

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE *AIDS QUILT SONGBOOK*

AND ITS UNCOLLECTED WORKS

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The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* was a musical response to the shame surrounding the outbreak of the HIV virus and was one of the first art song publications to deal with the topic of HIV and AIDS. This DMA thesis documents the significance and history of the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, traces the progression of the project up until December 1, 2008, and documents the work, experiences, and words of the composers who have been inspired to contribute to the AIDS Quilt Songbook project.

In 1981, the medical and popular press reported the first cases of a quickly spreading virus among homosexual males. This virus is currently diagnosed as HIV and AIDS. Lack of funding consumed the early years of what grew to become a national pandemic.

The artistic community was one of the major catalysts for funding and education. Cleave Jones and other gay rights activists developed the NAMES Project as a memorial for those lost to the pandemic. The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* was created to parallel the AIDS Quilt as “a never-ending work whose meaning and spirit is renewed and redefined with every addition.” This concept of additions has continued the expansion of the AIDS Quilt Songbook Project from 1993 to the additions premiered on December 1, 2008 (World AIDS Day) at the Court Theater in Chicago, Illinois, entitled “The Chicago AIDS Quilt Songbook: A Benefit for Season of Concern.” The AIDS Quilt Songbook project has sixty-seven documented additions, but only eighteen of the sixty-seven additions are collected.

This thesis examines the events, compositions and experiences of the composers: Chris DeBlasio, Ricky Ian Gordon, Daniel Kallman, Cary John Franklin, and Evan Kuchar, who

submitted compositions to the *AIDS Quilt Songbook* between 1991 and 2008. The compositions examined are: *Walt Whitman in 1989* by DeBlasio, *I Never Knew* by Gordon, *When I am dead, my dearest* by Kallman, *As Imperceptibly as Grief* by Franklin, and *Death Spiral* by Kuchar.

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CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Eminent literary critic Jane Tompkins states that musical composition can offer “powerful examples of the way culture thinks about itself, articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment.”¹ The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* was a musical response to the confusion and shame surrounding the outbreak of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and was one of the first art song publications to deal solely with the topic of HIV and AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). The output of the artistic community became a catalyst for education and awareness in a time when HIV and AIDS ignorance and shame consumed the nation. Members of the artistic community took the opportunity to express their frustration through passionate artistic endeavors. They seemed to understand their power to reshape the wide spread misconceptions about HIV and AIDS through art. This research project documents the significance and history of the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, traces the progression of the project up until December 1, 2008, and documents the work, experiences, and words of the composers who have been inspired to contribute to the AIDS Quilt Songbook Project.

In 1981, the medical and popular press reported the first cases of a quickly spreading plague among homosexual males. Informally, it was first called the “gay plague,” and later formally titled GRID (gay-related immune deficiency) and ARC (AIDS-related complex). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention now states that HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. The CDC changed its definition of HIV and AIDS repeatedly between 1981 and 1996 as

¹ Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), xi.

knowledge and understanding of the syndrome and virus became widely studied and medical findings became solidified.²

Between June 1981 and May 1982 the CDC spent less than \$1 million on AIDS and \$9 million on Legionnaire's Disease. At that point more than 1,000 of the 2,000 reported AIDS cases resulted in death; there were fewer than 50 deaths from Legionnaire's Disease.³

This drastic lack of funding would continue through 1989, the year president Ronald Reagan left the White House. President Ronald Reagan exemplified the nation's confusion and shame, as he did not publicly speak about the epidemic until October of 1987. At that point, 41,027 people had died and 71,176 people had been diagnosed.⁴ Rock Hudson, famed actor and friend to Ronald Reagan, was among the many victims to die of AIDS in 1985. He shocked the nation with his diagnosis and death.⁵ Actress Morgan Fairchild said his death "gave AIDS a face."⁶

Keith Ward in his venerated article, "Musical Responses to HIV and AIDS," highlights the "connection between the inherent musical value of AIDS-inspired art and its social intent."⁷ He states that musical composition is an artistic social response to HIV and AIDS, and he accentuates artistic output as an important catalyst for education and awareness. Groundbreaking projects such as the film, *Philadelphia*, released in 1993 (winner of two Oscars and twelve

² M.C. Tift, *Musical AIDS: Music, Musicians. And the Cultural Construction of HIV/AIDS in the United States* (Doctorate Diss.: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007) p. 1.

³ Michael Bronski, *The Truth About Reagan and AIDS*, National Review Online. (November 2003). Republished, <http://www.indegayforum.org/news/show/26843.html>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ M.C. Tift, *Musical AIDS: Music, Musicians. And the Cultural Construction of HIV/AIDS in the United States* (Doctorate Diss.: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007) p. 2.

⁶ BBC New Contributors, "The show goes on in Aids battle" BBC News Online, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/3281609.stm>.

⁷ Keith Ward, *Musical Responses to HIV and AIDS, in Perspectives on American Music since 1950*, ed. James R Heintze (New York: Garland, 1999) p. 326.

nominations in 1994)⁸, and the musical, *Rent*, premiered in 1996 (winner of four Tony Awards and fifteen awards internationally),⁹ exemplified the artistic communities' outcry for a conclusion to the suffering and death that surrounded them.

The Names Project

The NAMES project presented the AIDS Memorial Quilt on October 11, 1987 at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.¹⁰ In 1985, Cleve Jones, a gay rights activist, assisted in the organization of the annual candlelight march in memory of San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone who were assassinated in 1978. He asked the marchers to write the names of family and friends who had died of AIDS onto a placard. Jones and the other organizers collected the placards and taped them on to the walls of the San Francisco Federal Building. The concept of the AIDS memorial quilt was born that evening as “the wall of names looked like a patchwork quilt.”¹¹

Later that year, Jones and other activists organized the NAMES Project Foundation in order to create a Memorial Quilt for the victims of AIDS. Jones was the first to create a panel for the quilt in memory of his friend Marvin Feldman. The project received national attention and awards. The Memorial Quilt in its entirety was presented a total of five times between 1987 and 1996 at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.. Large portions of the quilt toured across the

⁸ Internet Movie Database Contributors, “Philadelphia” <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107818/awards> (accessed March 13, 2009).

⁹ John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano, “Stage Notes: a Field Guild for Teachers” (New York: McREL, Inc. 1997), p 37.

¹⁰ The NAMES Project Foundation Contributors, “History of the AIDS Quilt” The NAMES Project Foundation,” <http://www.aidsquilt.org/history.htm>.

¹¹ Ibid.

United States and further panels were added at each destination.¹² Over 47,000 panels now comprise the AIDS Memorial Quilt and over \$3 million has been collected and donated to AIDS research and organizations from the NAMES project.¹³

William Parker's *AIDS Quilt Songbook*

The *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, released by Boosey and Hawkes in 1993, was created to parallel the AIDS Quilt as “a never-ending work whose meaning and spirit is renewed and redefined with every addition.”¹⁴ This concept of additions has continued the expansion of the AIDS Quilt Songbook Project from 1993 to the most recent presentation and new additions premiered on December 1, 2008 (World AIDS Day) at the Court Theater in Chicago, Illinois.

On June 4, 1992, William Parker, Kurt Ollman, William Sharp, and Sanford Sylvan debuted a song cycle of eighteen pieces dedicated to the victims of HIV and AIDS entitled the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*. All of the profits from the songbook, as well as the profits from the compact disc released in 1993, are donated to the ARC (the AIDS Resource Center) and other AIDS related organizations.¹⁵ William Parker (August 5, 1943 – March 29, 1993),¹⁶ the organizer of the project and collector of the pieces, began working on the project in the late 80's after being discontented with several of the AIDS benefit concerts in which was asked to perform, as well as the over-all silence from musical community in response to HIV. “Initially, the public musical response to this pandemic was silence. Whether out of fear, denial,

¹²M.C. Tift, “Musical AIDS: Music, Musicians. And the Cultural Construction of HIV/AIDS in the United States” (Doctorate Diss.: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007) vi.

¹³ The NAMES Project Foundation Contributors, “History of the AIDS Quilt” The NAMES Project Foundation” <http://www.aidsquilt.org/history.htm>.

