers: Boosey and Hawkes, C. Fischer, Peters.

Libby Larsen (American, 1950–) Prolific, widely performed and recorded in all genres. Interested in biographical works that illuminate strong-minded women. Many important commissions and awards. *Songs from Letters* (s, pf); *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (s, ch. orch). Publishers: OUP, E. C. Schirmer.

Nicola LeFanu (British, 1947–) A major force in British com-

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position today. Much of her work exhibits experimentation with sound and its organization. Several theatre works involve singers, actors, and dancers as equals in presenting the drama. *Rondeaux* (t, hn); *The Same Day Dawns* (s, ch. ens); *A Penny for a Song* (s, pf).

Thea Musgrave (Scottish, 1928–) Works performed internationally. Prolific in several mediums and compositional styles. Some works picturesque or dramatic, while others are abstract. Major commissions and awards. Appointments as a conductor of opera or orchestral music. *5 Love Songs* (s, gui); *4 Portraits* (bar, cl, pf); *Suite o'Bairnsangs* (v, pf). Publishers: Chester, Novello.

Shulamit Ran (Israeli, 1949–) Won Pulitzer Prize, 1991. Early works conservative, later works avant-garde. Driving rhythmic energy a characteristic of much of her music. Many awards and major commissions. *7 Japanese Love Poems* (mez, pf); *Amichai Songs* (mez, ob/eng hn, va da gamba, hpd). Publishers: C. Fischer, Israel Music Institute, Presser.

Sally Reid (American, 1948–) Composes both traditional acoustic and electronic music. Editor of the *ILWC Journal*. *5 Haiku* (mez, pf); *Tear on a Child's Cheek* (mez, pf); *Songs from Alaska* (mez, cl). Publisher: American Music Center.

Sharon Mabry first received national recognition in the 1980 National Public Radio "Art of Song" series, when she was a featured recitalist. She has performed at international music festivals and is in demand as a recitalist and master teacher of vocal techniques. Her three recordings on the Owl and Coronet labels have received outstanding critical acclaim and international air play on public radio. She will have two new CDs available in 1997-1998. One features music by American composers Persis Vohar and Christina Kuzmich, and the other includes works by Tennessee composers Kenton Coe, Jeffrey Wood, and Michael Rose.

In 1986, she made her critically acclaimed New York recital debut in Merkin Concert Hall, Abraham Goodman House. In 1988,

she was awarded a Solo Recitalist Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts to perform recitals of twentieth-century music. In 1990, she received a recording grant from the NEA to record works by Vercoe, Goossen, and Barber.

In addition to her concert career, Dr. Mabry is professor of music at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, Tennessee. She holds the Bachelor of Music degree from Florida State University, where she studied with Elena Nikolaidi, and the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from George Peabody College for Teachers, where she studied with Louis Nicholas. As a scholarship recipient to the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Austria, she studied with Walter Moore, Erik Werba, Hans Hotter, Norman Shetler, and Brigitte Fassbaender.

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