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Three choral compositions by Alice Parker: a conductor's analysis of Songstream, Angels and Challengers, and Songs from "The Dragon Quilt"

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**THREE CHORAL COMPOSITIONS BY ALICE PARKER:
A CONDUCTOR'S ANALYSIS OF
SONGSTREAM, ANGELS AND CHALLENGERS,
AND *SONGS FROM "THE DRAGON QUILT"***

A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

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Abstract

Alice Parker (b. 1925) has earned a place of respect in choral music through more than half a century of work in arranging and composition, conducting, teaching and writing. Her works reflect diverse interests, from short, unison pieces for treble choir, to the complexity of unaccompanied madrigals, to major choral/orchestral works and operas. Conductors and singers all over the world have been influenced by her writings, seminars and SINGS, and she continues to extol the value of music, both in the concert hall and as a part of everyday life. Scholarly research of her choral compositions is limited, and further research is warranted because of the volume, variety, and quality of materials she has produced, and as recognition of her personal standing in the music world.

This paper is an in-depth study of Parker's compositional methods through an analysis of three major choral works: *Songstream* (1986, Galaxy Music Corporation), *Angels and Challengers* (1990, Alice Parker Music Company), and *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt"* (1984, E. C. Schirmer Music Company). It is presented in five chapters: Chapter 1 is a general biography which focuses on her musical career, compositional style and educational endeavors and philosophy; Chapters 2-4 examine each of the works individually. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of Parker's choice of text. The influence of the text on overall form and on the modal melodic and harmonic movement is a hallmark of Parker's compositional style. Chapter 5 is a brief discussion of practical rehearsal considerations and interpretive issues, followed by a conclusion.

This study illustrates the variety and often surprising complexity that results from Parker's simple philosophy of music coupled with her straightforward compositional style. Utilizing natural text stress and modal melodic techniques, she creates music that is the embodiment of the text.

Chapter 1

Alice Parker

Musical Career

Alice Parker was born in Boston, Massachusetts on December 16, 1925, to Mary Stuart and Gordon Parker. Although her parents were not professional musicians, they enjoyed music on an amateur basis, and encouraged their obviously talented daughter in her musical studies. Parker learned to play piano, violin, and clarinet and was involved in the vocal music of the church the family attended.¹ She began composing at age eight, although she plays down the importance of this fact, stating “. . . it wasn’t like I was doing something really extraordinary. I wrote little piano pieces at first and then pieces for the high school orchestra and chorus.”² During her teenage years, Parker studied composition and music theory with Mary Mason at the New England Conservatory, and participated in summer camps at Westminster Choir College. Here, she became acquainted with John Finley Williamson and made such an impression on him that he commissioned a choral piece from Parker. In 1945, she conducted its premiere, a setting of an Archibald MacLeish text, *The West Wind*.

Parker attended Smith College where she majored in piano and composition. When intense practice habits led to wrist problems, she switched her focus from piano to organ and graduated *cum laude* in 1947 with a double major in organ and composition. Although the cantata performed at graduation that year was Parker’s

¹ Connie Day Roberts, “*The Ponder Heart*: An Opera by Alice Parker Adapted from the Novel by Eudora Welty” (DMA diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1995), 67.

² Ann Meier, “Alice Parker: Working Toward a More Musical Society,” *Music Educators Journal* 73, (January 1987): 36.

senior thesis, she had actually become very discouraged with composition.³ She stated, “My composition work at Smith ended in making me sufficiently self-conscious about what I was writing so that it very effectively stopped it completely.”⁴ Parker applied to the Eastman School of Music and discovered that she would be expected to produce twelve-tone compositions. Of that contemporary compositional method, she said, “It didn’t feel right to me, and it didn’t give me any of the pleasure that I thought should be part of composing. Eventually, I realized that atonality was a negative discipline rather than a positive one, and that I was affirmatively a ‘tonal’ composer.”⁵

In the summer of 1947, Parker attended the Tanglewood Music Festival, a graduation gift from her parents. She sang in the Festival Chorus under the direction of Robert Shaw, who had just finished his first year teaching at Juilliard.⁶ This experience strengthened her decision to study choral music,⁷ where she could combine her musical talents with a love of poetry.⁸ Parker promptly enrolled in Juilliard and entered that fall as a master’s degree candidate in choral conducting. There she was taught by musicians who would greatly influence her life and career in music: choral conducting with Robert Shaw; piano and score study with Julius Herford; and theory and improvisation with Vincent Persichetti.⁹ Her relationship

³Janice Elaine Miller Long, “Alice Parker: Analytical Notes on the Cantatas, An Annotated Catalogue, A Complete Works List, and a Biography,” (DMA diss., University of La Verne, CA, 1979), 112.

⁴ Ibid., 114.

⁵ Joseph A. Mussulman, “Alice Parker: Riding a Surfboard,” *Music Educators Journal* 66, (March 1980): 42.

⁶ Roberts, 68.

⁷ Jennifer King, E-mail interview with Alice Parker, September 10, 2004.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Roberts, 68.

with Julius Herford was particularly significant. She said that he “. . .taught me to think before I play (never had considered that before) and listen while I play—ditto. Basic and gorgeous. I owe almost everything I’m doing now to his teaching.”¹⁰

Parker’s time at Juilliard was incredibly busy and fruitful. She remembers these years:

In the fall, I enrolled at Juilliard to be a Choral Conducting student of his [Shaw’s]-accepted, I felt, only as the token female in the class. Maggie Hillis joined me the next year. Those years were like being on a roller-coaster: singing in the Collegiate Chorale (the Verdi Requiem with Toscanini; the complete Christmas Oratorio at Carnegie on a full blizzard night); attending rehearsals of the Juilliard chorus (The St. John Passion) and the small group which became the nucleus of the Robert Shaw Chorale (radio programs, opera recordings, special performances); superb score study with Julius Herford (my other mentor: I started piano study with him that year); writing program notes, researching repertoire and doing all manner of odd jobs for Shaw.¹¹

Upon graduation from Juilliard, Parker hoped to acquire a college teaching position, but was unsuccessful. She obtained a teaching position at the North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka, Illinois, and worked there for two years. This experience helped her to realize that full-time teaching was not what she wanted to do. Parker returned to New York and once again took up study with Julius Herford. With his help, she found a part time teaching position at the Summit School of Music in New Jersey. Here she worked with Helen Bender, a mentor who convinced Parker that teaching is most effective when learning is a pleasant

¹⁰ Long, 115.

¹¹ Alice Parker, “Editorial: Remembering Robert Lawson Shaw,” *Melodious Accord Newsletter* 13 (February 1999): 1. Available online at <http://melodiousaccord.org>

experience.¹² This attitude may still be seen as central to Parker's teaching methods.

All the while, Parker had continued collaborating with Shaw on arrangements of materials to be recorded by the Robert Shaw Chorale, formed in 1948. Parker said that early in their student/teacher relationship, they recognized that they had complementary working styles.¹³ The Parker/Shaw arranging partnership became much more involved when the Chorale was signed to a recording contract by RCA Victor:

Robert wanted to record only choral masterworks, but RCA asked for something that would sell to support the serious music. That's where I came in. He had no time to write the arrangements himself, although he was perfectly capable of doing so. . . .

There was no thought at that time of establishing a published series of these arrangements. The idea was to produce albums of folk materials that would be not only attractive to singers and listeners but also relatively inexpensive to produce. There, too, I was restricted to using melodies in the public domain (no copyright problems) and unaccompanied voices (no expensive instrumentalists).¹⁴

An album a year kept Parker busy as the partnership developed along with her own arranging skills. In the beginning, Shaw selected most of the music and had a large hand in their arrangement, but as time went on, the pieces became more and more the result of Parker's work.

Gradually, I was able to anticipate the pencil [Shaw's] and to feel its presence even in my first sketches. I learned to edit my own ideas and brought in sketches that needed fewer changes. The last

¹² Long, 115-116.

¹³ Alice Parker, "Parker-Shaw Memories," *Choral Journal* 36 (April 1996): 15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

two albums we did were entirely mine: subject matter, choice and sequencing of tunes, arrangements, and markings.¹⁵

These years of arranging traditional melodies helped Parker come to terms with her personal aversion to non-tonal music.

In school, I was trying to escape tonality: in the folksongs, I realized it wasn't a barrier. It was the fabric that you worked with to create the setting. I'd always loved songs, but I thought the "home songs" I'd grown up with were inferior to the great compositions. I learned differently.¹⁶

Another major aspect of Parker's life tied her even closer to the Chorale. In 1954, she married baritone Thomas Pyle, a member of the Chorale who, in addition to his choral and solo work, assisted Shaw with a variety of chores from setting up the stage to auditioning singers to managing tours. The couple had five children in the next eight years, which kept Parker close to home while Pyle toured with the Chorale.¹⁷ In addition to her formidable obligations at home as well as her continued collaboration with Shaw, Parker taught private piano and music classes and assisted with children's music at Riverside Church. In 1964 she published a small dictionary titled *Music Reference Crammer*. During this time of childbearing and rearing, which she has lovingly referred to as "...an enforced period of basics,"¹⁸ Parker once again began to compose. Of her years away from composition, she states,

Twelve tone music really turned me off, so I (almost) stopped. I couldn't figure out where I belonged in 20th century music. . . After fifteen years of working with Shaw (a medieval apprenticeship in renaissance vocal techniques!), having a family, and

¹⁵ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶ King, Interview.

¹⁷ Parker, "Editorial", 2.

¹⁸ Mussulman, 44.

teaching piano and children's classes at home, it didn't seem to matter where I belonged – I had something to say and a way to do it. In other words, I had grown up enough to have confidence in my own voice.¹⁹

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Parker continued to arrange, compose and teach. Her collaboration with Robert Shaw and the Chorale lasted until 1967. In 1968, Parker began teaching summer courses in choral arranging, composing and creative singing at Westminster Choir College.²⁰ Parker's compositions during the 1960s show a growing self-confidence in her abilities. She began with publications that were intended for children, or with SATB pieces that were close in character to the arrangements.²¹ However, in the mid-1960s, Parker began to try her hand at extended compositions. The 1966 "church opera" *Christopher Dock* (later listed as a cantata), was a twenty minute piece that employed a full adult choir, soprano, tenor, and bass soli, and a children's choir accompanied by a recorder quartet, a string quartet, trumpet and percussion. Parker also composed the cantatas, *An Easter Rejoicing* (1967) and *A Sermon from the Mountain: Martin Luther King* (1968). All three of these works include original and traditional melodic material; *Christopher Dock* and *An Easter Rejoicing* contain melodies from American hymns; and *A Sermon from the Mountain: Martin Luther King* draws from African-American spirituals.²² While in all three, Parker combined the melodies she knew so well with new ideas of her own, the carefully selected texts served to create very different formats for each. *An Easter Rejoicing*,

¹⁹ King, Interview.

²⁰ Long, 117-118.

²¹ Alice Parker, *Alice Parker Works List: 1948-2004*, Hawley, MA: Alice Parker Music Company, 2004.

²² Ibid., 5-7.

for instance, consists of thirteen movements that are grouped and interspersed with biblical readings to create a connected whole. *A Sermon from the Mountain...* combines spoken words with vocal solos and full chorus, using varied instrumental combinations as cohesive elements.²³

In 1970, Parker was invited to give a session on hymns at Union Seminary in New York. Folk-influenced music was becoming popular in many American churches, and she came to the defense of the continued use of the hymnal. This led to yet another avenue for her career:

. . . Everyone else was preaching throwing out the hymnal (guitars and folk were IN), but I knew from all the arranging that many of the hymns were superb melodies, and that the fault was in the way we performed them, not the tunes themselves. So I tried to think how I could challenge these very bright church musicians - many of them close friends - and came up with the idea of asking them to improvise settings. It was rather like reconstructing the approach to the melodies that I'd learned to take: find a way of articulating the single line that makes it come alive, and then devise a simple setting. They loved it - and so it started. For several years after that I led SINGS in various churches where those friends worked, but it took some time for me to realize that this was a very important part of my work.²⁴

In 1976, Parker published a small book called *Creative Hymn Singing*, which outlines the melody-based improvisational method used in her SINGS. It is a slender book that is full of basic information on history, notation, and evolution of style in traditional American hymns. In simple terms, Parker demonstrates her knowledge and passion for beautiful melodies and for amateur singing.²⁵ She still

²³ Long, 3, 23.

²⁴ King, Interview.

²⁵ Alice Parker, *Creative Hymn-Singing* (Hinshaw Music: Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1976).

leads a series of SINGS in her hometown church, and continues to work with congregations as she travels for various engagements.²⁶

After the death of her husband in 1976, Parker increased the level of composing and traveling, conducting choirs and orchestras in festivals, conferences, schools and churches across the country. She lectured at Yale, was a MacDowell Colony Fellow,²⁷ and in 1978 received a grant to study in residence with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Also in the 1970s, Parker received an NEA Composer's Grant, an American Music Center Grant, and an ASCAP Composer's award.²⁸ Considering her busy schedule, and the fact that she composes only on commission,²⁹ it is impressive to note the list of compositions for the 1970s: three operas; six cantatas; eight choral suites; four song cycles; and ten separate choral pieces. There were also Parker's first works for chorus and full orchestra, two of which used traditional tunes, *Seven Carols* (1972), and *Gaudete: Six Latin Christmas Hymns* (1973). Two major choral/orchestral works that were completely original compositions were the cantatas, *Journeys: Pilgrims and Strangers* (1976), and *Commentaries* (1978).³⁰ Both employ a full orchestra, along with other instrumental ensembles that allow for the variety in style and texture that had become a hallmark of Parker's style: in *Journeys*... there is a very large percussion ensemble and a small improvising jazz band in addition to the full orchestra; *Commentaries* has percussion as well, and there is an additional chamber

²⁶ King, Interview.

²⁷ Susan Merritt, "Text and Tune: Back to Basics with Alice Parker," *The Choral Journal* 25 (September, 1984): 5.

²⁸ Long, 117.

²⁹ Mussulman, 91.