¹⁴ Kyle Ferrill quoting Philip Caggiano, “William Parker and the AIDS Quilt Songbook” (Doctorate of Music Diss.: Florida State University, 2005) p. 8.

¹⁵ Jeffrey Stock, Table of Contents to The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1994), iii.

¹⁶ Ibid.

stigmatization, or shock, musicians were mostly mute during the initial stage of the pandemic.” In the foreword of the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, Jeffery Stock is quoted as saying, “For singers, we are being pretty unvocal about AIDS.”¹⁷ William Parker was inspired and motivated to change this silence. He is quoted explaining frustration with AIDS and HIV benefit concerts of the past and how The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* performance and publication breaks down the barrier of silence surrounding AIDS:

They’d say, ‘Well, we’ll do a couple of Schubert songs, some Puccini, a little Mozart, and we’ll all go home.’ But it occurred to me that no one even says the word ‘AIDS’ all night long. . . . The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* invites people to take risks. Some of the texts are very graphic. They’re about taking medication, being sick, throwing up, having to take it over again, the night sweats--- the horror of the number of diseases that exist. We’re not sugar-coating it and saying, ‘Well, we’re just having a little difficulty.’ We must show some of the rough sides. After all, most songs are about crucial times in our lives---someone has died, someone has left you, you’ve inherited a lot of money, the boy’s gotten the girl. So, Why can’t we sing about AIDS?¹⁸

The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* contains selections from many of the great composers of the late twentieth century, as well as composers who have become recognizable in the current status of modern music. Some of these composers include Ned Rorem, John Musto, William Bolcom, Chris DeBlasio, Lee Hoiby, and Ricky Ian Gordon.¹⁹ In literary circles, the poetry used by the composers was praised for, “blowing open the discussion of AIDS in the literary world.”²⁰ Eight of the eighteen poems were selected from *Poets for Life: Seventy-six Poets Respond to AIDS*, published in 1989.²¹ Two of the originally collected pieces *Walt Whitman in 1989* and *I never knew* are explored and examined in this document.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Brian Kellow quoting Parker, “Art in the Age of AIDS” *Opera News* 56 (June 1992): 42-43.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Stock, Table of Contents to *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1994), ii.

²⁰ Kyle Ferrill, *William Parker and the AIDS Quilt Songbook* (Doctorate of Music Diss.: Florida State University, 2005) Spring 2005, p. 5.

²¹ Ibid.

The *AIDS Quilt Songbook* (debuted June 4, 1992; published: 1993)

1. *Fury* by Donald Whellock (b. 1940) Text by Susan Snively (b. 1945)
2. *Blues for an Imaginary Valentine* Music and Text by Fred Hersch (b. 1955)
3. *Heartbeats* by John Musto (b. 1954) and Text by Melvin Dixon (1950 – 1992)
4. *A Dream of Nightingales* by Ned Rorem (b. 1923) and Text by David Bergman (b. 1950)
5. *Walt Whitman in 1989* by Philip DeBlasio (1959-1993) and Text by Perry Brass (b.1947)
6. *The 80s Miracle Diet* by David Krakaur (b. 1959) and Text by Melvin Dixon (1950 – 1992)
7. *For Richard* Music by Annea Lockwood (b.1939) and Text by Eve Ensler (b. 1953)
8. *Fairy Book Lines* by Donald St. Pierre and Text by Charles Barber (1962 – 1992)
9. *Vaslav's Song* by William Bolcom (b. 1938) and Text by Ethyl Eichelberger (1945 – 1990)
10. *AIDS Anxiety* Music and Text by Richard Pearson Thomas
11. *The Flute of Interior Time* by John Harbison (b. 1938) and Text by Karbir (1440 – 1508, translated by Robert Bly (b. 1926)
12. *The Birds of Sorrow* by Carl Byron and Text by Ron Schreiber (1934 – 2004)
13. *Investiture at Ceccoli's* by Lee Hoiby (b. 1926) and Text by James Merrill (1926 – 1995)
14. *A Certain Light* by Elizabeth Brown (b. 1953) and Text by Marie Howe (b. 1950)
15. *I Never Knew* Music and Text by Ricky Ian Gordon (b 1956)
16. *The Second Law* by Richard Wilson (b. 1941) and Text by Stephen Sandy (b. 1934)
17. *Perineo* by Libby Larsen (b. 1950) and Text by Roberto Echavarren (b. 1944)
18. *The Enticing Lane* by Stephen Houtz (b. 1956) and Text by Christopher Hewitt (1946 – 2004)

On June 5, 1992, the day after the *AIDS Quilt Songbook* debut the four baritones and the pianist began recording the songbook at the Academy of Arts and Letters in Manhattan. William Parker was unable to record due to illness and exhaustion. The selections *The Second Law* by Richard Wilson, *Perineo* by Libby Larsen, and *The Enticing* by Steven Houtz, were not included in this recording.²²

²² Ibid.

The *Minnesota AIDS Quilt Songbook* Additions

A second and final performance with William Parker was made in 1993. This performance would later come to be known as William Parker's last public performance. In the summer months of 1992, Marsha Hunter and Brian Kent, representing the Minnesota Chapter of the American Composers Forum, contacted the Walker Art Center in hopes of a collaborative effort to present, *The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Songbook*. Hunter and Kent worked to coordinate the event with William Parker and sent out a statewide call for new submissions for the recording project. The concert took place on World AIDS Day, December 1, 1992.²³

Daniel Kallman, one of the composers chosen to participate on the concert, recalls Parker's voice being weakened by illness, but yet, firmly rooted in passion and intent. William Parker was too weak to stand on his own by the end of the concert. His fellow performers held him up as they sang the African American spiritual, *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*.²⁴

The recording was released in 1995 entitled *Heart Beats: New Songs for the AIDS Quilt Songbook from Minnesota*. The recording includes the selections Parker was unable to perform from the original *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, the new uncollected additions (many of which are still unpublished) and a few of the previously recorded pieces.²⁵ Two of the uncollected compositions are examined and explored in this document, *When I Am Dead, My Dearest* (self published) and *As Imperceptibly As Grief* (unpublished).

²³ Amy Doty. Jacket notes to *Heartbeats: New Songs from Minnesota for the AIDS Quilt Songbook* (Innova 500, 1995).

²⁴ Daniel Kallman, "The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Project", personal interview. See Interview with Kallman in Appendix.

²⁵ Kyle Ferrill, "William Parker and the AIDS Quilt Songbook" (Doctorate of Music Diss.: Florida State University, 2005) Spring 2005, p. 7-8.

Minnesota Project Additions (debuted December 1, 1992)²⁶

19. *Positive Women: Susan* by Janika Vandervelde (b. 1955)²⁷ and Text by Susan Gladstone
20. *Let It Go* by Carol Barnett (b. 1949)²⁸ and Text by Michael Estork
21. *We're All Pharaohs When We Die* by David John Olsen
22. *Domination Of Black* by Craig Carnahan (b. 1951)²⁹ Text by Dan Conner
23. *The Loons* by Carolyn Jennings (b. 1936)³⁰ and Text by Michael Estork
24. *When I Am Dead, My Dearest* by Daniel Kallman (b. 1956)³¹ and Text by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)³²
25. *The Blue Animals* by Aaron Jay Kernis (b.1960)³³ and Text by Jon Anderson (1940 – 2007)³⁴
26. *As Imperceptibly As Grief* by Cary John Franklin and Text by Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886)³⁵

William Parker hoped that his project would continue to expand. He received many submissions after the initial publication and hoped to see it grow to embody more styles, different arrangements of the original eighteen compositions, and different types of ensembles.³⁶

²⁶ All composers and poets of the Minnesota project were found at: The Estate Project Contributors, “Music Archives” The Estate Project, <http://www.artistswithaids.org/artforms/music/classical.html>

²⁷ Zoran Minderovic, “All Music Guide” Answers.com, <http://www.answers.com/topic/janika-vandervelde-classical-musician>.

²⁸ Carol Barnett, “Carol Barnett Biography” personal website, <http://www.carolbarnett.net/biography.html>.

²⁹ Craig Carnahan, “Personal Biography” St. Martins Chamber Choir, <http://www.stmartinchamberchoir.org/Education/Bios/BioCarnahan.htm>.

³⁰ Alliance Music Publication Contributors, “Composers by Alphabet,” <http://www.apimusic.org/composersb.cfm?ln=J>.

³¹ Daniel Kallman, “The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Project” personal interview. See Interview with Kallman in “Permissions and Interviews”.

³² English Online Contributors, “Christina Rossetti” English online, http://www.englishonline.co.uk/freesite_tour/resource/literature/-rossetti.html.

³³ Boosey and Hawke Contributors, “Composer Biographies” Boosey and Hawke Publications, <http://www.boosey.com/shop/composer/Aaron%20Jay+Kernis>.

³⁴ Reginald Shepherd, “Reginald Shepherd Blog” A blog about poetry, literature, and art, that occasionally engages other issues of importance and interest. <http://reginaldshepherd.blogspot.com/2007/10/homage-to-jon-anderson-1940-2007.html>

³⁵ Petri Liukkonen, “Emily Dickinson” Books and Writers, <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/emilydic.htm>.

³⁶ Kyle Ferrill, *William Parker and the AIDS Quilt Songbook* (Doctorate of Music Diss.: Florida State University, 2005) Spring 2005, p 8.

According to a recent interview with the composer Daniel Kallman, one of the contributors to the Minnesota AIDS Quilt project, two separate efforts were made to collect and publish the recorded selections from the Minnesota project; however, nothing came of those efforts.³⁷

The Estate Project's Documented Additions

The Estate Project was established in 1991 by the Alliance of the Arts to, “provide practical estate planning advice to all artists (especially those living with HIV/AIDS), to document and offset the immense loss wrought by AIDS in all artistic disciplines, and to preserve the cultural legacy of the AIDS crisis so that future generations can enjoy, study and engage artworks as aesthetic achievements and historical documents.”³⁸ According to their database, further compositions have been debuted but have never been recorded for distribution nor formally collected as part of the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*. In brief examination, many of these compositions are unpublished.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina (1995)³⁹

27. *A Musical Kaddish 'In Sea'* by Thomas J. Anderson
28. *Stele* by Sidney Corbett and Text by Denise Levertov
29. *The Reassurance* by Stephen Jaffe
30. *Dolphins* by Scott Lindroth and Text by Richard Harteis
31. *The Hill* Music and Text by Robert Ward

³⁷ Daniel Kallman, “The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Project” personal interview. See Interview with Kallman in “Permissions and Interviews.”

³⁸ The Estate Project Contributors, “Mission Statement” The Estate Project, <http://www.artistswithaids.org/mission/index.html>.

³⁹ The Estate Project Contributors, “Classical Music Composers database” The Estate Project, <http://www.artistswithaids.org/artforms/music/classical.html>.

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania (1996, 1997, 1998)⁴⁰

32. *AIDSSONG* by Mark Alburger
33. *Song on a Text by William Blake* by Robert Copanna
34. *Over Salt River* for soprano, English horn and piano by Tina Davidson
35. *To Daffodils* for baritone and cello by Daniel Dorff
36. *Facing* by Paul Epstein
37. *Trembling Song* by David Finko
38. *And Is There Anyone at All?* by Margaret Garwood
39. *Eagle Poem* by Janice Hamer
40. *To Be Laid to Sleep in a Garden* music and text by Harry Hewitt
41. *Dirge in Woods* by Jan Krzywicki
42. *Consolation* by Gerald Levinson
43. *In the Middle of Summer* for tenor, baritone and piano by Robert Maggio and Text by Howard Kaplan
44. *"Most this amazing"* by Philip Maneval
45. *From Psalm 116* for baritone and ensemble by James Primosch
46. *Arcadian Shadows* for soprano, clarinet, cello and piano by Jay Reise
47. *Spring and Fall* by Kile Smith
48. *Mort j'appelle* for male voice, viola, bass and piano by Andrew Stiller and Text by François Villon
49. *Prayer* by Anthony Watson
50. *The Path of Night and Smoke* by Adam Wernick

TACOMA, Washington (1999)⁴¹

Two Songs by Lawrence Ebert:

51. *I Could Lie Down* (Percy Bysshe Shelley)
52. *So Live* (William Cullen Bryant)

The Chicago AIDS Quilt Songbook Project Additions

In 2008, Eric Reda, Artistic Director of the Chicago Opera Vanguard, began to solicit

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

new additions for the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*. The concert entitled the Chicago AIDS Quilt Songbook; a Benefit for Season of Concern, took place on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2008. It was preceded by an awards ceremony in which volunteers for Season for Concern, celebrities, and local AIDS awareness activists were honored. The honorees shared their stories of loss and reasserted their personal commitment towards a resolution to the global pandemic.

The new additions were everything that William Parker had hoped for, including duets, electronic music, vernacular styles, two of the original compositions, and new cultivated selections that parallel the 1993 publication. This collage of style and genre allowed each artist to express their emotions in a way that most fit the personal grief of each individual. The mood of the performance paralleled that of a funeral in which the ceremony offers the living an opportunity to say goodbye. The unpublished and uncollected selection *Death Spiral* is examined and explored in this document.

Chicago AIDS Quilt Songbook (December 1, 2008)⁴²

53. *Birthday Music* and text by Stephen Kartes
54. *Good to See You're Alive* by Jon Steinhagen and Text by David Cerda
55. *The Way to Hell* by Seth Boustead and Text by Ivan Faute
56. *Quilt Duets* by Lawrence Axelrod and Text by Mark Doty/ Jim Rondone/ Anna Akhmatava/ NAMES Project Website
57. *Keyboards, Characters* by Patricia Morehead and Text by Nina Corwin
58. *Believe* music and text by Karen Mooney
59. *Home Movies* by Robert Steel
60. *Kiss me* by Augusta Read Thomas and Text by E.E. Cummings
61. *Le Beau Est Toujours Bizarre* by Natasha Bogojevich and Text by Milan Pribisic
62. *You're so Gay* music and text by George Howe
63. *Kinda Scary* by Amost Gillespe and text by Philip Dawkins

⁴²The compositions listed are from the unpublished concert program distributed at the Chicago AIDS Quilt Songbook event.

64. *A Total Stranger One Black Day / When any mortal (even the most odd)* by William Jason Raynovich and text by E.E. Cummings
65. *Atrippla!* music and text by Eric Reda
66. *Death Spiral* music and text by Evan Kuchar
67. *A Moment's Vigil* by Josh Schmidy and Text by Lisa Dillman

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS OF SONGS

Walt Whitman in 1989 by Chris DeBlasio

[*Walt Whitman in 1989*] merges oneself with a hidden story of grief and its transcendence.

Perry Brass

The well-known gay writer and activist Perry Brass (b1947) met with Chris DeBlasio (1959 – 1993) in his NYC apartment in December of 1988. Perry set up the meeting to discuss a possible collaboration between the two on a musical work. He hoped that the composition would reflect the life struggles of someone living with HIV and AIDS. Chris DeBlasio was active as a writer in various papers and magazines, as well as leader in an AIDS awareness non-profit organization called Act Up. Chris had been diagnosed with HIV a few years earlier and was overwhelmed with sadness and frustration. He turned down the collaboration because he felt the subject matter was “too close to home.” Perry left the meeting discouraged and let go of the project. Then, about a year later, Chris contacted Perry to let him know that he had written a set of five pieces using poetry from Perry’s books. The five-song cycle was entitled, *All The Way Through Evening*. Perry, Chris, and Michael Bash, the baritone for whom the set was written, gathered that evening to hear the pieces.⁴³

I did not question how he got the courage to do this: to confront his own fears of dealing with this thing, "to keep its lowering darkness somewhere just above (his) head," but I was jubilant. Although Chris had set other poems of mine, we knew from the start that *All The Way Through Evening* was significant. In these songs, he constructed his own expression and gift. As he told me, "I realize it's now or never. I'm not going to have years ahead of me," I think this contributed to the sense of immediacy the cycle conveys: the sense of crisis and of untamable feelings ... Chris made these poems that were once so personal to me, universal; he made them sing from his own heart things that are difficult for us to express.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

After *Walt Whitman 1989* was chosen for the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, he began to receive new commission offers as well as a full scale opera commission. He was finally receiving the kind of recognition his talent deserved, but with his health failing, he chose to focus on smaller works and the orchestration of *All The Way Through Evening*. He completed the orchestration about six months before his passing. His partner, William Berger, Chris and Michael Dash, worked tirelessly in the final days contacting orchestras and circulating music.