³⁰ Parker, *Works*.

orchestra.³¹ As Parker became more comfortable writing for orchestra, the pieces showed more extravagant use of full sound, as opposed to the thinner scoring she had previously used.³²

Parker's compositional output for the 1980s was comparable to the previous decade, and her teaching and traveling load remained full. While she composed several large works—one opera and four chorus/orchestral pieces—the bulk of her compositional output consisted of the more intimate genres: ten cantatas with chamber instruments; twelve choral suites; twenty-two sacred and secular choral pieces; and one song cycle. A brief look at Parker's music from the 1980s demonstrates her continued use of traditional and original music. For example, of the ten cantatas, four contain entirely original melodic material: *In Praise of Singing* (1981), *Elinor Wylie: Incantations* (1984), *Charity and Love* (1986), and *Pleasure in the Flowers* (1989); four use traditional melodies from such disparate traditions as American mountain hymns: *Kentucky Psalms* (1984), and *The Babe of Bethlehem* (1986), 17th century Dutch hymns, *The Zeeland Psalter* (1989), and Duke Ellington's melodies, *Songs from the Sacred Concerts—Duke Ellington* (1986); and two cantatas combine Parker's original melodies with traditional American songs and hymns: *Sacred Symphonies* (1983), and *Naomi and Ruth* (1987).³³ Parker's talent for compositional variety becomes even more evident in her music from this period. Looking through the *Alice Parker Works List*, one may find a two minute piece for two equal voices, accompanied by guitar, harp or keyboard, *Holy Michael*

³¹ Long, 37.

³² Ibid. 38.

³³ Parker, *Works*.

(1983), composed one year after *The Ponder Heart*, a two hour opera with Parker's libretto based on Eudora Welty's novel. Although *The Ponder Heart* was written in a traditional operatic style, Parker used "...jazz, blues, Southern Protestant church music, a barbershop quartet, and a unique style of recitative to depict events in and around Clay, Mississippi."³⁴ The 1980s also produced two of the works considered in this monograph: *Songstream*, an intimate choral suite which brings to mind Romantic lieder, and *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt,"* which sits firmly in the twentieth century, with complicated, free poetry, quickly changing tempi and textures, and colorful orchestration. When Parker's composition *Earth, Sky Spirit* was premiered in 1986, music critic Derrick Henry commented on her orchestration: "Ms. Parker's intent is that the orchestra surround the voices with sounds evoking the natural world. She achieves the miraculous by scoring in such a way that her large orchestra never overwhelms the children."³⁵

In a 1987 interview, Parker was asked what other things she would like to accomplish. She replied:

I would love to make some recordings of my own music, because if you have the recording as well as the page, you are letting people know, "This is one way of interpreting that page." It is possible to do what is exactly on the page and be totally unmusical. And so I am letting people know what kinds of freedoms I take with my own page, and where, in hopes that they can then conjecture "why." And to show them that slavish adherence to the symbols on the page is not part of my music program.³⁶

³⁴ Roberts, ix.

³⁵ "Famous Shaw-Parker Team in World Premiere," *The Choral Journal* 27 (1986): 3.

³⁶ Meier, 41.

This goal was made possible by Melodious Accord, Inc., an organization that was established in 1985 when “...singers and choral directors who had been fired by her [Parker’s] talent and love for the varied and subtle sounds of voices singing together, convinced her to start her own group.”³⁷ The corporation provides for a sixteen member professional chorus, “The Musicians of Melodious Accord,” that presents a yearly concert series in New York City and makes recordings of Parker’s arrangements and compositions. There are currently seven compact discs of Parker’s work available, performed by the chorus and conducted by Parker, and two additional discs that are in the editing stages. The organization also sponsors a series of SINGS given each year, and helps provide opportunities for advanced study through Alice Parker’s workshops and concert appearances. They maintain a website which includes their monthly newsletter and purchasing information for Parker’s books and recordings.³⁸ In 1985, Parker also found time to publish her instructional book, *Folk Song Transformation*, a companion songbook to her video by the same name.

In the 1990s, Parker continued to travel, compose and teach. Yet another choral book, *Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church* was published in 1991. All three of Parker’s choral books mentioned herein are guides that encourage free-spirited singing and creative vocal improvisation. They are intended for use by amateur choirs. In addition to her national and international travels and continued teaching at Westminster, Parker’s 1990 compositional output included three choral/orchestral works, six cantatas, seven choral suites, two song cycles, and

³⁷ Parker, *Works*.

³⁸ Melodious Accord Website available at <http://melodiousaccord.org>.

thirty-one separate choral pieces. The wide variety of text sources used in these works reveals her universal outlook: traditional American sources such as hymns, folk songs, and spirituals; biblical texts in English and liturgical Latin and a chant by Hildegard of Bingen; poetry from Dickinson, Yeats, Shakespeare, Watts, and Rosetti, to name a few; four works using traditional Native American texts; pieces in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, and translations from traditional Moravian texts. In the *Alice Parker Works List*, many pieces are catalogued under both the sacred and secular categories.³⁹ It has been said that Parker's religious compositions have a "universality" that allows for equally effective performances in disparate locations.⁴⁰ One could easily argue that the universality extends to Parker's secular pieces as well. Several choral compositions from the 1990s that represent a world-wide view are: two song cycles, *Songs of the Turtle* (1994), with texts drawn from Taos Pueblo writings, and *Whole Earth Songs* (1992), with texts by Alice Parker regarding earth conservation; and *Hollering Sun* (1992), a choral suite that also uses Native American texts. Once again, in the 90s it may be seen that Parker composed a wide variety of pieces, yet continued to gravitate toward her more preferred genres of cantata, unaccompanied motet, and vocal chamber music with instruments.⁴¹

In 1994, Parker was awarded the Michael Korn Founder's Award from Chorus America, for her lifetime achievement in choral music. Robert Shaw's comments for the occasion referred to "Alice Parker's amazing qualities of scholarship, musicianship, and leadership. . . ." He continued with what he saw as

³⁹ Parker, *Works*.

⁴⁰ Long, 118.

⁴¹ King, Interview.

the two fundamental elements that distinguished her music, “The first of these is that her music works. It sings. . . . In the second place . . . Alice has had a rare relationship with words, with what was noble, provocative, elegant, unique, or simply felicitous in the English language.”⁴²

In January of 1999, when Robert Shaw died, Parker wrote of what she learned from Shaw during their twenty years of working together:

Be your own harshest critic. . . Listen all the time: the specific word, accent, mouth, voice, person, composer. Capture the sound on the page. In the last analysis (and the first), one can’t separate the text, the melody and the setting: it’s all one. . . . music is one of the greatest gifts and sternest masters. When we enter its world, we must submerge our individuality in its surge and ebb, only finding our own voice through the mastery of its demands.⁴³

Although Parker is still often remembered as Shaw’s arranging partner, the bulk of her life has been spent pursuing a separate route. Over forty years of composing, conducting, writing and teaching all over the world have earned her a prominent place in American choral music. While she gives generous credit to Shaw’s influence on her career and compositional technique, her main musical thrust is entirely personal.

He was trying to train the kind of musicians in his choirs that orchestral players are: reading the page absolutely literally. In choral-orchestra work this is necessary – see his results. I’m at the other end of the spectrum: I don’t want to be bound by the page. . . . My aim is to free people from it: to get back in the unfettered air where the song can be itself. . . . I teach expression first, then accuracy.⁴⁴

⁴² Roberts, 70-71.

⁴³ Parker, Editorial, 2.

⁴⁴ King, Interview.

Now, in the first decade of the 21st century, Alice Parker approaches eighty. She maintains a pace that many people half her age would find difficult. Traveling, lecturing, teaching, composing, conducting and recording continue to make great demands on her time. In June of 2000, she was again honored by Chorus America, received the Distinguished Composer Award from the American Guild of Organists in July, and was honored as a Fellow of the Hymn Society in the same month. Melodious Accord received a \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to assist in the recording of arrangements by Parker and Shaw.⁴⁵ Compositions for the 2000s include one choral cycle, five choral suites, and twelve individual choral pieces. Parker continues to accept between four and eight commissions per year, but at this point is focusing on smaller works, saying “I’m not interested in great long pieces at the moment – think I’ve done the last opera. So I gravitate towards pieces directly needed by a church or school.”⁴⁶ She travels less in order to keep up with her projects nearer to home, and to keep in touch with her five children and their families. She works out of her home and studio in the hills of Western Massachusetts.⁴⁷

Compositional Style

Alice Parker grew up with an affinity for poetry, songs, and choral singing that was strengthened and affirmed by her years of collaboration with Robert Shaw.⁴⁸ The hundreds of arrangements she worked on helped her to develop a

⁴⁵ “Composer/Conductor Alice Parker Celebrates 75th Birthday,” Press release dated Dec. 8, 2000, by Melodious Accord, Inc., available online at <http://melodiousaccord.org>.

⁴⁶ King, Interview.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ King, Interview.

compositional style that grew from a linear treatment of melody. Twenty years of arranging melodies for Robert Shaw and his Chorale had shown her that “. . . if you have a great melody to work with, you mostly need to stay out of its way (you can afford to be clever with the less-great.)”⁴⁹ In the foreword to *Creative Hymn Singing*, she gives this basic statement, “Voices want to sing melodies...” Then Parker continues with the next step of her compositional method, “...counterpoint is the natural extension of sung melody.” In the early 1960s when Parker once again began to compose original music, it was with the realization that she worked best when driven by melody and counterpoint, unlike most other composers of the time.

I do feel kind of alone in that my approach certainly has nothing to do with the twentieth century when I think of it in this way. But the only way I can operate is just to figure that it's not my job to fit in with twentieth-century music or with anybody else's idea of what music should be. All I'm trying to do is get at the essence of what I honestly hear in my head...⁵⁰

She discusses this deliberate choice further:

. . . I became convinced that in modal counterpoint the harmony is truly ‘resultant’ – a vertical result of the crossing lines. I’d felt almost totally frustrated by ‘traditional’ harmonies: I couldn’t seem to break free of them. So I leapt back over them, to a pre-tonal language, and I’ve been very happy there!⁵¹

In very simple terms then, Parker’s compositional method consists of the same essential elements she used when arranging: a usable melody with an appropriate text, and countermelody with the resultant harmony. Of course, this method is quite flexible and offers a wide variety of results, depending on the many parameters of a given composition.

⁴⁹ Parker, Editorial, 2.

⁵⁰ Mussulman, 44-45.

⁵¹ King, Interview.

To produce an original melody, Parker must first find a suitable text. Her commission contract insists that she have the final say in selection of poetry.⁵² The melody emerges from her careful choice and attention to every detail:⁵³

I read the text on every level that I can, from the way the words feel in my mouth, to what they sound like aloud, to what they mean, to what meanings lie underneath the meanings. And on the most physical, sonorous level, I take the way the words feel in my throat as the basis for both the rhythmic and the tonal extension of them, so that I'm drawing the melody out of what is implicit in the text. What I'm doing, then, is making an abstraction out of a very concrete thing.⁵⁴

It is of utmost importance that the text is right. Parker explains, "I'm very fussy – the lines need to 'sing' in my ears – I can feel the music latent in them. That's very personal – not something I can produce on demand."⁵⁵ Parker has had a lifelong love of poetry.⁵⁶ Poets whose lines she has set to music include Emily Dickinson, Isaac Watts, Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Ogden Nash, among many others, as well as passages from the bible, traditional American hymns and folksongs, and translated Native American texts.⁵⁷

Rhythm is the first musical aspect that is derived from the spoken line. This may result in odd and/or changing meters,⁵⁸ as well as alternating triple and duple divisions or dotted rhythms, according to specific syllabic stress. When the meter is regular, Parker often relates it to a "rhythm-driven", or "dance" piece, and the text

⁵² Alice Parker Commissioning Agreement, pg. 1.

⁵³ Meier, 40.

⁵⁴ Mussulman, 43.

⁵⁵ King, Interview.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Parker, Works.

⁵⁸ Long, 2.

may occasionally be somewhat subjugated to the forward flow of the rhythm.⁵⁹

Hemiola is sometimes used at moments when the text requires added emphasis.⁶⁰

The rhythmic setting of the text is further affected by careful editorial monitoring of tempo, rests, breaths, and specific articulation markings. In fact, most of the additions that Parker makes to a nearly finished piece consist of editorial markings which help clarify her intent.

. . . it always seems to me perfectly logical that you sing the line ‘my way’ if you’ve understood the text . . . but I find that many people are unaware of the words, and more tempo, dynamic and articulation markings make them a bit more sensitive.⁶¹

Parker’s melodic lines grow from careful text stress, within the mood and tempo appropriate for the poem. Although the melodies are seldom in a diatonic key (the greatest influence being modal folk music), they are very natural to the ear.⁶² As simple as the melodies may seem at times, it can be difficult to identify specific modes, as Parker weaves in and out of tonal centers using half and whole steps in an ambiguous melodic movement. She deliberately thinks in modes “. . . to avoid getting caught in the circle of fifths.”⁶³ This can result in an easy, straightforward melody or one that requires a considerable amount of skill to sing effectively. Large leaps may occur at dramatic points in the text or the musical line and there is occasional use of text painting of single words or phrases.⁶⁴ Parker’s

⁵⁹ Parker, *Hymn-Singing*, 6.

⁶⁰ Long, 63.

⁶¹ King, Interview.

⁶² Merritt, 5.

⁶³ King, Interview.

⁶⁴ Long, 5.

melodic lines are organic, and they have an inherent sense of movement and direction.

Once a melody has been composed for a particular text, Parker again employs intensive listening:

Listen to the sound of your own voice when you sing it just as well as you can—which has nothing to do with vocal quality but has everything to do with inflection, listening to the way you breathe, how you accentuate the words, and how the text and the tune fit together. That’s how you really get down to the melody’s most basic music materials.⁶⁵

When these basic melodic materials become settled, she begins to create melodic lines that serve as counterpoint, so the compositional process is, at this point, entirely horizontal. It is important to her that each vocal line is melodic, sings well, and has an inevitable feel to it.⁶⁶ In her SATB music, the top vocal line almost always carries the melody. However, the other parts are drawn from the melodic line and are conceived vocally—that is, to be sung in a melodic fashion—never as harmonic fill-in. As is common in contrapuntal music, parts may be introduced in melodic imitation or canon, or two or more melodies may be sung at the same time. Whether contrapuntal or homophonic, the motion between the soprano and bass is usually contrasting,⁶⁷ and there is often pairing of voice groups, especially soprano-alto and tenor-bass.⁶⁸ The voice-leading is excellent, although the lack of traditional underlying harmony and the close dissonances that occur within the vocal lines may

⁶⁵ Musselman, 43.

⁶⁶ Merritt, 5.

⁶⁷ Long, ix.

⁶⁸ Merritt, 6.

necessitate a more thoughtful musical rehearsal process than do the typical diatonic melodic lines to which most choirs are accustomed.

When the vertical harmony that emerges from Parker's compositional method is examined, the result is often open fourths and fifths, stacked thirds,⁶⁹ close dissonances and chord clusters created by converging lines. Tonal centers are established and strengthened by the use of melodic arrivals and returns, pedal points,⁷⁰ or sometimes just reiteration of a specific pitch. There are times, though, that the ear is unsure of a "home pitch," which leaves the listener open to the twists and turns of the melody. Parker carefully plans the movement between the voices, stating,

I'm very aware all the time of the balance of consonance and dissonance – and very fond of unisons and open fifths. I want the listener's ears to be constantly refreshed – not just sinking into familiar patterns.⁷¹

The avoidance of functional harmony is seen in the bass movement, which is often by second, and sometimes by arpeggiated fourths.⁷² Due to the use of modes, there is seldom a functional leading tone in any voice part. As mentioned above, the tonal center changes as the melody winds its way, but all of the pieces studied herein did have a single over-riding tonal center. At important sectional points, such as the beginning or end of a poetic stanza, Parker may employ a more functional harmonic method such as bass movement that could be considered V-I or vii-I, or the use of true triadic movement in all voices. However, when consecutive triads are used,

⁶⁹ Long, 62.

⁷⁰ Merritt, 6.

⁷¹ King, Interview.

⁷² Long, 8.

they are most often in second inversion with a strong bass, and so still do not impart a heavily diatonic feel. Also, when the bass moves in a V-I fashion, the involved chords often do not include thirds.⁷³ In general, obvious sectioning due to the text determines the overall form.

In multi-movement works, after selection of the poetry, Parker establishes the order of the text along with a tonal center, meter and tempo for each movement. The selection of the tonal center is determined by the melodic relationships between movements and by vocal tessitura.⁷⁴ Thus, the pieces are harmonically linked to one another without the use of traditional harmony.

The accompaniments interact with the vocal lines and are intended as an integral part of the music, serving as a support to the voices and adding an additional depth of expression.⁷⁵ Voices are sometimes doubled, especially in thicker textures. Instrumental interludes may introduce or finish a vocal phrase, or may be entirely independent musical statements that serve as transitions. The accompaniments often feature a simple bass line, pedal tones, and *ostinati* that serve as cohesive elements in the place of functional harmony.⁷⁶ Parker composes the accompaniments last, and says the process “. . . often makes me come to grips with the harmonic implications of what I’ve ‘heard.’”⁷⁷ Her writing for piano exhibits her own facility with the instrument, and her instrumental writing reflects a keen ear for color and texture.

⁷³ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁴ King, Interview.

⁷⁵ Merritt, 7.

⁷⁶ Long, 8.

⁷⁷ King, Interview.

Another key element to Parker's approach to composition is rooted in practicality. She only composes on commission, and so writes what is appropriate to the specific request. This is a creative decision rather than a financial one.

I always want to know as much as possible about the group and what they want/need. They must be definite about voicing/instrumentation, soloists, and relative length. . . So each commission is a chance to explore the group and its possibilities, as well as for me to add to the repertoire something that meets a specific need.⁷⁸

The size of the commission in terms of forces or length does not change the compositional process or alter the significance of the piece in Parker's view.⁷⁹

Commissions run the gamut from simple short songs for as few as two voice parts to large choral works or operas with full orchestra. While the parameters of each commission certainly affect all aspects of the resulting music, Parker's dedication to a quality text and melody-based composition never wavers, nor does her unapologetic view of her compositional technique:

I believe, strongly, that there are things that I can say right now to people using the language they understand very well. That does not mean that other people don't have a perfect right to invent something brand new. But I want understanding and listening right now. I don't want to wait for it.⁸⁰

Educational Aspects

Adherence to this philosophy may also be seen in Parker's teaching. Her instructional text, *Creative Hymn Singing*, is a primer for conductors and singers in her compositional and teaching methods. In the Foreword, she asks that each hymn tune be read with an open mind and careful ear so that it may "live again." After

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Musselman, 91.

⁸⁰ Meier, 41.

discussion regarding the importance of text rhythm and melody, she warns the singer that notation is limited, and they must use creativity and imagination to be true to the music in performance.⁸¹ Parker developed the group seminars she calls “SINGS” in order to share her method of teaching with other interested musicians. She leads participants in spirited singing, encouraging each individual to reach the innate musician within themselves, be they adult or child, professional or amateur.⁸² This belief in the natural musicianship of all people stems from her philosophy that music is a universal form of communication and that all arts develop from our basic senses:

We are born into this world with five senses, which are our avenues to the outside world. We learn through these senses the sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste of things around us, and through them we communicate with others of our species. Our society places a high value on the more rational functions of the brain, but we are designed to have first a sensory education. Those of us lucky enough to spend our lives in any of the arts know that a lifetime is not nearly long enough to explore the riches therein.⁸³

The main goal in Parker’s “SINGS” is to help the singers lose learned inhibitions and begin to critically listen to the flow of the music within the group. She further portrays her commitment to the universality of music by including pieces from various eras and many other countries, as well as traditional American hymns.⁸⁴ These “SINGS” are an opportunity for others to share in her knowledge and love of singing and of our nation’s musical heritage.

⁸¹ Alice Parker, *Creative Hymn Singing* (Chapel Hill, NC: Hinshaw Music, Inc., 1976): 6-7.

⁸² Parker, *Works*.

⁸³ Alice Parker, “Music in the Lives of People”, *Choral Journal* 38 (March 1998): 19.

⁸⁴ “Composer Alice Parker Honored as Fellow by Hymn Society,” *Melodious Accord Press Release* (July 27, 2000), available online at <http://melodiousaccord.org>.

As one may suspect, Parker's teaching in other, more specific areas of music stems from her general musical outlook and her compositional technique. When she first began teaching choral arranging at Westminster in 1968, she discovered that she viewed the basic elements of music—melody, harmony, and rhythm—on a much deeper level than did her students. Although they were all well educated musicians, they did not have the kind of “medieval-style apprenticeship” that Parker had in her relationship with Robert Shaw.⁸⁵ She understood that her compositional style came from the intense practice and trial-and-error learning that occurred in her years of arranging. From this experience, she has come to disagree with the usual method of teaching arranging and composition:

Too often theory is put before practice, and I think that is a travesty of the creative process. . . . What their [the] students are taught is to manipulate the tones. And the minute you begin manipulating the tones, you can no longer listen to what is inside your head. You cannot spin a melody . . .⁸⁶

In fact, she teaches the way she learned—beginning with a beautiful melody, and developing the craft necessary to set it.⁸⁷ Parker believes that students may be taught the craft of writing for voices and instruments, but for true creative composition, all a teacher can do is “open a door.”⁸⁸

As a conductor, Parker emphasizes the idea that performers must free themselves from the written page, and that “We need to learn to read *through* the marks on the page to recreate the intended sound...”⁸⁹ While this statement would

⁸⁵ Parker, *Parker-Shaw Memories*, 18.

⁸⁶ Mussulman, 44.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁸ Meier, 38.

⁸⁹ Parker, *Hymn-Singing*, 7.

not be argued by most musicians, her adamant stand for rote learning, or teaching by ear is not main-stream. She argues her position in this way:

It is much easier to teach by rote than it is by reading, and I don't let anybody deny it. If I'm working with a professional group, I don't let them read. If I sing three notes with my voice, I'm giving them more information than three chapters in a book could give them. . . I want to hear sounds that exactly reflect the kind of music they're singing.⁹⁰

When Parker speaks of learning by ear, she is not referring to an uninvolved, passive process, but one that requires really critical listening—one that includes involvement of intuition and natural creativity, and an ability to come to a group decision. This group effort to understand the melody and all the details that go along with it, such as vocal style, articulation, rise and fall of the phrase, text stress and dynamics, serves to quickly congeal the part-work that must follow. Everyone is singing with the same sound and shape in mind, whatever their part may be.⁹¹ Parker applies this type of choral teaching to all age levels, and finds that children (not surprisingly) are especially good at learning by ear. In fact, she believes that “. . . restricting their music to what they can read is idiocy: they can sing anything sung to them, and the page should only come into the equation after the song is learned, as an aid to memory.”⁹² Although not opposed to the use of *solfège* or count-singing for general music instruction, Parker rarely uses these methods in rehearsal.

In my own teaching and rehearsing, I always start with the words: reading them in rhythm and mood, until they flow easily. Then I

⁹⁰ Meier, 40.

⁹¹ Ibid., 41.

⁹² Lucinda Mosher, “Alice Parker on Composing for Children’s Voices,” *Choral Journal* 24 (February 1984): 23.

add the melodies, which just float over the already established rhythms. It's a quick and effective method. . . . in a rehearsal, with real music, I want to teach the music, not another layer between me and it.⁹³

She also extends these ideals to instrumentalists. During the final rehearsals of her cantata, *Journeys: Pilgrims and Strangers* in 1976, Janice Miller Long remarked that Parker was

... most interested in aiding instrumental players in grasping the flavor of each section. At the appropriate moments she instructed the violins in the idiosyncrasies of country fiddling; pointed out to specific players when they had programmatic counterparts to what the chorus was singing; and at points in the score where improvisations were requested, she urged the members of the jazz band to momentarily step out of their classical training and to "do it by ear."⁹⁴

In the long process of developing her compositional style, a personal viewpoint regarding music (and singing, in particular) has emerged that permeates Alice Parker's compositions, her writing, teaching, and conducting.⁹⁵ It is based upon the human affinity for beautiful melody. Parker has made an enormous contribution to choral music in the last fifty years. Her dedication to the idea that music holds tremendous value in the everyday lives of people⁹⁶ reveals itself in her works.

⁹³ King, Interview.

⁹⁴ Janice Miller Long, "Alice Parker Conducts a Premiere," *Choral Journal* 16 (May 1976): 10.

⁹⁵ This may be inferred from interviews and writings in *The Choral Journal*, *Music Educator's Journal*, Parker's *Creative Hymn Singing*, *The Melodious Accord Newsletter*, the Alice Parker website, Roberts' and Long's dissertations and the email interview by this author. All of these sources occur within the body of this paper, and all are listed in the bibliography.

⁹⁶ Parker, *Music in the Lives*, 19.

Chapter 2

Songstream Analysis

Analysis Presentation

The following analyses will consider each of the three pieces separately. They are placed in order by the size of forces used: *Songstream* with four-hand piano and SATB choir; *Angels and Challengers* with piano, two clarinets, oboe, bassoon, SATB choir and SATB soli; and *Songs from “The Dragon Quilt”* for full orchestra, SATB choir, soprano soloist and narrator. Each piece will be introduced with a brief biography of the poet followed by specific details relating to its commission. Unifying factors which concern the piece as a whole will then be considered, such as poetic themes, tonal centers, and melodic and/or rhythmic themes that may recur. A subsequent discussion of individual movements will look at more detailed musical elements, including modal and key center movement, formal relationships, and examples of Parker’s stylistic traits. A flow chart will be provided as reference for each movement. The chart is structured as follows:

Table # : Flow Chart “Movement Title”

Measure numbers

Formal Sections (capital letters)

Melodic themes (small letters)

Tonal centers/modes

Dynamics

Poetic stanza

A brief discussion of practical rehearsal considerations and expressive issues will be presented at the conclusion of the analyses.

Songstream

Songstream is a setting of nine poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Born in Rockland, Maine on February 22, 1892,⁹⁷ she was the first of three daughters of Cora Buzzell Millay and Henry Tolman Millay. Edna began writing poetry as a child, and by the time she graduated from high school, several magazines had published her verse. In 1912, at the age of twenty, Millay's long poem, "Renaissance" was one of the finalists in a competition established by *The Lyric Year*. Although she did not win, her poem received widespread acclaim which led to a sponsorship to Vassar. Millay's poetry gained in popularity with each new publication and, along with her colorful lifestyle and somewhat radical views, propelled her to great fame. In the middle of the Great Depression, her books sold by the thousands, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Ballad of the Harp Weaver*. She read poetry on a popular weekly radio show and traveled the country performing in sold-out venues. Millay wrote the libretto for *The King's Henchman*, which at that time was the Metropolitan's most successful American opera. During World War II, Millay was criticized for writing poetry that was considered to be propaganda, but she felt strongly that it was her contribution to the war effort. In 1949, Millay's husband of twenty-seven years, Eugen Boussevain, died of lung cancer. Edna appeared to be winning her own lifelong battle with physical and mental illness, complicated by alcohol and drug addiction, when she died from a fall in her home in October of 1950.

⁹⁷ All historical details regarding Edna St. Vincent Millay are from Nancy Milford, *Savage Beauty: The Life of Edna St. Vincent Millay*, New York: Random House, 2001.

At a time when her contemporaries were going in new directions, Millay wrote almost entirely in traditional poetic forms. Her skillful craftsmanship allowed for a great depth of emotion, restrained within the selected poetic form. Although many of her poems are revealingly personal, the themes of Millay's poetry are traditional—love, nature, and death.⁹⁸ Regarding her popularity, Millay once said:

I think people like my poetry because it is mostly about things that anybody has experienced. Most of it is fairly simple for a person to understand. If you write about people who are in love, and about death, and nature, and the sea, thousands. . . understand . . . my poetry because it's about emotions, about experiences common to everybody.⁹⁹

The nine poems set in *Songstream* demonstrate the strict form and universal themes common to Millay's poetry. The four selections from her 1920 book, *A Few Figs from Thistles*, are "To Kathleen" (I), "The Philosopher" (III), "The Merry Maid" (VI), and "Thursday" (VII). Two poems are from the 1921 publication, *Second April*: "Mariposa" (II), and "Passer Mortuus Est" (VIII). There are also two from *The Harp Weaver and Other Poems*, published in 1923: "The Spring and the Fall" (IV) and "Nuit Blanche" (V). The last piece, "Lethe" is from the 1928 publication of *The Buck in the Snow*.¹⁰⁰ While all the poems vary widely in terms of tone, all are relatively short and share an underlying theme of impermanence.