Finally on the day of Chris's death, Michael appeared in his hospital room to tell him that Michael Morgan, the conductor of the Cosmopolitan Symphony Orchestra, had agreed to conduct the orchestral version on March 4, 1994. Chris, who had been barely conscious heard the news, and smiled. Michael, whose lush baritone voice had inspired Chris to write the cycle, premiered the orchestral version as well. It was at the Town Hall, for this premiere, that many of us in the audience realized Michael was sick as well his weight loss was too apparent. Now both Chris and Michael are gone and of the three of us in Chris's apartment that first afternoon, only I remain.⁴⁵

Chris died in 1993 at the age of thirty-four. William Berger, Chris's partner, composed an article entitled, *Loss Within Loss: Artists in the Age of AIDS*. Berger states, "The supreme irony is that Chris might never have blossomed at all if it hadn't been for AIDS. It was his diagnosis that spurred him into demon confrontation and therapy and activism and opened him to the dangers and thrills of human interaction and love and the joy of being alive."⁴⁶

In Perry's text, Walt Whitman descends down from the heavens. The scene draws parallels between civil war victims and AIDS victims as their bodies are physically disfigured. Perry brings out the parallels between AIDS ignorance and "the wars of hard tongues and closed minds." Walt Whitman holds a dying man and calms him in his time of need. He has come to help the AIDS victims pass on. He speaks to the dying man and cradles him calmly like a

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ William Berger. "Chris DeBlasio" In *Loss Within Loss: Artists in the Age of AIDS*, ed. Edmund White, 152-167. Madison, Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin, 2001

rocking boat on a slowly moving river, “I will put him myself on one of your strong flat boats
and we’ll sail together all the way though evening.”

Text and Analysis

Walt Whitman in 1989 by Chris DeBlasio (1959 – 1993)

Text by Perry Brass (b1947) Inscribed: “ Sept. 18, 1989 Orangeburg, New York; for a generation
taken by our war” From Sex-charge, Belhue Press.

Written for Baritone

Range: A2 – F4

Walt Whitman has come down
today to the hospital room;
he rocks back and forth in the crisis;

he says it’s good we haven’t lost
our closeness, and cries
as each one is taken.

He has written many lines
about these years; the disfigurement
of young men and the wars

of hard tongues and closed minds.
The body in pain will bear such nobility,
but words have the edge

of poison when spoken bitterly.
Now he takes a dying man
in his arms and tells him

how deeply flows the River
that takes the old man and his friends
this evening. It is the River

of dusk and lamentation.
“Flow,” Walt says, “dear River,
I will carry this young man

to your bank. I’ll put him myself
on one of your strong, flat boats,
and we’ll sail together all the way
through evening.”⁴⁷

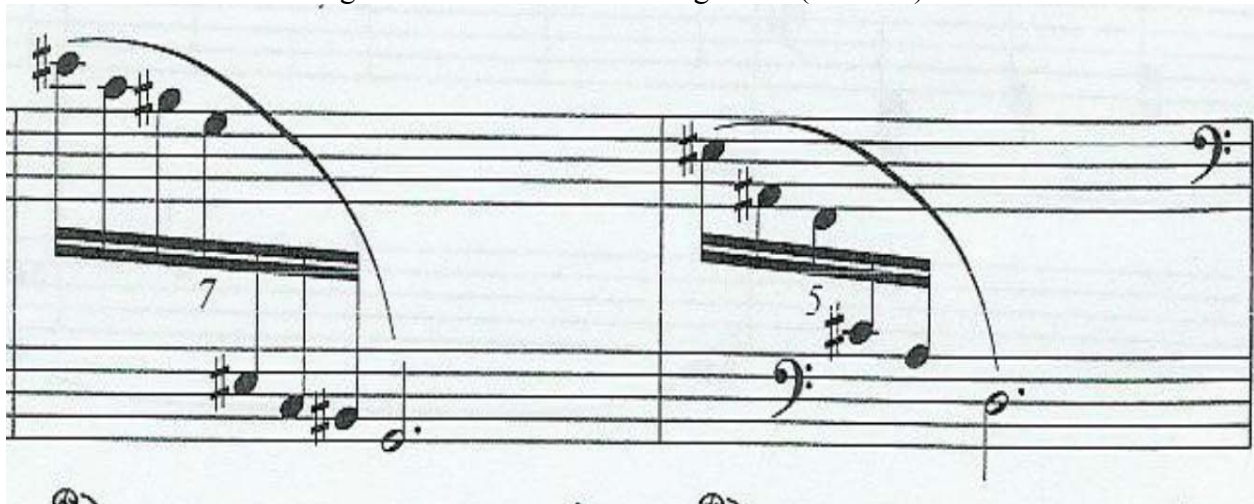
⁴⁷ Christ DeBlasio et al. *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1993. p. 32 -36.

Musical Setting

The music structure of this piece is recitative (m. 1 – 27) and aria (m. 28 – end). It has a multi-metered recitative that exemplifies a tonal harmonic practice, with multiple key changes throughout. In the aria, the tonality is loosely rooted in Bb major and uses a consistent 4/2 meter.

The piano introduction depicts Walt Whitman descending from the heavens with The descending motif seen in figure no. 1 found in both the recitative and aria. The descending motif returns at the conclusion of the aria, which is a common compositional technique that creates a sense of roundedness and completion. It is the only motif used in both sections.

Figure No. 1: The Descending Motif (m. 2 – 3)⁴⁸



DeBlasio uses text painting throughout his compositional compass. This is exemplified with the rocking motif seen in figure no. 2 and the crying motif seen in figure no. 3. He uses the rocking motif to depict the text, “He rocks back and forth in the crisis” and the crying motif to depict falling tears.

⁴⁸ Christ DeBlasio et al. *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1993. p. 32 -36.

Figure No. 2: The Rocking Motif (m. 9)⁴⁹ Figure No. 3: The Crying Motif (m. 13)⁵⁰

The image displays two musical excerpts. Figure No. 2, 'The Rocking Motif' (m. 9), is in 6/4 time and features a piano accompaniment with a rocking motif. Figure No. 3, 'The Crying Motif' (m. 13), is in 4/4 time and features a vocal line with the lyrics 'cries as each one is' and a piano accompaniment with a crying motif.

DeBlasio concludes his recitative with use of all three motifs from m. 20 – 27. This gives a sense of closure to the section. Harmonically, DeBlasio prepares the listener for the aria with a perfect authentic cadence from F major to Bb major, bridging the conclusion of the recitative with the beginning of the aria.

The aria section maintains a steady 4/2 meter which allows a great deal of freedom for the vocalist to bring out the text; however, long legato lines that challenge the singer's breath management and support. The chord structure changes each measure and reasserts itself with a low double octave in the bass and a simplistic open pattern in the right hand of the piano part.

Figure No. 4: The River (m. 30)⁵¹

The image shows a musical score for 'The River' (m. 30) in 4/2 time. It includes a vocal line with the lyrics 'friends this eve - ning. —' and a piano accompaniment.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The river motif continues throughout the aria and is joined by the descending motif in the conclusion of the aria. This depicts the calming journey that lasts through the evening.

I Never Knew, Music and Text by Ricky Ian Gordon

When someone you love is dying of AIDS, every day something else about them dies.

Ricky Gordon

Ricky Ian Gordon is no stranger to those who enjoy opera and art song. After completing his studies at Carnegie Mellon University in Composition, he quickly emerged as one of the predominate writers of the Musical Theater genre. Over time, he has become a prominent composer of the art song genre and has contributed greatly to operatic endeavors. Many of Gordon's compositions have been recorded and performed internationally by renowned opera singers, Frederica von Stade, Renée Fleming, and Dawn Upshaw, as well as famed Musical Theater singers, Audra MacDonald, Kristin Chenoweth, and Betty Buckley.

His style has been described as bridging the gap between classical and musical theater.

Stephen Holden, music critic, wrote,

If the music of Ricky Ian Gordon had to be defined by a single quality, it would be the bursting effervescence in fusing songs that blithely blur the lines between art song and the high-end Broadway music of Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim ... It's caviar for a world gorging on pizza.⁵²

When writing for the *AIDS Quilt Songbook* in 1991, Gordon had experienced the immediate loss of close friends to AIDS and AIDS related complications. Gordon dedicated *I Never Knew* to Bart Gorin a NYC art dealer who died of AIDS in 1991,⁵³ Rich Martel, a 33-year-old actor and friend Billy Deacutis who died of an AIDS related-brain lymphoma on May 5,

⁵² Ricky Ian Gordon, "Biography of Ricky Ian Gordon" professional website, <http://www.rickyiangordon.com/bio.html>.

⁵³ Michele Kort, "The music and passion of Lara Nyro: Soul Picnic" New York, Macmillan, 2003. p 214

1991⁵⁴, Mark Fotopolos an Actor who died in 1990 of AIDS related complications, and one of the early victims of AIDS, Daniel Katz.⁵⁵

Shortly after Gordon's submission to the AIDS Quilt Songbook Project, he experienced the humbling consumption of AIDS first hand. Gordon's partner, Jeffery Grossi, was diagnosed with AIDS. In the years to come, he would evolve from being Jeffery's lover to becoming Jeffery's primary care taker. Jeffery Michael Grossi died at the age of thirty-two in 1996. Jeffery's struggle has had an enormous impact on Gordon's life and perspective, which has greatly influenced his music. "I felt in a way like grief was a foreign country that I'd heard people talk about, but I didn't quite know what it was until (Jeffery) died." Gordon sites *Orpheus and Euridice* as being one the works that he used to channel his frustration. Shortly after Jeffery's death, Gordon added a verse to *Orpheus and Euridice*, "When it came, her death, he struggled hard and long. / All throughout her suffering, she'd act so strong. / Ashamed, he somehow felt his own survival wrong."⁵⁶ Much like in *I Never Knew*, Gordon experiences a sense of guilt for living while his friends and partner have died.

Other examples of Gordon's work expressing AIDS related frustration and struggle are *What the Living Do*, a setting of several poems by Marie Howe centered around her brother's struggle with AIDS, and *Night Flight to San Francisco*, an operatic monologue from Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. Gordon wrote the opera *Green Sneakers* in memory of Jeffery.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ John Willis "Theater World 1990 – 1991", New York, Hal Leonard Corporation, 2000. p. 204

⁵⁵ Michael Giltz,, "Tales of the Tales" Farmington Hills, Michigan, The Advocate: Liberation Publications, Inc May 22, 2001.

⁵⁶ Ricky Ian Gordon, "Lonely Hunter" professional website <http://www.rickyiangordon.com/press/lonelyhunter.html>

⁵⁷ Ricky Ian Gordon, "Green Sneakers" professional website <http://www.rickyiangordon.com/press/greenvaillaceup.html>

The poetry in *I Never Knew* exposes Gordon's guilt for surviving while his friends pass away. This is exemplified in the verse, "or that I would remain where other birds took flight". He depicts shock that desire could have such a horrible outcome, and exposes his uncertainty with life after death, exemplified in the verse, "can you be happy where you are?" The over-all sentiment is a baffled disillusionment over sudden death of his friends.

Text and Analysis

I Never Knew Music and Text by Ricky Ian Gordon (b.1956) Inscribed " for Bart Gorgin, Rich Martel, Mark Fotopolos, Billy Deacutis, Daniel Katz, and so many others..."
Written for Baritone Voice and Piano
Range: Bb2-Gb4

I never knew
When I dreamed of holding
all those men
that there would be
so little
time for that embrace
or that desire
would end in such a way
I never knew.
Or that I would remain
where other birds took flight
and just as I
know not where
you have gone –
I know not
where to go
I am thinking now of you
who were my sober friend
and you I loved
can you be happy
where you are?
If I only could've known
I'd have protected you
as you protected me
but I never knew
I never knew
I never knew

And if I had
would I have clung to you?

I never knew.⁵⁸

Musical Setting

The structure is: A (m. 1 – 16a) B (m. 16b – 27) A1 (m. 28 – End). The meter is 4/4 throughout with a predominant C minor tonality. Gordon uses The I Never Knew Motif throughout the A sections, seen in figure no. 5. As the piece reaches its climax, Gordon augments the I never knew motif in its final two statements. In m. 45 of the vocal line it is augmented and in the final cadence he shifts to the height of baritone registration for a final augmented statement of the motif. It is predominantly found in the vocal line and the right hand of the piano. It is always followed by the response motif in the left hand of the piano as exemplified in figure no. 5. It functions much like a modified echo with identical rhythmic note values.

Figure No. 5: The I Never Knew Motif And The Response Motif (m. 5 -6)⁵⁹

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics "I nev - er knew" are written below the notes. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The first measure of the piano accompaniment features a response motif in the left hand, consisting of a half note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. The second measure of the piano accompaniment features a response motif in the right hand, consisting of a half note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. The response motif is a modified echo of the vocal motif.

⁵⁸ Ricky Ian Gordon et al. *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1993. p. 101 -105.

⁵⁹ Ricky Ian Gordon, et al. *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1993. p. 101 - 105.

Gordon brings back the I never knew motif and the response at the return of the A section in m.

25. He also adds a third melody or countermelody in the vocal line seen in figure no. 6.

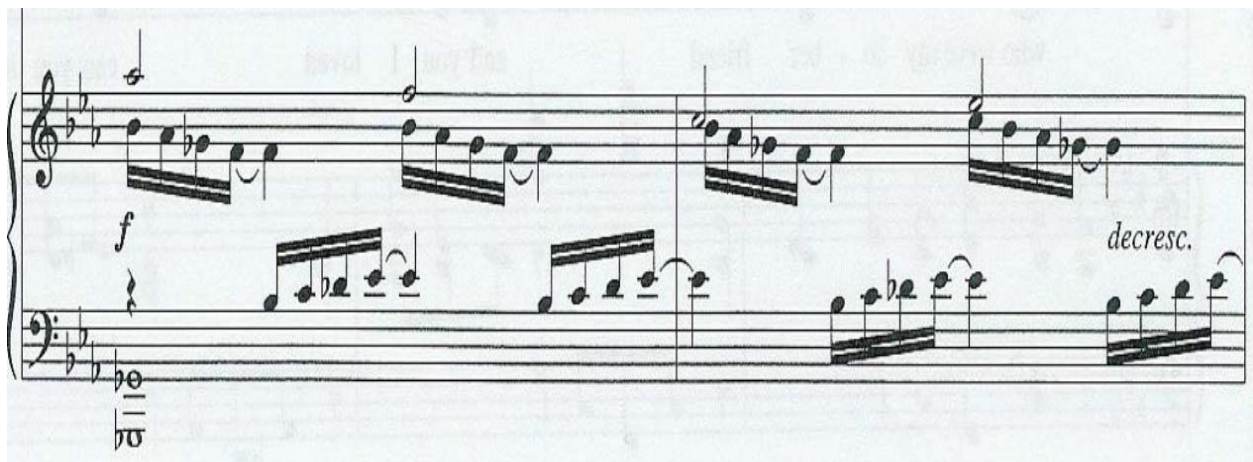
Figure No. 6: Countermelody (m. 28 -29)⁶⁰



The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line with the lyrics "I am think-ing now of you". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The vocal line starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a simpler pattern in the left hand.

In the B section, Gordon continues to use an echo effect, with a pattern presented in the right hand and repeated, in a modified or inverted state in the left hand of the piano part, seen in figure no. 7. In this example, Gordon again produces a third counter melody that can be seen descending from Ab5 in the right hand of the piano part.