Parker's setting of *Songstream* was commissioned by the Hampshire Choral Society in Northampton, Massachusetts. The commission was in recognition of

⁹⁸ Enid Dame, "Edna St. Vincent Millay," *American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present*, Vol. 3, ed. Lina Mainiero, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982, 175.

⁹⁹ Milford, 335.

¹⁰⁰ Edna St. Vincent Millay, *Collected Poems*, ed. Norma Millay (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1956), 254.

the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Society, and the piece is dedicated to its conductor, Carol Gotwals, a longtime friend of Parker's.¹⁰¹ It was first performed on May 1, 1983,¹⁰² and is published by Galaxy Music. Parker selected the poems for *Songstream* and found Millay's poetry particularly suitable for a musical setting. She explains:

Her verses "sing" to me. They are founded on wonderful lyric poetry from ancient Greek and Latin onwards, and she had the true gift of combining thought, cadence and sound into memorable phrases. In this work, I particularly enjoyed her ironic humor, her turning upside-down of traditional love poetry.¹⁰³

The title of the choral suite was taken from the last stanza of the last poem, "Lethe:"
 "... Immerse the dream./ Drench the kiss./ Dip the song in the stream."¹⁰⁴

The commission and Millay's poetry allowed Parker to fulfill a long-held desire to compose something in the style of Brahms' *Liebeslieder Waltzen*.¹⁰⁵ This influence is obvious in the SATB choral texture with soprano/alto and tenor/bass duet movements and the four-hand piano accompaniment, but there is much more deliberate imitation within the music. Parker states:

"I pretended that I was Brahms as I wrote (this sounds crazy) – feeling the energy to get a whole roomful of people dancing, and then allowing the words to sing. . . . I also felt no need to keep to a triple beat. 7/8 feels triple to me (a 3 pattern with a long first leg); but 5/8 is odd duple – and I simply chose the meter in which the words felt most comfortable."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ King, Interview.

¹⁰² Alice Parker, *Songstream* (Boston: Galaxy Music Corporation, a division of EC Schirmer, 1983), 1.

¹⁰³ King, Interview.

¹⁰⁴ Millay, *Collected Poems*, vi-ix. In 1985, Parker set seven Millay sonnets in her choral suite, *Millay Madrigals*.

¹⁰⁵ King, E-mail interview with Alice Parker, March 17, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

To discuss unifying factors in *Songstream*, one should be aware of what is meant by its designation as a “choral suite.” Parker describes a suite as “. . . mostly a cappella . . .” (though not in this case), and “. . . slightly smaller in design . . .” than her cantatas.¹⁰⁷ As their name implies, choral suites are intended to be performed as a whole, and are conceived as such, with textual and musical unifying elements.¹⁰⁸

The piece is first unified by its text. Although the poems were not written as a single unit, they share the thematic material of love and its impermanence, and the fleeting quality of life and beauty, tempered by Millay’s sometimes flippant sense of humor. The music takes on the form of the poetry in a straightforward and visible manner, and is often sectional by stanza. (This may be seen in the flow charts accompanying each movement.) Most of the poems (except “Nuit Blanche” and “Lethe”) consist of regular, rhyming stanzas. An obvious method of composition, then, would be to set them strophically. While definite repetitions of melody occur within these pieces, especially at the first line of stanzas, all are too varied to be considered strophic, and each one contains a contrasting section or wide variation between sections. Another musical result of Millay’s poetic rhythm is the fact that there is almost no changing meter in *Songstream*. In “Mariposa” (number II) which is set in 7/8, there is one measure of 4/4 six measures from the end. It is used to essentially stop the forward rush of the 7/8, and the tempo picks up immediately

¹⁰⁷ King, Interview. Parker’s general description for a cantata was a longer piece for voices and instruments.

¹⁰⁸ Long, ix-x.

afterward. This shows a departure from a description of her earlier works as being full of mixed meters.¹⁰⁹

There is not an obvious form for the suite in its entirety, but there are major factors that bind the work together. Overall, the tonal center encompasses a gentle rise from E phrygian in number I to a height of B phrygian in number VI, and then recedes to E phrygian in number IX. The relationship between the consecutive modes is melodic, with each successive tonal center existing within the scale of the previous mode. Although each movement has a principal mode, the modality and tonal center within the individual pieces changes often in accordance with Parker's melody. These changes can be subtle or quite dramatic, and may have duration of several phrases or only a single measure. (Because of the quickly changing tonal centers there are no flats or sharps in the key signatures in eight of the nine movements; number VI has a single sharp.) Another unifying characteristic may be seen in Parker's use of tempo and meter. Meters of three occur in the beginning (I), the middle (V), and the end (IX). Therefore, these pieces share rhythms and a text stress most appropriate for a triple meter. They are offset by four pieces in 7/8 (coupled as numbers II and III, and VI and VII). All of these are very short and fast, and have the same eighth-note division of 3 + 2 + 2. The order of the time signatures for all nine movements shows a grouping of numbers I through IV, which is repeated in numbers V through VIII, finishing with IX as a separate piece (see table 1.)

¹⁰⁹ Long, 2.

Table 1: Modes and Time Signatures for *Songstream*

Movement	Mode	Time Signature
I	E phrygian	3/4
II	F lydian	7/8
III	A aeolian	7/8
IV	G major	4/4
V	A aeolian	3/4
VI	B phrygian	7/8
VII	G mixolydian	7/8
VIII	F major	4/4
IX	E phrygian	9/8

The vocal parts of *Songstream* share melodic and rhythmic style similarities that are a result of Parker's personal reading of the poetry, and of her modal/melodic compositional style. Text stress is natural and of utmost importance, and is strengthened by the inherent qualities within the meter and tempo selected for each piece. Varied melodic lines move by step or leap, and sometimes in stacked thirds or fourths. Particularly dramatic leaps or repetitions are usually obvious expressions of the text, although there is much subtle text painting as well. Phrase lengths are also varied, and relationships between melodies are common. Except for the 7/8 division referred to above, recurring melodic and rhythmic motives do not play a part in the vocal lines of *Songstream* as a whole.

One may find recurring motives, though, in the accompaniment, where the four-hand texture serves to compound the effect. The 7/8 movements, in particular,

share rhythmic and melodic motives which are further emphasized by the fact that their tempo markings are similar. In each, there is much use of a pattern which consists of open fifths and fourths arpeggiated in the bass and stated in the first three eighth notes of the measure. This is followed by four eighth notes in the treble, usually descending (example 1). An additional unifying element that occurs in the 7/8 movements is vocal texture. All four are written as duets: II for tenor/bass; III and VI for soprano/alto; and VII for soprano-alto/tenor-bass.



Example 1, “The Philosopher,” mm. 7-9 piano
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In each short movement of *Songstream*, (from the 20 measures of “Thursday” to the 73 of “Lethe”), Parker strictly adheres to Millay’s poetry. She does occasionally repeat the last line for the sake of creating a coda (numbers I, IV, V and IX), and at times omits words in supportive vocal lines in order to add rhythmic interest (II, III, VII and VIII). The text is always discernible in the melody, which is most often syllabic and in the top vocal line.

I: "To Kathleen"¹¹⁰

Still must the poet as of old,
In barren attic bleak and cold
Starve, freeze, and fashion verses to
Such things as flowers and song and you;

Still as of old his being give
In Beauty's name, while she may live,
Beauty that may not die as long
As there are flowers and you and song.

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Table 2: Flow Chart "To Kathleen"

Mm. 1-----12--16-----30-----40--44-----57-----71							
A				B			Coda
a	b	c		a'	d	c	c''
E phr	E maj	a aeo		E phr	E maj		C maj E phr
mp	mf			mp	f mp		p mp p
stanza 1				2			line 8

The simple form of this poem dictates a simple musical form as well. (See table 2.) The movement is divided into two related sections, according to the poetic stanzas, plus a short coda that consists of a repetition of the last line. The primary mode of E phrygian is used in sections A and B, while the coda begins in C major and returns to E phrygian. The sections are related by the E phrygian mode and by similar melodic and rhythmic material in the first and last lines of each stanza (shown as "a" and "c" in the diagram). An imitative setting of the melismatic final line of text serves as the coda.

¹¹⁰ Kathleen was Edna Millay's youngest sister. Also a published poet, she always lived in the shadow of comparison to her sister. In later years, the two became estranged. Milford, 446.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

ALICE PARKER

Easy waltz tempo ♩ = 112

Soprano
Alto

Tenor
Bass

Still must the

Easy waltz tempo ♩ = 112

mp

Easy waltz tempo ♩ = 112

mp

Ped. * Ped. * dim.

5. poco più mosso

po - et as of old, In bar - ren at - tic

po - et as of old, In bar - ren at - tic

poco più mosso

poco più mosso

Example 2, "To Kathleen," mm. 1-24

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10

bleak and cold, Starve, freeze, and fash - ion ver -

bleak and cold, Starve, freeze, and fash - ion ver -

15

Such things as flow'rs

ses to flow'rs and song

ses to

espr.

(Example 2, cont.)

20

and you;

song and you;

loco

mf

mf

8

(Example 2, cont.)

Vertical harmonic movement demonstrates Parker's ability to manipulate modes and tonal centers in order to better express the text. With the melodic addition or subtraction of specific accidentals, each tonal center may fluctuate between varieties of modes or change completely. Section A begins in E phrygian and moves to E major in measures 11-12, calling attention to the words "cold" and "Starve." The phrase continues in A aeolian, becoming A major at the end of the textual stanza on the word "you." (See example 2.)

The chordal movement in section B emulates the previous section, but the change to E major (example 3, m. 40) is much more obvious. The movement through modes effectively creates dramatic aural moments, especially when the melody arrives at a major mode. It is at these points that Parker often chooses to

35 *cresc.*

give In Beau - ty's name, while she may live,

give In Beau - ty's name, while she may live,

8. *cresc.*

40 *poco meno mosso* *f* as long As

Beau - ty that that may may not not die die as long As

Beau ty may not die

poco meno mosso *f*

poco meno mosso *f*

Example 3, "To Kathleen," mm. 35-43

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write in a more traditional manner, utilizing full triads in root position. (Note the I to V movement of the vocal and instrumental bass in mm. 40-43 of example 3.)

Several examples of rhythmic interest occur in the straightforward waltz of “To Kathleen.” The use of a vocal hemiola at measures 13-15 gives urgency to the text, and contrasts with the previously flowing melody. (See example 2.) The hemiola is immediately followed by an offset feeling of 3/4 in the following measure, Parker makes the intended stress clear with an accent on the word, “flow’rs” (example 2, mm. 15-18).

The opening bars of the piece offer clear cut examples of several of Parker’s style characteristics: rhythm used to emphasize the meaning of the text (the word “Still” held for five beats, and a rest on the downbeat of m. 10, before the word “bleak”); variation of a simple, stepwise melody in the soprano line (m. 8); independent melodic lines in the other voices; and contrasting movement between soprano and bass. (See example 2.)

II: “Mariposa”

Butterflies are white and blue
In this field we wander through.
Suffer me to take your hand.
Death comes in a day or two.

All the things we ever knew
Will be ashes in that hour:
Mark the transient butterfly,
How he hangs upon the flower.

Suffer me to take your hand.
 Suffer me to cherish you
 Till the dawn is in the sky.
 Whether I be false or true,
 Death comes in a day or two.

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Table 3: Flow Chart “Mariposa”

Mm. 1-----8-----11-----16-----24-----32--34-----47--49-----55											
A				B				C			
a	b	c	d	b'	e	b''	c'				
F lyd				A aeo	A maj/lyd	D-fl maj	G-fl maj	F maj/lyd			
mp	mf		mf	mp	f	p	mf	p			
stanza 1				2				3			

Once again, Millay has compressed her favorite topics—nature, love and death—into the space of a few rhymed lines that seem almost flippant upon first reading. The additional line in the last stanza is the only deviation from the form. In Parker’s duet setting for tenor and bass, the text is quickly sung, appearing in three sections by stanza. (See table 3.) Section A is in F lydian, section B is in A aeolian, and section C begins in D-flat major and ends in F lydian. The sections are unrelated melodically, except for an arpeggiated pattern that reappears throughout (shown as “b” in table 3, and seen in mm. 24-28 in example 5).

“Mariposa” is the first of four poems in *Songstream* that are set in 7/8 time. All are fast and dance-like and are voiced as duets. The thinner vocal texture allows for a lighter sound that is appropriate for the fast asymmetrical meter. The new tempo, meter, and style are immediately established by the two measure

Light, fast $\text{♩} = 160$

Tenor *mp* But - ter - flies are

Bass

Light, fast $\text{♩} = 160$

f

Light, fast $\text{♩} = 160$

Ped. * Ped. * *sim.*

4

white and blue In this field we wan - der

(8)

p

Example 4, "Mariposa," mm. 1-6

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introduction in the treble part of the accompaniment. The descending lydian motive in the top piano line serves as a unifying motive throughout the piece. Ambiguity of the tonal center (and of modal usage) can be seen in the first few measures. The downward lydian motive in the piano emphasizes both C and F, and the first two melodic statements in the tenor outline C major (mm. 3-4) and A aeolian (mm. 4-7.) (See example 4.)

Section B maintains an A tonal center, in spite of a variety of accidentals, through the use of a pedal tone in the lower piano part. The A pedal also helps to emphasize the Neapolitan character of the melody in measures. 26-27. The unusual introduction of a descending C major scale at measure 32 suggests the D-flat major tonal center which begins section C, and acts as the high point to the piece. (See example 5.)

As complicated as these harmonic changes may seem, the movement of Parker's melody makes aural sense. The voice leading is exceptional, and enables the singers to maneuver with relative ease. At one point, the tonal center in the accompaniment moves from A Lydian through C major and into D-flat major within the space of four measures (mm. 31-34 in example 5). However, each of the vocal parts moves only by half-step to their new pitches in the D-flat chord, and careful listening by the singers is all that is required.

15 *mf marc.*

All the things we ev - er knew Will be

mf marc.

All the things we ev - er knew Will be

19

ash - es in that hour: _____

ash - es in that hour: _____

cresc.

cresc.

Example 5, "Mariposa," mm. 15-36

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29

mf

flow'r.

(8)

cresc.

cresc.

33

poco rubato

f warmly

Suf - fer me — to take your hand.

f warmly

Sur - fer me to take your hand.

loco

poco rubato

f warmly

loco

poco rubato

f warmly

(Example 5, cont.)

III: “The Philosopher”

And what are you that, wanting you,
I should be kept awake

As many nights as there are days
With weeping for your sake?

And what are you that, missing you,
As many days as crawl
I should be listening to the wind
And looking at the wall?

I know a man that’s a braver man
And twenty men as kind,
And what are you, that you should be
The one man on my mind?

Yet women’s ways are witless ways,
As any sage will tell —
And what am I, that I should love
So wisely and so well?

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Table 4: Flow Chart “The Philosopher”

Mm. 1-----12-----16-----22-24-----28-----34-----37-----42-----48						
A	B	C		D		
a	a'	b	c	a	c'	
A aeo		E maj/aeo	A maj (B pedal)	A aeo		Amaj
f	f	mf		f mp		f p
stanza 1	2	3		4		

This 7/8 setting acts as a partner piece to the previous male voice duet. Set for soprano and alto, it is also sectioned by stanza (see table 4): sections A and B are in A aeolian, section C is in A major, and section D returns to A aeolian. As the

flow chart shows, the close modal relationship between the sections is accompanied by a close melodic relationship as well with sections A, B, and D sharing much of the same melodic material, particularly in the first line of each stanza.

The tonal center of A remains relatively stable in Sections A and B until movement to E in m. 16 prepares the A major of Section C. Section C contains new melodic material, and the A tonal center is soon destabilized by a B pedal in the piano (mm. 28-31 in example 6) which underlies melodic and chordal changes that arrive at F major in measure 32. An abrupt E major transition (m. 34) finally returns to A aeolian at the beginning of section D. (See example 6.)

Parker based the melody for “The Philosopher” on a theme from one of Brahms’ Hungarian dances for piano.¹¹¹ Beginning with upward leaps of an octave and a sixth in the soprano and alto, respectively, the vocal lines descend in chromatic stepwise motion. Parker’s vocal and instrumental accents on beat two of measures 2 and 3, along with the dissonant chords on the same beat ensure the desired text emphasis. (This may be seen in Section D, example 6, mm. 36-38.)

Where “Mariposa” was mostly *legato* and light, “The Philosopher” is *marcato*, accented and loud. The piece moves quickly in an angry bluster until the *subito* piano ending, which highlights the irony of the text, “That I should love/so wisely and so well.”

¹¹¹ King, March interview.

16

should be list - 'ning to the wind And look - ing

should be list - 'ning to the wind, Look - ing

19

at the wall?

at the wall?

8

es p. n.

Example 6, "The Philosopher," mm. 16-38
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23

mf

I know a man that's a bra - ver man

mf

And

8

26

cresc.

And what are you, that

twen - ty men as kind, _____

And

loco

mf

cresc.

mf cresc.

(Example 6, cont.)

29

you should be The one man_ in my

cresc.

what_ are you, The one man, the

32

mind?_

f

one man_ in my mind?_

f

(8)

f

mp

poco cresc.

(Example 6, cont.)

36

Yet women's ways are witless ways, As

Yet women's ways are witless ways, As

8

low

mp

sf

p

mf

w.p.

(Example 6, cont.)

IV: "The Spring and the Fall"

In the spring of the year, in the spring of the year,
 I walked the road beside my dear.
 The trees were black where the bark was wet.
 I see them yet, in the spring of the year.
 He broke me a bough of the blossoming peach
 That was out of the way and hard to reach.

In the fall of the year, in the fall of the year,
 I walked the road beside my dear.
 The rooks went up with a raucous trill.
 I hear them still, in the fall of the year.
 He laughed at all I dared to praise,
 And broke my heart, in little ways.

Year be springing or year be falling,
 The bark will drip and the birds be calling.
 There's much that's fine to see and hear

In the spring of a year, in the fall of a year.
 ‘Tis not love’s going hurts my days,
 But that it went in little ways.

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Table 5: Flow Chart “The Spring and the Fall”

Mm. 1-----8-----14-----23-----28-----37-----42-44-48---52---58---63-----69										
A	B		C		Coda					
a	b	a'	b'		c	b''	d	b''		
G maj	B aeo/maj		G maj	D maj/aeo	C min	Bfl maj	G maj/aeo	G maj		
mf		f	mf	f		f	mp	f	p	mp pp
stanza 1	2		3						line 18	

“The Spring and the Fall” is a welcome stylistic change after the two 7/8 duets. “Simply, happily” is Parker’s indication, with a tempo of quarter note = 120. The three poetic stanzas determine musical sections. (See table 5.) A and B are chiefly in G major and share melodic material. Section C introduces new melodic material, beginning in B-flat major, then returns to the original key of G major utilizing previous melody (C-b"). The coda consists of the last two words of text twice repeated by the soprano and alto voices.

Once more, the text is completely natural in Parker’s rhythm, with an easy flow that never counters the strong beats of the 4/4 meter. The playful style of the “*poco tango*” accompaniment gives a lighthearted personality to the piece.

“The Spring and the Fall” is the only movement in *Songstream* that has chiefly diatonic “major” tonalities. However, as in previous movements, each section experiences a series of changes in and around these tonal centers. Section A

12 *f marc.*
He broke me a bough of the
year.

(8) *loco* *f*

15
bloss - - 'ming peach That was out — of the way and

8 *espr.*

Example 7, "The Spring and the Fall," mm. 12-17
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essentially maintains the G major tonality until measure 14, where the last two lines of text are expressed in B aeolian and B major. (See example 7.)

The beginning of Section B is almost identical until measure 31 becomes D major in preparation for D aeolian in measure 33 (example 8). The last two lines in the second stanza are expressed as D aeolian and C melodic/harmonic minor.

Section C begins with a striking B-flat major root position chord at measure 44, which is the musical climax of the piece. (See example 8.) From this high point, Section C returns to the G tonal center (example 8, m. 48), ending in a subdued manner appropriate to the text.

“The Spring and the Fall” offers excellent examples of Parker’s ability to provide melodic interest in every vocal line. In measures 44-50 (example 8), alto and tenor harmonize and support the soprano melody, but have their own character and melodic individuality, while the vocal bass line moves mostly in functional root position along with the melodic, tango-style accompaniment.

The use of changeable duet texture throughout this movement creates interest and aids in “refreshing the listener’s ears.”¹¹² SATB singing accounts for only 13 out of 69 measures (7 in example 8, mm. 44-50), as the chorus most often interacts in duet sections of soprano/alto and tenor/bass in a verbal exchange that suits the poem.

¹¹² See Parker’s quote on page 19.

31

mp He laughed at all I

fall — of the year.

sf *sf* *mp*

8 — — — — — *loco*

35

And broke my heart, in lit - tle

dared to praise, And broke my heart, in lit - tle

8 — — — — — *loco*

mf *mp*

mf *mp*

Example 8, "The Spring and the Fall," mm. 31-52
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39 ways.

ways.

mp cresc. molto

p espr.

mp cresc. molto

43

f richly

Year be spring-ing_ or year be

f

Year be spring-ing_ or year be

f richly

f richly

(Example 8, cont.)

V: "Nuit Blanche"

I am a shepherd of those sheep
 That climb a wall by night,
 One after one, until I sleep,
 Or the black pane goes white.
 Because of which I cannot see
 A flock upon a hill,
 But doubts come tittering up to me
 That should by day be still.
 And childish griefs I have outgrown
 Into my eyes are thrust,
 Till my dull tears go dropping down
 Like lead into the dust.

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Table 6: Flow Chart "Nuit Blanche"

Mm. 1-----10-----14-----18-----23--26-----31-----39-----43									
A			B			C			Coda
a			a'			a''		b	
A aeo	E aeo	G mix	E mix			B aeo			C maj A aeo
mf							f	p	pp
lines 1-4		5-8			9-12				line 12

Parker has set "Nuit Blanche" in a "slow waltz" at quarter note = 72. The poem itself is not sectionalized, but rather one continuous poetic thought consisting of three sentences at four lines each. There are three related musical divisions: Section A in A aeolian; Section B in G mixolydian; and Section C in B aeolian returning to the original mode of A aeolian. Parker ends this setting with a repeat of the last line of the poem. (See table 6.)

The melodic material throughout the three sections is basically the same, a stepwise descending melody that is varied through modal changes and differences in the ends of phrases, especially the last two poetic lines. A growing intensity is achieved by expanding the range of the soprano melody for each section (the first is sung within the space of a sixth, the second within the space of an octave, and the third including the repetition of the last line, spans a thirteenth, or an octave plus a sixth). The variation in melody inspires modal changes that add to the growing intensity by creating a continuous feeling of forward movement. It is coupled with interesting textural changes in the voice parts. Section A begins with a simple soprano/tenor duet in parallel sixths. The stable tonal center of A aeolian moves easily into E aeolian at measure 10 with the addition of an F#. However, the lack of a solid E at the end of the phrase opens it to change at measure 14, where the second section begins in G mixolydian. Here, the tenor takes over the melody followed by an imitative line in the soprano. (See example 9.)

Section B moves through E mixolydian and then into B aeolian at the beginning of Section C. With the addition of the alto, the text is presented homophonically in mostly parallel movement between the voices. The bass does not make an entrance until the last two poetic lines at measure 31 (example 10), where Parker chooses duet texture once again, this time as soprano-alto/tenor-bass. Although the harmony here is simple thirds between voices, the canonic imitation leads to dissonances that lend greater expression to the music at its most dramatic

Slow waltz ♩ = 72

warmly
mf I am a shep-herd of those sheep That

Soprano
Alto

warmly
mf I am a shep-herd of those sheep That

Tenor
Bass

Slow waltz ♩ = 72

poco rubato

Slow waltz ♩ = 72

warmly
poco rubato

Ped. ✱ Ped. ✱ sim.

climb a wall by night, One af-ter one, un-

climb a wall by night, One af-ter one, un-

(8)

Example 9, "Nuit Blanche," mm. 1-15

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8 til I sleep, Or the black pane goes

til I sleep, Or the black pane goes

(8)

12 white. Be - cause of which 1

white. Be - cause of which I can - not see A

poco più f *mf* 8

sf *mf*

(Example 9, cont.)

point. (See example 10, mm. 31-34.) A cadence in C major at measure 36 prepares the return to A aeolian for the short coda. The piece ends in open fifths in the voices and the piano (see example 10), expressing the empty character of the poem's end, and leaves a more open tonal venue for the following piece. Other movements in *Songstream* that end in open fifths are I, II, and IX, although in each of these cases, the open fifth occurs in the vocal parts, and a third is provided in the accompaniment.

A particular element worth noting in "Nuit Blanche" concerns Parker's rhythmic setting. Strong textual and melodic points often occur on the ordinarily weak second beat, and there are several vocal rests on beat 1 in Section A. The musical effect, then, is one of movement through the bar, as opposed to a strong beat on 1, then relaxation on beats 2 and 3, which is often the case in a waltz. This very effectively aids in the expression of the driven, unsettled nature of this poem. (See example 9, mm. 2-12.) There is also a melodic and rhythmic motive woven into the piano part that continues relentlessly the entire time the chorus sings. (See right hand of the treble piano part in examples 9 and 10.) This motive ceases only during piano interludes and at the coda at measure 38 (example 10). The accompaniment supports the intensifying force in each section with a selective doubling of voices and increase in volume throughout.

29

poco rit.

f

thrust, Till my dull tears

f

Till my dull

(8) - *poco rit.*

cresc.

loco

f

poco rit.

cresc.

f

32

go drop - ping down Like lead

tears go drop - ping down Like lead

(8) - *loco*

Example 10, "Nuit Blanche," mm. 29-43

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35 *mp* **a tempo**

in - to the dust, Like

in - to the dust, Like

a tempo

mp *espr.*

warmly **a tempo**

mp *espr.*

8 - - - -

39 **poch. rit.**

lead in - to the dust.

lead in - to the dust.

poch. rit.

p *pp*

poch. rit.

p *espr.* *pp*

(8) *loco*

(Example 10, cont.)

VI: “The Merry Maid”

Oh, I am grown so free from care
 Since my heart broke!
 I set my throat against the air,
 I laugh at simple folk!

There’s little kind and little fair
 Is worth its weight in smoke
 To me, that’s grown so free from care
 Since my heart broke!

Lass, if to sleep you would repair
 As peaceful as you woke,
 Best not besiege your lover there
 For just the words he spoke
 To me, that’s grown so free from care
 Since my heart broke!

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Table 7: Flow Chart “The Merry Maid”

Mm. 1-----4-----17-----24---27-----35-----45					
A		B		C	
<hr/>					
a		a'		b	a''
B aeo/phr/hm/maj			G maj	B aeo/phr/hm/maj	
mf	f	f	mf	f	mf ff f
stanza 1		2		3	

“The Merry Maid” contains three closely related sections, all of which share a B tonal center expressed in a variety of modes, with a short excursion to G major in Section B. (See table 7.) Melodic material is equally related, and only the first two lines of the last stanza (shown as C-b in table 7) differ greatly from the rest.

This movement is an abrupt change in music and mood, at quarter note = 160 and marked “fast, furious” in 7/8 time. Like number III, “The Philosopher,” it is written for soprano and alto and also shares characteristics such as melodic leaps and chromaticism. As in all the 7/8 pieces, the text falls extremely well into the asymmetrical meter, and stanzas fly by in this fast, syllabic setting. The accompaniment immediately sets the tempo and tone with a strong bass and fast, downward treble motives that instill a sense of urgency and drive the sarcastic poetic idea in the vocal lines. (See example 11, mm. 1-2.)

“The Merry Maid” provides a clear example of Parker’s manipulation of modes through the use of a few accidentals. As seen in example 11, the tonal center of B is strongly established by an F# to B movement in the first four measures. The melodic C-natural in measure 5 implies a phrygian mode, but the introduction of C-sharp in the next measure immediately alters that perception and the downward scale in the treble piano part in measure 7-8 outlines B aeolian. Then, two measures later an A-sharp introduces the harmonic minor mode (example 11, mm 5-10).