Figure No. 7: Pattern With Echo Effect And Use Of Inversion (m. 18 -19)⁶¹



The image shows a musical score for a piano part. The top staff is the right hand, and the bottom staff is the left hand. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The right hand features a descending eighth-note pattern starting on Ab5, which is repeated in the left hand in an inverted state. The score includes a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a *decresc.* (decrescendo) marking. The left hand has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

When I am Dead, My Dearest by Daniel Kallman

Daniel Kallman (b. 1956) composed *When I am dead, my dearest* while studying at the University of Minnesota under Dominick Argento and Paul Fetler.⁶² His “compositions for orchestra, winds, and choir are widely published and have been performed across North America, Europe and East Asia. His steady stream of commissions also includes music for worship, theater, dance, and the young musician. Kallman has composed for the National Symphony Orchestra, the Air Force Academy Band, the Hong Kong Children’s Choir, the Minnesota Orchestra, A Prairie Home Companion, and a wide variety of other vocal and instrumental ensembles.”⁶³

When he received a call from the Minnesota chapter of the American Composers Forum, asking for submissions for the *Minnesota AIDS Quilt Songbook*, his mind immediately went to the text *When I am Dead, My Dearest* by venerated Victorian poet, Christina Rossetti (1830 – 1894).⁶⁴

Kallman remembers finding this text while looking through Christmas poems as a young composer. This piece reminds the world of the, “futility of life”. *When I am dead, my dearest* is filled with nostalgia of life, with moments of sad reflection, but over all, serene and calm. Rossetti’s poetry is hailed for displaying “a perfection of diction, tone, and form under the guise of utter simplicity.”⁶⁵

⁶² Daniel Kallman, “The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Project” personal interview. See Interview with Kallman in Appendix.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Clark Layman, ed. W. Thesing, “Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century British Women Poets” Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 240, University of South Carolina, 2001. pp. 210-231.

Kallman interprets the text as saying, “Don’t morn for me when I die. I will not know saddens after my death.”⁶⁶ I will remember and not grieve but will happily forget.

After Kallman’s composition was selected to be part of the Minnesota AIDS Quilt project, he attended the concert at the Walker Arts center in Minneapolis. He describes the experience as moving and life altering. Hardly able to stand before the audience, William Parker’s state was the example of how this deadly virus can destroy the body, but cannot destroy the soul. He performed with his voice breaking and fragile; however, it did not falter in passion or conviction.⁶⁷

Text and Analysis

When I am dead, my dearest, by Daniel Kallman (b. 1956)

Text by Christina Rossetti (1830 – 1894)

Written for: Soprano Voice and Piano

Vocal Range: D4 – G5

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:

Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:

And dreaming through the twilight

⁶⁶ Daniel Kallman, “ The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Project” personal interview. See Interview with Kallman in the appendix.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.⁶⁸

Musical Setting

This selection reflects the strong influence of Kallman's teacher, Dominick Argento. His influence is most apparent in the Italianate operatic nature prevalent throughout. Argento is an American composer but has spent much of his time in Florence. The influence is most apparent in the rise and fall of each vocal line and his connection to the inflection and sensitivity of the text. As exemplified in figure no. 8a, the highest note in the phrase is near the end of the vocal line and is the most important word of the phrase. This type of compositional phrase structure is continued throughout. The harmonic structure is atonal and the meter, multi-metered. It is marked *Largo molto*, and later doubles his tempo marking while approaching the climax of the piece at measure 22. He begins the 1-3 strophes with the same vocal line seen in figure no. 8; however, at the beginning of the third strophe he marks a faster tempo and transposes this pattern a whole-tone higher beginning on F# instead of E natural as seen at the beginning of the first and second strophes. This is in response to the rising intensity of the text and its dramatic climax.

Figure No. 8: When I Am Dead, My Dearest (m. 4 – 5)⁶⁹

The image displays a musical score for two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, written in treble clef, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, written in bass clef. The lyrics are "When I am dead, my dear-est,". The music is in a multi-metered, atonal style. The vocal line features a rising melodic line that peaks on the word "dead".

⁶⁸ Daniel Kallman, "When I am Dead, my dearest", Minnesota, Daniel Kallman Publications 1985 p. 1-3.

⁶⁹ Daniel Kallman, "When I am Dead, my dearest", Minnesota, Daniel Kallman Publications 1985 p. 1-3.

Another operatic feature is Kallman's use of text painting exemplified in the elongation of the word, "Pain" at the end of the third strophe seen in figure no. 9. After this peak in dramaticism, he slows the tempo, reduces the dynamic, composes descending patterns in the piano and vocal part, and lowers the tessitura to depict the resolve of the poetry, "haply I may remember, and haply may forget."

Figure No. 9: Kallman's Pain (m. 29)⁷⁰

The image displays a musical score for the song "Pain" (measure 29) by Stephen Sondheim. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a long note on the word "pain:" which is underlined. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a "cresc." marking. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a "riten." marking. The score is in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

As Imperceptibly As Grief by Cary John Franklin

Cary John Franklin (b. 1956) received his academic musical training at McAlester College where he studied with Dale Warland and at the University of Minnesota where he worked with Dominick Argento. Franklin's most recognized piece *With a Poet's Eye* has been released and recorded by Chanticleer and The Dale Warland Singers. He is a nationally recognized composer with performances and commissions from many of the leading performing ensembles in the US. His compositional compass stretches across every classical music venue and ensemble. He is an award-winning member of the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers and serves on the Board of the American Composers Forum in Minnesota.⁷¹

Franklin was one of the organizers and producer of the *Minnesota AIDS Quilt Songbook* recording project entitled, *Heart Beats: New Songs for the AIDS Quilt Songbook from Minnesota*. He had been commissioned to write an Emily Dickinson Cycle in 1987 by the Schubert Club of St. Paul. He has always been fascinated by Dickinson's moving and beautiful poems and is drawn to her use of vibrant imagery. It is difficult to find text that has such vivid color and expression while being suitable to melody.⁷²

The American Composers Forum of Minnesota Committee selected the final piece his Emily Dickinson cycle, *As Imperceptibly As Grief*. Franklin describes the poem as, a warm, heart-felt piece about passing on to a new existence, "the passing of a relationship, the passing of a life." One of the predominant trends throughout Dickinson poetry is her use and devotion to

⁷¹ Cary John Franklin, "The Minnesota AIDS Quilt Project", personal interview. See Interview with Franklin in the appendix.

⁷² Ibid.

nature. She often uses nature to parallel her emotions. In *As Imperceptibly as Grief*, she uses the changing of the seasons to parallel the stages of mourning. She alludes to the process of grieving as imperceptible to the eye, but continually affecting the world around us. Franklin finds the verse, “Our summer made her light escape, into the beautiful” the most inspirational verse in the poem. This line is the passing of grief onto something of beauty or resolve. For the victims of AIDS, it is the pain leaving their body as they descend to death.⁷³

Text and Analysis

As Imperceptibly as Grief by Cary John Franklin (b. 1956)
Text by Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)
Written for Voice and Piano
Vocal Range: B3 – F#5

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away—
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy—
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon—
The Dusk drew earlier in—
The Morning foreign shone—
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone—
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