Section B continues in much the same manner until a transition to G major. This is short-lived, however, as the piano interlude moves back to a B tonal center for Section C which, like Section A, fluctuates between aeolian, phrygian and harmonic minor modes. (See table 7.)

This kind of melody-driven chromatic/modal movement generates a creative interplay of the two vocal lines. The soprano and alto are equal throughout the

Fast, furious ♩ = 160

Soprano
Alto

Oh, *mf* Oh, *mf*

mf molto marc.

mf molto marc.

Ped. * Ped. * slow.

f unis.

I am grown so free from care Since my heart— broke!

(8)

f

f

Example 11, "The Merry Maid," mm. 1-15
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8 div.
I set my throat a - gainst the air, I laugh at

(8)

Senza Ped. * Sine.

12
sim - ple folk!

(8)

Senza

(Example 11, cont.)

piece as their converging lines create dissonance, consonance and unison in textures that are homophonic, imitative, or completely independent. One unusual vocal setting (at least in the context of *Songstream*) occurs in the alto line in measures 35-36 (example 12), where a *marcato* delivery of the text occurs on the same pitch. (The alto part joins an ongoing F# pedal in the bass piano part.)

35 *cresc.*

not be - siege your lov - er there For just the words he

marc. cresc.

Best not be - siege your lov - er there, Best not be - siege your lov - er there For

(8)

marc. cresc.

38 *ff*

spoke To me, that's grown so free from care

ff

just the words he spoke To me, that's grown so free from care

(8)

loco

ff

Senza

Example 12, "The Merry Maid," mm. 35-41

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VII: “Thursday”

And if I loved you Wednesday,
Well, what is that to you?
I do not love you Thursday—
So much is true.

And why you come complaining
Is more than I can see.
I loved you Wednesday, —yes—but what
Is that to me?

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Table 8: Flow Chart “Thursday”

Mm. 1-----10-----13-----15-----17-----20					
A				B	
a				b	
G maj/mix		E aeo/maj	G maj	Bmm	G maj/mix
mf	f		mf		f
stanza 1			2		

“Thursday” is the last of the poems set in 7/8. Although it has the same metronome marking as “The Merry Maid” (quarter note = 160), the stylistic indication is “saucily” and the general tone is more subdued. This is the only 7/8 piece written for SATB. However, the texture is still that of a duet between S/A and T/B. It is the shortest movement in *Songstream*, being only twenty measures long, and is divided into two related parts determined by the text. The primary tonal center is G, which appears in its mixolydian and major forms, and the melody consists of two similar phrase couplings. (See table 8.)

Although “Thursday” has a single basic tonal center, there are quick changes throughout that exemplify Parker’s melody-driven modal movement. The first 9 measures fluctuate between G mixolydian and G major, depending on whether the F’s are sharp or natural. The F# allows movement to E aeolian (m. 10) and to E major (m.11), and then an abrupt change to C major (m. 12) sets up the return to G (m. 13). (See example 13.) A quick change into a B tonal center which is influenced by the melodic minor mode (example 13, mm. 15-16) returns once again to the original G center to finish (mm. 17-20).

The variety Parker achieves within the four 7/8 movements of this choral suite is remarkable, most likely owing to an intimate relationship with the poetry. All four are short and fast, with the same eighth-note division, syllabic presentation of the text, and with similar accompaniments. What sets “Thursday” apart is a true melody/accompaniment relationship between the duet partners. The tenor and bass parts serve as accompaniment and add rhythmic interest, but are not equal parts to the melodic soprano and alto. (See example 13.) Parker’s careful rhythmic setting allows for the strong enunciation that is appropriate for this text. For instance, in measure 9, the second syllable of “Thursday” falls on the third eighth-note of the first beat, so the syncopated rhythm along with the explosive consonant serves to accent and propel the rhythm of the line. In the next measure, there is an eighth-note rest on the second beat so that the “ch” of the word “much” will be emphasized, followed by a glottal attack on “is.” (See example 13, mm. 9-11.)

7

f

I do not love you Thurs - day - So

mp

you? Thurs - day, No!

cresc.

f

mf

10

mf *cresc.*

much is true. And why you come com -

mp

So much is true. Thurs - day,

Example 13, "Thursday," mm. 7-20

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14

plain - ing — Is more — than I can see. — I

Thurs - day, com - plain - ing, — com - plain - ing, 'plain - ing;

8

17

loved you Wedn' - sday, — yes — but what Is that to me? —

mf mp

Wedn' - sday Wedn' - sday, Thurs - day, No! Thurs - day. —

(8)

f sfz mp

f sfz mf mp

(Example 13, cont.)

VIII: "Passer Mortuus Est"

Death devours all lovely things:
 Lesbia with her sparrow
 Shares the darkness,—presently
 Every bed is narrow.

Unremembered as old rain
 Dries the sheer libation;
 And the little petulant hand
 Is an annotation.

After all, my erstwhile dear,
 My no longer cherished,
 Need we say it was not love,
 Just because it perished?

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Table 9: Flow Chart "Passer Mortuus Est"

Mm. 1	12	21	28	30	37
A	B	C		D	postlude
a	a'	b	a	a''	
F lyd/maj	A aeo		D aeo	F lyd/maj	
mf		mp	f	mp	p
stanza 1	2	3			pp
				instrumental	

Another sudden change in style and mood occurs with this setting. The 4/4 time with a stylistic indication of "lightly, nostalgically" and tempo of quarter note = 72 lays down the basis for an entirely different musical experience. The form is four-part, three according to the poetic stanzas, and a fourth which consists of a piano postlude. Each Section is in a single basic tonal center: Sections A in F

major; Section B in A aeolian; Section C in D aeolian; and Section D in F major.

Sections A, B, and D share the same melodic material. (See table 9.)

Section A presents the text with a simple stepwise soprano melody harmonized in the alto and countered by sustained parts in tenor and bass. A closer look shows how Parker's introduction of accidentals in the melody causes fleeting movements through other modes and tonal centers. The B natural in the first measure of the melody implies a lydian mode (mm. 1-3), and then bass movement, coupled with a melodic B-flat brings on D aeolian (mm. 4-5). An E flat further upsets the harmonic balance and moves toward G aeolian (m. 6), which quickly progresses to a firm F major cadence in measure 9. (See example 14.)

Lightly, nostalgically ♩ = 72

Soprano
Alto

Tenor
Bass

Death de-vours all love-ly things:
De-vours de-vours
Death, death de-

Lightly, nostalgically ♩ = 72

Lightly, nostalgically ♩ = 72

Ped. * sim.

Example 14, "Thursday," mm. 1-9

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4

Les - bia with her spar - row - Shares the dark - ness, death, death de -

vours death de - vours

7

vours pre - sent - ly Ev - ery bed is nar - row. Pres - ent - ly, death de - vours.

Pres - ent - ly, death de - vours.

espr.

(Example 14, cont.)

Section B possesses a more stable tonal center as the Section A melody line is presented in A aeolian. The single modal change to A major in (example 15, m. 19) sets up the dramatic beginning of Section C, a B-flat major triad (m. 21). The immediate return to A aeolian in the next measure points out the Neapolitan function of that chord, and successfully draws the listener's ears to this high point of the piece. The drama is accentuated by a *subito forte*, the re-introduction of the bass voice part, and a rhythmic and textural change in the piano accompaniment. (See example 15.)

Section C continues through D aeolian (see table 9 and example 15, mm. 23-24) until a return to the beginning melodic motive brings back the F tonal center. "Passer Mortuus Est" is the only movement in *Songstream* that has a substantial postlude. It consists of a simple reiteration of the recurring melody (seen as "a" in table 9).

In this movement, there are almost always one or two voices that are imitative in nature and independent of the other lines. (See tenor and bass in mm. 2-9, example 14, alto in mm. 19-20, and bass in mm. 22-24, example 15.) The vocal interplay provides rhythmic impetus and interest in the slower tempo without sacrificing the clarity of the text.

Another compositional technique worth noting concerns several different methods Parker uses to bring out accented text syllables in the melody. In Section A, these methods include syncopating a vocal entrance (as in measures 5 and 7), elongating the rhythm (m. 4, beat 1 and m. 8, beat 2), and utilizing strong beats in the measure (beat 1 in mm. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9, and beat 3 in m. 6). (See example 14.)

19 an - no - ta - tion. Af - ter all, my
 Is an an - no - ta - tion. Af - ter all, my
 an - no - ta - tion. Af - ter all,

f richly
f richly
f richly
 Ped. *

22
 erst - while dear, My no long - er cher - ish'd,
 my erst - while dear, My no long - er cher - ish'd,

(8) loco
 Ped. * Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Example 15, "Passer Mortuus Est," mm. 19-24
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IX: "Lethe"

Ah, drink again
This river that is the taker-away of pain,
And the giver-back of beauty!

In these cool waves
What can be lost?—
Only the sorry cost
Of the lovely thing, ah, never the thing itself!

The level flood that laves
The hot brow
And the stiff shoulder
Is at our temples now.

Gone is the fever,
But not into the river;
Melted the frozen pride,
But the tranquil tide
Runs never the warmer for this,
Never the colder.

Immerse the dream.
Drench the kiss.
Dip the song in the stream.

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Table 10: Flow Chart "Lethe"

Mm.	1-----5-----9-----17-----29-----37-----48-----61--64-----73
	A B C D E
	a b c d a-e e'
	E phr/maj B aeo G lyd/maj C maj G aeo E maj/aeo/phr
	p mf mp mf p mp mf f ff p pp
	stanza 1 2 3 4 5 3 X line 20

This dramatic text ends the choral suite with the longest, most complex musical movement. The poetic structure of “Lethe” is noticeably less regular than all the previous poems. Naturally, Parker’s setting of this text has a more varied structure as well. (See table 10.) The sections relate to the poetic stanzas: Section A in E phrygian/major moving to B aeolian; Section B transitioning through several tonal centers, beginning in G lydian and ending in G major; Section C in C major; Section D in G aeolian; and Section E in varying modes of E. One result of the uneven stanzas is a melodic form that is essentially through-composed, unlike the previous movements. The piece is connected through the use of similar melodic style, vocal texture, modal movement, and the propelling force of the accompaniment.

“Lethe” moves through a succession of tonal centers and modes in order to support the melodic expression of the text. The four measure introduction begins in E phrygian and changes to E major, preparing the entrance of the voices (example 16, mm. 1-4). With the loss of the G# (m. 9), there is a move to B aeolian which continues during the piano interlude until Section B. (See example 16, mm. 9-15.)

Sections B, C, and D follow in a similar fashion of declamatory melodic statement and modal movement. Vocal texture continues in the same manner as well, alternating between SATB and duet (as in example 16, mm. 10-12). The greatest change in musical material occurs in Section E, which begins with the same E major choral entrance on “Ah” as Section A (mm. 4-6, example 16).¹¹³ There is

¹¹³ The repetition of this exclamation constitutes the single instance in *Songstream* where Parker inserted text to the existing poem.

Expansively $\text{♩} = 60$

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass

Expansively $\text{♩} = 60$

Expansively $\text{♩} = 60$

mp *espr.* *cresc.*

mf Ah, drink.

mf Ah, drink.

cresc. *mf* *loco*

mf *Ped.* *Ped.*

Example 16, "Lethe," mm. 1-15

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7

a - gain — This riv - er — that is the ta - ker - a -

a - gain — This riv - er — that is the ta - ker - a -

8

Ped. Ped. Ped. sim.

10

way of pain,

way of pain, And the giv - er - back of

loco

(Example 16, cont.)

13

beau - ty! —

8 — — — — —

f espr.

sub. f

(Example 16, cont.)

movement through the tonal areas of G major (m. 52) and F major (m. 54) into B aeolian as the last line of the text is sung (mm. 56-60). (See example 17.) The final short interlude at measure 59 serves to connect the coda, which consists of three repetitions of the last textual line. The emotional height of the choral suite is attained at these repetitions as the accompaniment moves through a sequence of A major to D major, then G major to C major (mm. 62-65). Meanwhile, the voices remain in B aeolian until the reappearance of E aeolian in measure 65. E continues as the tonal center through the final repetition and a G# in the last chord provides an E-major ending. (See example 17, mm. 59-73.)

The 9/8 meter combines aspects of all the preceding time signatures and thus serves as a rhythmic unifying element to the work as a whole. Its three beats per measure may be related to the 3/4 movements (I and V), and the triple division of

49

mf cresc. Ah! *f* Im - merse the

mf cresc. Ah! *f* Im - merse the

(8)

cresc. *f* *espr.*

cresc. *f*

52

dream. Drench the kiss.

dream. Drench the kiss.

(8)

espr. *espr.*

Example 17, "Lethe," mm. 49-73

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55

f

Dip the song in the stream,

Dip the song in the stream,

8

f

sf

f

8

loco

Ped.

Ped.

58

dip the

dip the

(8)

espr.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

Ped.

(Example 17, cont.)

61 *ff*

song in the stream,

song, dip the song in the

song in the stream,

(8)

ff

ff

ff

ff

Ped. Ped. Ped. sim

64

dip the song,

stream,

dip the song in the stream,

dim.

dim.

loco

ff

ff

(Example 17, cont.)

67 *Slower*

mp *dim.* *poch. rit.*

the song in the

mp *dim.*

dip the song in the

Slower *p* *mp* *dim.* *poch. rit.*

Slower *p* *mp* *dim.* *poch. rit.*

70 *a tempo* *rit.*

p *p*

stream. stream.

a tempo *rit.* *p* *p* *p*

p *espr.*

a tempo *rit.* *p* *p* *p*

(Example 17, cont.)

the 9/8 beat occurs on the first beat of each measure in the 7/8 movements (II, III, VI and VII). Most of the previous movements used duple division, and “Lethe” employs this rhythmic device as well. However, it is the only piece where duple against triple division is found, which intensifies the effectiveness of the rhythm as an expressive means. (See piano accompaniment throughout and voices mm. 7-13 in example 16, and example 17, mm. 51-55.)

Since “Lethe” is through-composed, each phrase uses new melodic material as short, separate musical ideas. Another interesting result of this poem has to do with the melodic material itself. While we continue to see variations in vocal texture, (especially by S/A or T/B duets) the piece is almost completely homophonic. Furthermore, there are several phrases that are somewhat like chordal chant, with very little melodic movement, but with great care taken in the textual rhythm and in expressive markings. (See example 18, mm. 29-34.) The tenor line has the most “melodic” line (example 18, mm. 29-32), although it is not marked as such and is not given prominence in terms of volume or articulation. It is, however, doubled in the right hand of the bass piano part, and so it would be slightly more prominent.

“Lethe” supplies a substantial ending to the song cycle which ties together many musical and poetic elements. The choice of this poem to conclude the work is another nod to Brahms’ *Liebeslieder*. In Parker’s words, “. . . the last one, with its larger, more serious subject, is my response to the philosophical poem with which Brahms ended the second set.”

28 *flowing*
p
 The lev - el flood _____ that laves _____ The
 The lev - el flood _____ that laves _____ The

flowing
p

flowing
espr.

31
 hot brow _ And the stiff shoul - der _ Is at our
 hot brow _ And the stiff shoul - der _ Is at our

Example 18, "Lethe," mm. 28-33

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Table 11: Organizational Chart “Songstream”

Songstream
1983
Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay
Duration: Aproximately 18 minutes
SATB/Piano duet

	I	II	III	IV	V
Title:	“To Kathleen”	“Mariposa”	“The Philosopher”	“The Spring and the Fall”	“Nuit Blanche”
Voicing:	SATB	TB	SA	SATB	SATB
Time Signature:	3/4	7/8	7/8	4/4	3/4
Tempo:	quarter = 112	eighth = 160	eighth = 132	quarter = 120	quarter = 72
Style indications:	Easy waltz	Light, fast	Vehemently	Simply, happily	Slow waltz
Structural sections:	2 plus coda	3	4	3 plus postlude	3
Basic tonality:	E phrygian	F lydian	A aeolian	G major	A aeolian

	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Title:	“The Merry Maid”	“Thursday”	“Passer Mortuus Est”	“Lethe”
Voicing:	SA	SATB	SATB	SATB
Time Signature:	7/8	7/8	4/4	9/8
Tempo:	quarter = 160	quarter = 160	quarter = 72	dotted quarter = 60
Style indication:	Fast, furious	Saucily	Lightly, nostalgically	Expansively
Structural sections:	3	2	3 plus postlude	5
Basic tonality:	B phrygian	G mixolydian	F lydian/major	E

Chapter 3

Angels and Challengers Analysis

The poetry for *Angels and Challengers* was taken from *Selected Poems of May Sarton*, published by W. W. Norton and Company in 1978. The title of the composition comes from this line in the second poem (“Song”): “No, I will never forget you and your great eyes/Angel and challenger.”

May Sarton was born in Belgium in 1912, the only child of George and Mabel Sarton.¹¹⁴ The family moved in 1914 to escape the German occupation, eventually arriving in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her father taught at Harvard. Though she held early promise as a writer, having published her first poems at the age of eighteen, Sarton turned down a scholarship to Vassar and embarked on a career in theater. When the Great Depression stifled those pursuits, she began to travel extensively, visiting friends in Europe and trying her hand at serious writing. She was a prolific writer, composing novels, journals and volumes of poetry (almost fifty publications during her lifetime). Although the larger works earned her more money, Sarton always considered poetry her true art form. She continued writing until her death in 1995 at the age of 83.

Sarton, like Millay, wrote much of her poetry in classical forms, but was in general not as strict in this aspect as was Millay. Her subjects too, are classic—death, love, nature, and desire. Although Sarton had a faithful following of readers, she never attained the recognition she craved from established critics until very late

¹¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted, biographical information regarding May Sarton is from Margot Peters, *May Sarton: A Biography*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

in her life. She is remembered as a brave, honest writer, revealing her personal examination of life as an artist and a feminist.

Angels and Challengers was commissioned by the Unitarian Universalist Association for their 1990 General Assembly on Arts and Spirituality.¹¹⁵ Sarton was introduced to the Unitarian Church at the age of ten¹¹⁶ and, although she never became a member, her poetry inspired special services there. She also gave lectures and held readings at several Unitarian Churches. In 1976, she received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from a Unitarian school in Berkeley, California, and was once introduced to a Unitarian Universalist General Assembly as “our poet.”¹¹⁷ Sarton was an appropriate choice then, for Parker’s cantata.

Parker selected five poems for *Angels and Challengers* which were written over the course of thirty years: “The Lion and the Rose” (from the book of the same name, published in 1948); “All Souls” (*In Time Like Air*, 1958); “Metamorphosis” (*As Does New Hampshire*, 1967); “Invocation” (*A Grain of Mustard Seed*, 1971); and “Song” (*Selected Poems of May Sarton*, 1978).¹¹⁸ Parker had a free hand with this commission explaining, “The Unitarian Universalist Church is uniquely interested in great poetry – it doesn’t have to be literally ‘religious’ to be acceptable. They were remarkably open as to the parameters – easy to work with!”¹¹⁹ *Angels and Challengers* is set for SATB chorus, solo vocal quartet, oboe, two clarinets, bassoon and piano.

¹¹⁵ Alice Parker, *Angels and Challengers*, unpublished score, 1990.

¹¹⁶ Leonora P. Blouin, “May Sarton,” *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography*, 1-2. Accessed 10/25/04, available online at <<http://www.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/maysarton.html>>.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5

¹¹⁸ All of the listed poems are found in *Collected Poems: 1930-1993*, by May Sarton, New York, W. W. Norton and Company, 1993.

¹¹⁹ King, Interview.

Parker labels this piece a “cantata,” which she defines as a piece with voices and instruments.¹²⁰ This description could apply to many of her choral suites as well, and appears at times to be somewhat arbitrary. When questioned, Parker replied, “Consistency has never been my long suit!”¹²¹ Her *Works List* shows twenty-four cantatas with instruments. Some are large works involving soloists and narrators in addition to the choir and instruments, (such as *A Sermon from the Mountain: Martin Luther King*, for SATB, SATB soli, narrator, strings, and jazz ensemble), and some are on a much smaller scale, (like *Elinor Wylie: Incantations* for SSA, clarinet and piano). Many have spoken dialogue or declamatory sections,¹²² and texts come from a wide array of sources such as the Bible, traditional hymns, and prominent poets.

As in *Songstream, Angels and Challengers* is first and foremost unified by its text. Sarton’s poems determine the form of each movement, and the ordering of the poems determines the overall form of the entire piece. The musical material, including rhythm, melody, tempo, dynamics, and articulation is all a consequence of Parker’s personal reading and interpretation of the five poems. Although the poetry was published separately and over the course of three decades, there is an underlying theme that connects the selections. Where Millay’s poems in *Songstream* portrayed the impermanence of romantic love, Sarton’s poems selected here conclude that love is more permanent than life, but recognize the eternal human struggle to be at peace with that fact. Her belief in the love and renewal that comes

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Long, x-xi.

from within us and continues beyond us permeates *Angels and Challengers* with a universal spirituality.

Not surprisingly, the musical setting of this poetry greatly contrasts to the music of *Songstream*. It is more extreme in almost every aspect: tempi, dynamic and vocal ranges, textural changes, use of tonal centers (which is both more static and more complicated), and encompasses an even greater variety of moods. Because several of the poems (II, IV and V) contain emotional changes within them, the structure and sound of those movements change as well, as opposed to the Millay poems that generally express a single sentiment.

The overall sound and effect of the cantata is greatly influenced by Parker's choice of forces. The addition of SATB soli and chamber instruments (oboe, two clarinets, and bassoon), to the SATB chorus and piano adds great opportunities for variations in texture, volume, articulation, and tonal color. These musical devices assist in shaping and interpreting Sarton's complex poetry while also serving as a unifying element in each movement and in the piece as a whole.

Musical factors that unify the cantata begin with tonal center organization. Movements I and V are based on the B-flat aeolian mode, II and IV are both based in G, and III is in F major. As in *Songstream*, there is a trend toward the fifth of the original key center, and then a return.

Table 12: Modes and Time Signatures for *Angels and Challengers*

I	II	III	IV	V
B-flat aeolian	G-mixed modes	F major	G aeolian	B-flat aeolian
2/2	4/4	4/4	3/4	4/4

One sees here that all of the movements except IV (“All Souls”) are in a duple meter, although numbers II, III and V use other meters as well.

There is melodic, rhythmic and harmonic material that recurs and serves to unify the piece. Quick motives delivered on the beat, or as grace notes just before, occur in all movements but III. These motives are heard in the instruments except for the final movement when they are also sung (example 22, m. 63). In contrast, there is an arching melodic shape that reappears, often beginning with a pick-up note that leaps to the beat (example 27, m. 3). This melodic shape is frequently set in imitation and occurs in movements III, IV and V. Sustained pedals in unisons and perfect intervals occur in both voices and instruments throughout. Parker also uses polymodality at several points within the piece, especially in movement II. The different modes may occur within the same tonal center or as completely separate scales. Because polymodality is a particularly dissonant sound, its effect is memorable and unifying. One final factor worth noting is the similarity of the first vocal melody in movement I to much of the melody in movement V, due to stepwise motion of the B-flat aeolian scale.

I: “Invocation”

Come out of the dark earth
Here where the minerals
Glow in their stone cells
Deeper than seed or birth.

Come under the strong wave
Here where the tug goes
As the tide turns and flows
Below that architrave.

Come into the pure air
 Above all heaviness
 Of storm and cloud to this
 Light-possessed atmosphere.

Come into, out of, under
 The earth, the wave, the air.
 Love, touch us everywhere
 With primeval candor.

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Table 13: Flow Chart “Invocation”

Mm. 1-----16---19-----35-----56-----67-----77				
A	B	C	D	
a	a'	a''	a'''	b
Bflat aeo		F mm/phr/aeo	Bflat phr/mix	Aflat maj Bflat maj
Bflat pedal-----	F pedal-----	C pedal-----	F pedal-----	
p	mp	mf	f	p f p f
stanza 1	2	3	4	

“Invocation” has four musically related sections that correlate to the poetic stanzas. There are two flats in the key signature. Sections A and B are based in B-flat aeolian, Section C combines F major and F aeolian, and Section D is in different modes of B-flat. Each section is supported by sustained pedals in perfect fifths and/or octaves that occur in the voices for the first three sections, and in the accompaniment throughout. (See table 13.) The melody, sung in octaves in the first two sections, then in two to three parts (again in octaves) in sections three and four, rises along with the pedal tones, becoming higher and louder in each section.

Steadily $\text{♩} = 60 \pm$ Alice Parker

p poco cresc.
Come,

p espr. $\text{f} \text{ } 3 \text{ } 7$
Come out of the dark

p poco cresc.
Come,

p espr. $\text{f} \text{ } 3 \text{ } 7$
Come out of the dark

p *dim.*

p
come, come,

earth Here where the min-er-als Glow

p
come, come,

earth Here where the min-er-als Glow

Example 19, "Invocation" mm. 1-15
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(Example 19, cont.)

Parker originally conceived this movement as “a slow rise in pitch and tension from the beginning to the end.”¹²³ The stepwise melody, along with the use of pedal tones results in modal and harmonic sections that are relatively static. The tonal center is strongly established in Section A by the B-flat/F pedal tone in the accompaniment, tenor and soprano, and the aeolian mode is easily discerned in the descending melody, sung in octaves by alto and bass. (See example 19.)

Section B maintains a B-flat tonal center, although some melodic accidentals imply transposition, and an F pedal prepares the move to an F tonal center at the beginning of Section C. (See table 13.) Vocal parts in Section B are opposite to those of Section A, with sung pedal tones in the alto and bass, and the tenor and soprano expressing the now ascending melody in octaves. Section C continues in

¹²³ King, Interview.

Handwritten musical score for Example 20, "Invocation" mm. 34-43. The score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and Piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is common time (C).

Measures 34-38:

- Soprano:** *mf espr.* Come, ——— come in-to the pure
- Alto:** *mf* Come, ———
- Tenor:** *mf espr.* Come, ——— come in-to the pure
- Bass:** *mf* Come, ———
- Piano:** Accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Measures 39-43:

- Soprano:** air A-bove all heav-i-ness ——— Of storm and cloud ———
- Alto:** come, ——— come, ——— come, ———
- Tenor:** air A-bove all heav-i-ness ——— Of storm and cloud ———
- Bass:** come, ——— come, ——— come, ———
- Piano:** Accompaniment with chords and moving lines.

Example 20, "Invocation" mm. 34-43
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this choral structure, but the soprano and tenor melody lines begin to harmonize at measure 40. (See example 20.)

Section D returns to a B-flat tonal center with an instrumental F pedal. At this point all voices present the text in a two-part mirrored harmony sung in octaves between soprano and tenor and between alto and bass (example 21, mm. 56-60). The music moves toward a chord of perfect fourths (G, C, F) that predicts C major (mm. 64-66). A surprising move to A-flat major ensues, introduced by the oboe and reinforced by a triad in the women's voices. (See example 21, mm. 67-71.) The last statement returns definitively to B-flat major, ending with a dramatic *crescendo* and *ritard*.

The time signature of "Invocation" is 2/2 at half-note = 60, and the accented whole note pedals and simple melodies help to maintain an unrelenting tempo as the intensity increases. A metrical change to 3/2 in measures 62-65 gives special attention to the text, "The earth, the wave, the air." Measure 66 contains a sudden stop with a silent fermata, setting aside the last two poetic lines which continue in 2/2. (See example 21, mm. 62-66.)

The accompaniment in this movement is used largely to reinforce tonal centers and to help lend form to the piece, consisting mostly of sustained notes. A quick run in the woodwinds in measure 63 (example 21) introduces an instrumental motive that is used throughout the rest of the piece, and almost immediately in movement II.

54

Come in-to, out of,

oboe

cresc.

bsn. p

clar. f

59

un-der the earth, the div

oboe

clar.

bsn.

Ped

Example 21, "Invocation," mm. 54-71
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II: "Song"

No, I will never forget you and your great eyes,
O animal and power.

You will be stalking
The wood where I am walking.

You will lie asleep
In the places where I weep,

And you will wake and move
In the first hour of love,

And in the second hour
Love flee before your power.

No, I will never forget you and your great eyes,
Angel and challenger.