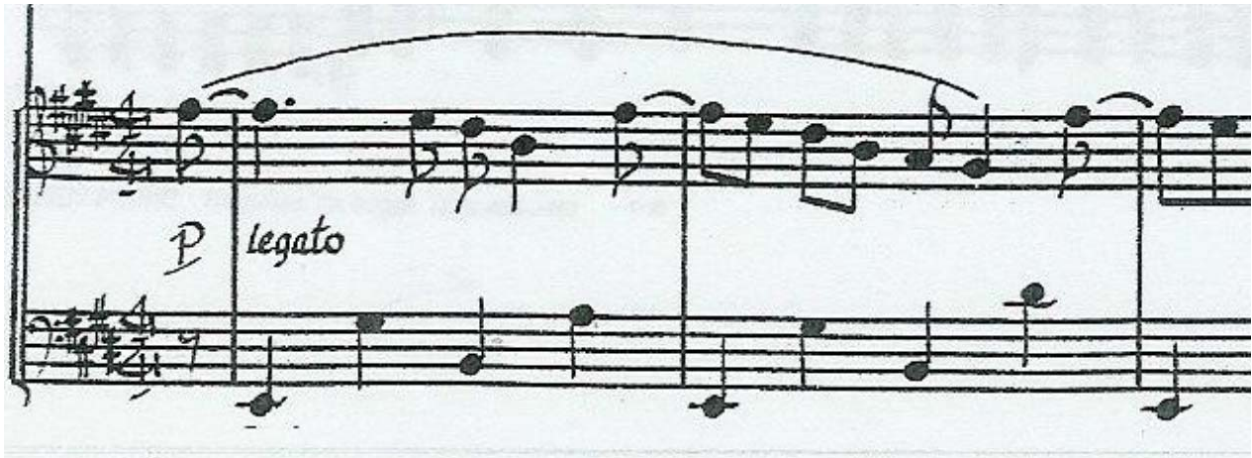
Music Analysis

The structure of this piece is, A (m. 1- 10) B (m. 11 - 18) A1 (m. 19 - 26) B1 (m. 27 - end). Franklin accentuates the division of each section with compositional techniques such as

⁷³ Ibid.

texture, registration, and meter. He marks the beginning of the A section, “broadly and timeless”. He achieves a sense of timelessness by tying the last up-beat of every measure with the first down beat of every measure (seen in figure no. 10).

Figure No. 10: Timelessness Technique 1 (m. 1-2)⁷⁴



He further accentuates the impression of timelessness by composing patterns of eighth notes in sets of three with tied notes in the bass seen in figure no. 11.

Figure No. 11: Timelessness Technique 2 (m. 7 – 8)⁷⁵



⁷⁴ Carl Franklin, “An Imperceptibly As Grief” unpublished.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Although he uses the 4/4-meter throughout, he does not solidify a sense of the meter until the start of the B section with a repeated eighth-note chord pattern while maintaining the ambivalence of timelessness in the right hand with tied-notes across the bar-lines. The B section, seen in figure no. 12, has a great deal of forward motion and allows Franklin an opportunity to express the dramatic peak of the poetry. The only time the piano doubles the melody and deviates from the tied note ambivalence is for the dramatic peak that inspired Franklin to dedicate the text to the AIDS Quilt Songbook project, “ Our summer holder her light escape into the beautiful”.

Figure No. 12: B Section (m. 12 – 13)⁷⁶



Death Spiral Music and Text by Evan Kuchar

Evan Kuchar (b. 1979) studied music at Augustana College and received a Masters from the University of Iowa where he studied composition with David Gompper and electroacoustic music with Lawrence Fritts. He primarily writes for a contemporary and experimental music group based in Chicago called Anomie. His music combines elements from contemporary and antiquated traditions, from Counterpoint to Radiohead, to form “subtle moments of beautiful

⁷⁶ Ibid.

melancholy". He teaches music at Chicago State University and teaches piano privately to children of all ages.⁷⁷

Eric Reda, the coordinator of the Chicago AIDS Quilt Songbook project contacted Kuchar after hearing his compositions at a performance of *Anomie*. Kuchar was honored to be part of the project. He had never known anyone who had been lost in the AIDS epidemic but he tried to discover parallels in his own life that would connect to the general idea of loss.⁷⁸

His thoughts about the text and music are best described most eloquently in his own words:

I tried to focus my imagination on the ostensible intent of the concert. The words were born of a long and difficult labor of free-writing and revision and searching ... I wanted to write words that would speak to the tragedy of AIDS but also to the more general tragedy of existence ... the idea that the Now is all that we can ever have; that the future is not guaranteed and the past is consumed and destroyed by the present; that life is a system of nested cycles churning and repeating in and around us in which we are merely momentary participants.⁷⁹

Text and Analysis

Death Spiral Music and Text by Evan Kuchar (b. 1979)
Written for Baritone Voice and Piano
Vocal Range: F2 – G4

you are.
you are this moment
you ARE this moment, nothing but
a moment
emerging, decaying
grasping for breath...
but a moment in a series of
crashing and burning
and rising from the
ashes to ashes to ashes and dust

⁷⁷ Evan Kuchar "The Chicago AIDS Quilt Project" personal interview. See Interview with Kuchar in the appendix.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

to be anything, everything
anywhere, everywhere
flying and dying like asteroids
flashing in a sky of
incredible beauty and
waiting as the next moment comes
to take us away

Analysis

Kuchar uses density, registration, dynamic, and texture contrast to create intense dramatic divisions within the score. As an experienced pianist, he is able to utilize the full capacity of the piano as he is an experienced pianist. Kuchar asks the baritone voice to sustain the extremes of his range in order to match the thick virtuosic texture of the piano part. This further accentuates the dramatic peak “like asteroids flashing in the sky”, seen in figure no. 13.

Figure No. 13: Flashing In The Sky (m. 100 – 103).⁸⁰

The musical score for 'Flashing In The Sky' (m. 100-103) is presented in three systems. The top system shows the vocal line in a bass clef, starting at measure 100 with a forte (ff) dynamic. The lyrics 'sky' and 'of in' are written below the vocal line. The middle system shows the piano accompaniment in a treble clef, starting at measure 100 with a fortississimo (fff) dynamic. The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment in a bass clef, also starting at measure 100 with a fortississimo (fff) dynamic. The piano part consists of dense, rapid sixteenth-note patterns in both hands, creating a thick, virtuosic texture. The vocal line is marked with a fermata over the first measure and a slur over the subsequent measures.

The impression is given of a well-written orchestral reduction. It is through composed with a tonal center of Bb minor. It is multi-metered, but predominantly in 4/4 and 6/8 time. The entire piece has parallels to many of the Richard Strauss’ art songs in the repertoire. This is exemplified in the way that the entire piece slowly crescendos from piano at m. 1, to fortississimo at m. 100 and back to piano by m. 122. The melodic line is disjunct in the

⁸⁰ Evan Kuchar, “Death Spiral” unpublished.

beginning and becomes very syncopated by m. 78. Kuchar captures the life journey and essence of one struggling with a life threatening disease. In the final stanza, Kuchar exposes his believe system of interconnectivity and the exchange of one reality to a new one.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

I am looking at his (William Parker's) panel for The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and can read the many messages written by his friends: "I will stand as a witness," "You gave me a world," "Thank you for the AIDS Quilt Songbook"...It is easy to imagine a soft smile on Will's face as the AIDS Quilt Songbook grows. Even in death Will Parker continues to touch us and teach.

Amy Doty

The original *AIDS Quilt Songbook* encapsulates a time when an unpopular minority was thrust into the lives of conservative America. In 1987, Ronald Reagan said, "AIDS information can not be what some call 'value neutral.' After all, when it comes to preventing AIDS, don't medicine and morality teach the same lessons?"⁸¹ These kinds of statements made it easy for many to isolate themselves from the disease, but as time has revealed to us, we are all *affected* by AIDS whether we are *infected* or not.

As the AIDS Quilt Songbook project has evolved, forty-nine uncollected additions have been added. The body of poetry is now vast and expanded. In the original publication, three female composers were selected. Out of the sixty-seven documented additions, eight-teen are from women composers. For the Minnesota AIDS Quilt project, *Positive Women: Susan* by Janika Vandervelde was the first addition to deal with the subject matter of a woman with AIDS. At the Chicago performance, *Believe* by Karen Mooney incorporated the use of African drums, drawing the attention to the AIDS crisis in Africa. These diverse kinds of additions are exactly what William Parker had envisioned for the project. He would be proud to know that his project has inspired so much artistry and purpose, that it continues to have a presence in the art song repertoire, and will continue to inspire and educate those that hear it, perform it, and study it.

⁸¹ Michael Bronski, "The Truth About Reagan and AIDS, National Review Online" (November 2003). Republished, <http://www.indegayforum.org/news/show/26843.html>

APPENDIX
INTERVIEWS AND PERMISSIONS

Permission to be interviewed by Kuchar:

from evan
to John Seesholtz
date Sun, Jan 4, 2009 at 12:35 PM
subject Re: Hi Evan
mailed-bygmail.com

Hey John,

Happy Holidays. I hope you can excuse the delay. I was out of the country for a few weeks, and then the holidays hit. I'm writing to let you know that I'm definitely interested in your project and would be happy to be involved. What sort of time frame are you operating under? I would like to edit the piano part just slightly--maybe make it slightly easier to allow the important lines to come through more. I'll send the other info with the final score.

yours,
Evan

Interview with Kuchar:

from evan
to John Seesholtz
date Wed, Mar 18, 2009 at 5:04 PM
subject Re: Hi Evan
mailed-by gmail.com

Hey John,

I'm glad to finally be sending you this. And while I maybe could have done it sooner, I think the distance will give me some perspective.

Could you tell me how you came to be involved with the AIDS Quilt project?

Eric Reda is a friend whom I've met in the various music circles in Chicago. I can't quite remember how and where we first met, but I remember seeing his opera "Reagan's Children." At some point he came to see my group, Anomie, play at Danny's Tavern where we played periodically.

What inspired you to write the piece?

Simply, I tried to focus my imagination on the ostensible intent of the concert. I've never known anyone directly who has been lost to the AIDS epidemic (aside from a stranger in California who I talked with for an hour), so I couldn't draw on any personal experience. So, I tried to discover parallels in my own life that would connect to the general idea of loss.

Who are your influences poetically and musically?

Poetically, I don't have any real models aside from whatever I may have absorbed listening to rock music. I just tried to write words that got at the heart of what I wanted to say without reusing tired models. And so, the words were born of a long and difficult labor of free-writing and revision and searching on the internet. Musically, I have two main streams of influences: classical and rock. In terms of classical composers, I tend to think first of Beethoven, then Stravinsky and Schoenberg, and finally John Adams. Somewhere in there is an affinity for modal counterpoint which floats on the surface of it all. As for rock, Radiohead is an easy pick for most influential, but, especially in this piece, I also ear Nine Inch Nails and Nirvana. More recently, I've also been inspired by post-rock groups like Tortoise, Mogwai, and Fond of Tigers.

In your own words, what is the piece about? Any hidden meanings in the text?

I wanted to write words that would speak to the tragedy of AIDS but also to the more general tragedy of existence. It probably grew out of some subconscious Buddhist thought that has been creeping into my world view in the last several years: the idea that the Now is all that we can ever have; that the future is not guaranteed and the past is consumed and destroyed by the present; that life is a system of nested cycles churning and repeating in and around us in which we are merely momentary participants.

Would it be possible for me to get a copy of your piece? (I'd be willing to sign with a notary stating that I will not publish it or use it without your permission)

Could you tell me a little about your background in music? Your teachers?

I am a pianist and a composer, mostly by force of will and stubbornness. I got an undergraduate degree in music from Augustana College in Illinois but had no opportunity to study composition. After graduating, I wrote independently and then took some lessons from Janice Misurell-Mitchell, a Chicago-based composer. I then went to the University of Iowa where I studied composition with David Gompper and electroacoustic music with Lawrence Fritts.

Do you have a professional bio that I could have?

Evan Kuchar is a composer and pianist living in Chicago. He primarily writes music for Anomie, an ensemble he helped start in 2008. Anomie has played at several local bars and Millennium Park. His music combines elements from contemporary and antiquated traditions to form subtle moments of beautiful melancholy. He studied music at Augustana College and received a Masters from the University of Iowa where he studied with David Gompper and Lawrence Fritts. He teaches music at Chicago State University and teaches piano privately to children of all ages.

Did you ask me once for Eric's contact info? His email is: <eric@chicagovanguard.org>,

sorry it took so long! can't wait to hear what you do with it.

peace
evan

Permission to be interviewed by Franklin:

from Cary Franklin
to John Seesholtz
date Tue, Mar 3, 2009 at 7:05 PM
subject Re: Final DMA Research Project
mailed-by m aca.lester.edu

Hello John,

Thanks for your interest in my music. I am on sabbatical semester but would be happy to set up an interview with you. Of course, you can have permission to use my piece in your dissertation.

Keep in touch.

Cary

Interview with Franklin:

Cary Franklin
to John Seesholtz
date Thu, Apr 23, 2009 at 9:47 AM
subject Re: Final DMA Research Project
mailed-by m aca.lester.edu
Follow up message

Q&A:

1) Could you tell me how you came to be involved with the AIDS Quilt project?
I was the music producer of the Minnesota AIDS Quilt recording project.

2) What inspired you to write the piece?
The Emily Dickinson Cycle was written on commission from the Schubert Club of St. Paul in 1987. My inspiration for writing any music with text comes from the text and I have always found Dickinson's poems to be moving and beautiful. Images and colors come to mind.

3) Who are your influences musically?
Mozart, Britten, Copland, Argento

4) What was your motivation for choosing the text?
Beautiful poetry that seemed to be well suited to music.

5) In your own words, what is the piece about?

The wonderful thing about poetry is that it can mean a myriad of things to different people. To me it is a warm, heart-felt piece about passing - passing on to a new place, the passing of a relationship, the passing of a life.

5b) What do you think is the most inspirational element of the text if any?

"Our summer made her light escape Into the beautiful."

6) Could you tell me a little about your background in music? Your teachers?

I will attach a bio. Most influential composition teachers were Dale Warland and Dominick Argento.

7) Could you tell me a little about your experiences at the Minnesota performance?

There have been a number of performances. The wonderful thing about multi-performances is that each performer brings something unique and touching to the work.

The cycle was not written specifically for the AIDS project but was chosen by the committee putting together the recording.

8) William Parker had hoped that there would be further volumes or a second collection of the AIDS quilt Songbook, Where you ever contacted about publishing in a further collection or Volume?

No.

9) Could I have a copy of your professional bio?

It is attached. Good luck!

Cary

Daniel Kallman Permission to be interviewed:

from Daniel Kallman

to John Seesholtz

date Tue, Feb 17, 2009 at 1:45 PM

subject Re: DMA Research Project

hide details Feb 17

Reply

Follow up message

Hello John - Thanks for contacting me and permission granted. I should tell you that unlike the other songs, I didn't actually write When I Am Dead for the AIDS QUILT. When I was contacted about the project I was in the middle of a large commission and told them I wouldn't have time to do a new setting but that I had written When I Am Dead as a graduate student. They wanted to look at it and decided to include on the CD. I would be happy to answer any other

questions you might have, though. I should have it in the mail to you tomorrow or Thursday.
Thanks, and good luck with your project - DK

Daniel Kallman, composer

Daniel Kallman Phone interview, March 17, 2009:

1) Could you tell me how you came to be involved with the AIDS Quilt project?

Phone call American composers forum (Minnesota composers forum) In the middle of another commission. Previously written during studies with Argento. List of name.

2) What inspired you to write the piece?

Graduate school with Argento. Necessity, the text was moving

3) Who are your influences musically?

Argento, Father was a band director, Choir, Band director: Kantori. Richard Larson. Austin Minnesota, Meister Singers – Famous group directed by Larson.
Britten – Choral music, Instrumental music: Prokofia, Stravinsky

4) What was your motivation for choosing the text?

Found the text while looking through Christmas texts,

5) In your own words, what is the piece about?

The Futility of Life. Rossettu is saying, “Don’t morn for me when I die. I will not know saddens after my death.”

6) Could you tell me a little about your background in music? Your teachers?

7) Could you tell me a little about your experiences at the Minnesota performance?

It took place at the Walker Arts center. I rode with composer Caroline Jennings. It was 1992, Bass Baritone Will Parker was dying his voice breaking and weakening but still incredible and strong enough to sing – Swing low sweet chariot was the encore – people holding him up at the end because he was too weak to stand on his own. It was a touching experience. Everyone was in tears. It was life altering.

8) Where you ever contacted about publishing in a further collection for the AIDS quilt songbook?

“I recall being contacted twice about putting something together but never heard back.”

*Aural permission to Use Bio online

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