You will be there
Dressed in your wild hair
Angel and animal
Wherever I may dwell,
Wherever I may sleep
You have the dreams to keep.

Walking in the still landscape by the rock and the bone,
You will be beside me when I am most alone.

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Table 14: Flow Chart "Song"

I										II															
Mm. 1	-----37-----																			81					
1	-----8-----				-----28-----				-----37-----				-----47-----				-----58-----				-----72-----				81
A	B		C				D		E				F		Coda										
a	b		a'				b'		b''				b												
vv:	G maj		C mix		F# maj				D/F		Eflat				G mix		D/Aflat G								
acc.:	G/Aflat		C phr		F# maj				F phr		Bflat maj				Gflat maj		Gflat/Aflat G								
mp f		p		mf		f		mf		p				f mp		mf p									
stanza 1		2		3		4		5 6		7				8				line 12							

There is an obvious visual difference between this poem and any that have come before. It is more complicated in terms of form and content, and Parker's music reflects this complexity. It is consigned to SATB soli and has no accidentals in the key signature. The movement may be divided into two large sections (seen as I and II in table 14), or into seven short sections (table 14, A-F). These shorter sections are determined by changes in the accompaniment and in delivery style due to volume and articulation. There is a short coda which repeats the text, "Angel and challenger, Angel."

Parker uses a more complicated modal/tonal scheme to musically interpret this poem, which has an inherent dichotomy and conflict (seen in the terms "angel," "animal," "power," and "challenger"). There are essentially two different styles of melodic material incorporated into the music which affects the structure of the shorter Sections. The first is an accented fanfare style introduced by ornamented perfect fifths in the instruments which returns in various forms throughout the piece. Vocally, the fanfare style consists of a chromatic, leaping melody moving to accented stepwise movement. (See example 22, mm. 1-6.) The second style is most obvious in the bass, heard in the piano and/or bassoon, and is first seen as an ostinato in the style of a "walking bass" on the C phrygian scale. (See example 22, mm. 8-11.) The vocal melody in the second stylistic technique is related to the first, utilizing stepwise motion, and some leaps of thirds and fourths that recall the fanfare motive. This melodic style is differentiated by volume (which is softer at the beginning of the section, but often crescendos), and a more legato line. (See example 23.)

With vigor $\text{♩} = 88$

SOLI

f marc. No, I will never for-
f marc. No, I will never for-

clar. 1 marc. *clar. 2 sim.* *oboe f*

mp bsn. pno.

3
 get you and your great eyes, *mf leg.* an-i-mal and pow-er.—
 get you and your great eyes, *mf leg.* an-i-mal and pow-er.—

f dim. *al*

7
steady marc. **Bass** *p cresc.* You will be stalk-ing the wood
dry *pp*
p bsn., pno. *sim.*
 (in octaves throughout)

Example 22, "Song," mm. 1-11
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Handwritten musical score for "Song" mm. 16-23. The score is in G major and 4/4 time. It features vocal parts for Soprano (Sop.), Tenor (Ten.), and Bass (B.), and instrumental parts for Clarinet 1 and 2 (clar. 1,2) and Piano (pno.). The lyrics are: "places where I weep, And you will wake and move In- And you will wake and move In- the first hour of love, And in the se- cond hour Love flee- the first hour of love, And in the se- cond hour Love flee-". The score includes dynamic markings such as "mf", "cresc.", "p", "f", and "sf". The tempo is marked "mm. 16-23".

Example 23, "Song," mm. 16-23
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The dichotomy may also be seen in the frequent incidence of dissonance which is sometimes the result of Parker's use of different modes and/or tonal centers concurrently (polymodality or polytonality, respectively). This may be seen in the opening measures (example 22.) From a tonal center that is clearly G, the B-flat in measure 2 implies G minor, the B-natural in measure 3 suggests G major, and the G# major triad in measure in measure 4 functions as a Neapolitan A-flat (as sustained in the instruments.) However, the voices continue with G major and so the result is a dissonant dual tonal center—G and A-flat. In Section B, the voices

38 *mf legg.*
 You will be there Dressed in your wild hair
ap. You will be there, — You will be there.

sim. *clar.*

42 *cresc.* *f* An-gel-
 An-gel- and an-i-mel, *f* An-gel-
cresc.

pno. *bssn., pno.* *cresc.* *clar.* *f* oboe clar. 1 2

46 *A little slower*
♩ = 80
f and an-i-mel —
winds *pno.* *p legg.*

Example 24, "Song," mm. 38-49
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and upper instruments become increasingly farther and farther away from the bass (the C phrygian ostinato in example 22, mm. 8-11) in terms of modes and tonal centers. The increasing pitch levels, volume and intensity due to dissonance create a dramatic aural effect which resolves to F# major at Section C. (See table 14.)

Section D begins with the bass ostinato pattern in F phrygian, played by the piano, bassoon, and clarinets, and joined by the vocal bass in m. 39. (See example 24.) The soprano and alto are in two modes of D, aeolian and major, respectively. The instrumental bass line then moves downward in a whole-tone scale (m. 42), and back up on a G major scale (with the addition of a lydian fourth in m.43). This occurs against the D-flat major mode in the upper instruments and voices. A consonant arrival of the bass at A-flat endures for only an eighth note, as the accompaniment moves to B-flat major at the beginning of Section E (m. 47). (See example 24.)

Section E is slower and more subdued, in relation to the text (stanza 7, lines 4-6). The polymodality continues until a return to a G at Section F (see table 14). The marching bass line resumes, this time in G-flat major, while voices and upper instruments move in G mixolydian by pairs of perfect fifths. At the last line of text, the accompaniment bass line joins in the G tonal center. The coda has particularly ambiguous tonal implications. (See example 25, mm. 76-81.) The treble voices (a D/A perfect fifth into an A/E perfect fifth to finish), could be in a variety of modes—G mixolydian, D dorian, or A aeolian. The tenor and bass voices, along with the accompaniment move down what appears to be an A-flat major scale, until

the final G indicates a G-locrian mode. The final chord, pianissimo and in open-voiced position, lacks a feeling of definite finality.

Handwritten musical score for Example 25, "Song," mm. 73-81. The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system (mm. 73-77) features a vocal line with lyrics "An-gel and chal-len-ger." and a piano accompaniment with markings "winds", "f", and "p". The second system (mm. 78-81) features a vocal line with lyrics "An-gel." and a piano accompaniment with markings "poco rit.", "p", "pp", and "clar.". The score is written in a G-locrian mode, indicated by the final G note.

Example 25, "Song," mm. 73-81
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III: Metamorphosis

Always it happens when we are not there—
The tree leaps up alive into the air,
Small open parasols of Chinese green
Wave on each twig. But who has ever seen
The latch sprung, the bud as it burst?
Spring always manages to get there first.

Lovers of wind, who will have been aware
Of a faint stirring in the empty air,
Look up one day through a dissolving screen

To find no star, but this multiplied green,
Shadow on shadow, singing sweet and clear.
Listen, lovers of wind, the leaves are here!

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Table 15: Flow Chart “Metamorphosis”

Mm. 1-----14-----19---22-----29-----40-----50-----57						
A			B			
a		a'	b		a''	
F maj	D maj	Bflat maj	D aeo	D w.t.	C maj	F maj
mp	p	mf	mp	mf		p
stanza 1		instr.	2			

“Metamorphosis” contrasts with “Song” in many important ways. The poetic form is straightforward with a simple rhyming pattern, and the uplifting sentiment is maintained throughout. Like the poem, the movement is divided into two sections. Section A is primarily in F major (the existing key signature), and Section B progresses through several tonal centers before returning to F major. The two sections share little melodic material, and are often musical representations of the text, especially in Section B. A short instrumental postlude unifies the piece with a repeat of the first melody.

Tonally, this is a much more simple and stable piece. Section A builds on an arching melody that goes from F major to B-flat major. In typical Parker fashion, however, a close look reveals a G-flat Neapolitan chord in measure 10 that moves subsequently through B-flat major (m. 11), and F lydian (m. 12-13). (See example 26.) The next phrase (mm. 14-18) flows into D major and contains the single

Graciously $\text{♩} = 100 \pm$

unis mp

Al-ways it hap-pens when we

mp *mp* *mp clar.*

are not there — the tree leaps up a-^{live} in-to the

Al- ways, al-ways, the tree leaps up — in-

air — Small o-pen pa-ra-sols of Chi-nese green-wave

to the air, — Small o-pen pa-ra-sols Wave.

p *mp* *mp* *mp*

Example 26, "Metamorphosis," mm. 1-21
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incidence of polymodality in this movement (m. 17), where the instruments remain in D major (on an A major chord as V), and the voices simultaneously sing the C-natural that occurs in the D mixolydian mode. This resolves to B-flat major to finish the first stanza (example 26, mm.14-21.) An instrumental interlude continues with variations on the vocal melody that sequence through various tonal centers, arriving at D major in preparation for the D aeolian entrance at Section B. (See diagram 15.)

Section B begins with the male voices singing an imitative melody over an instrumental A pedal. The D tonal center is essentially maintained until a C major cadence in measure 45 (example 27) predicts a return to F major.

This movement offers many examples of melodic text painting. For instance, the melody rises by thirds on the words, “the tree leaps up.” (See example 26, m. 5.) Moving on, the pickup note into measure 16 includes a large melodic leap combined with a change from unison to four parts, and a dynamic change from piano to mezzo forte. This is followed by a rest (for the combined consonant, “tch”) and an accent on beat three, all of which are used to express the text, “the latch sprung.” (See example 26, mm. 15-16.) Section B is a series of text-painted images: a very close imitation in voices for “a faint stirring” (example 27, mm. 31-32); a leap of a fifth and a fourth for “Look up” (mm. 34-35); imitation with a sustained final pitch on “multiplied green” (mm. 38-39); a whole tone imitative passage for the phrase “Shadow on shadow” (mm. 40-42); and a lyrical melody on “singing” which moves to C major at “sweet and clear” (mm. 43-45). (See example 27.)

29

mp
lov - ers of wind, who will have been a - ware of a faint -

mp
lov - ers of wind who will have been a - ware of

cl.
p

32

mf
Look up

mf
stir - ring - in the emp - ty air, Look up one day

mf
a faint - stir - ring - on the emp - ty air, Look up

tr

Example 27, "Metamorphosis," mm. 29-46
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35

one day - thro' a dis-solv - ing screen: No star -
 look up,
 thro' a dis-solv - ing screen To find no star -
 one day

mp
mp espr.

38

but mul-ti-plied green Shadow on
 but this mul-ti-plied green

mf
f

(Example 27, cont.)

41

Slower $\text{♩} = 88$

shadow, Sing - ing

Shadow on shadow, Sing - ing

Shadow on shadow, Sing - ing

Shadow on shadow, Sing - ing

44

sweet and clear.

sweet and clear.

sweet and clear.

sweet and clear.

(Example 27, cont.)

There are a few deviations from the 4/4 time signature, all of which aid in text stress rhythm (example 26, mm. 7-9, m. 18, and example 27, m. 35), or are a part of an instrumental repetition of previous vocal melody (example 27, m.46). The rhythm of the vocal parts and the melodic instrumental parts in “Metamorphosis” differs from the previous two movements because of the amount of imitation that occurs. The entrance of the melody introduces a rhythmic/melodic element consisting of a pickup eighth note which leaps to an arching melody, mostly composed of eighth note rhythms. (See example 26, m. 3.) This recurs in movements IV and V, and is easily recognized.

IV: All Souls

Did someone say that there would be an end,
 An end, Oh, an end to love and mourning?
 Such voices speak when sleep and waking blend,
 The cold bleak voices of the early morning
 When all the birds are dumb in dark November—
 Remember and forget, forget, remember.

After the false night, warm true voices, wake!
 Voice of the dead that touches the cold living,
 Through the pale sunlight once more gravely speak.
 Tell me again, while the last leaves are falling:
 “Dear child, what has been once so interwoven
 Cannot be raveled, nor the gift ungiven.”

Now the dead move through all of us still glowing,
 Mother and child, lover and lover mated,
 Are wound and bound together and enflowing.
 What has been plaited cannot be unplaited—
 Only the strands grow richer with each loss
 And memory makes kings and queens of us.

Dark into light, light into darkness, spin.
 When all the birds have flown to some real haven,

We who find shelter in the warmth within,
Listen, and feel new-cherished, new-forgiven,
As the lost human voices speak through us and blend
Our complex love, our mourning without end.

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Table 16: Flow Chart “All Souls”

Mm. 1-----32-----62--67-----110-----148									
A	B	C		D					
a	b	a'	c	a''					
G aeo	G maj/aeo		C maj/D maj/aeo		B aeo G aeo				
mp	mf	f	p	mf	f	p	mp	f	mp
1	2	3		4					

The four stanzas in “All Souls” correlate to the four sections in this setting for solo vocal quartet. Section A is in G aeolian, Section B has a primary tonal center of G alternating between the aeolian and major modes, Section C alternates between the tonal centers of C (major) and D (aeolian and major), and Section D returns to G aeolian. (See table 16.) There are no flats or sharps in the key signature. Sections A and D are closely related melodically, but there is melodic similarity throughout. The melodic style resembles the beginning melody in the previous movement (example 26, m. 3), utilizing the pickup note leaping to an eighth-note melody. Another unifying motive that relates this movement to numbers I, II, and V is the “trumpet call” motive, heard here during the second section in the oboe and clarinet parts (example 28, mm. 58-61.)

The duality expressed in this poem—love and mourning, life and death, memory and forgetfulness—is musically demonstrated by changes in minor and

51

mf what has been once so in-ter-
 what has been once so
 " Dear child, - what has been once so in-ter -
 " Dear child, - what has been once so in-ter-wo - ven
 clar. bsn.

56

f wo - ven Can-not be re-veled, - nor the gift un -
 in-ter-wo-ven Can-not be re-veled, - nor the gift un -
 wo - ven- Can-not be re-veled, - nor the gift un -
 Can-not be re-veled, - nor the gift un-
 clar. f

Example 28, "All Souls," mm. 51-64
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(Example 28, cont.)

major modes. The first stanza (Section A) speaks of the endlessness of mourning and is entirely in the minor mode of G aeolian. In Section B, the hopeful words of the second stanza are accented by a sudden change to G major (table 16). The continued use of alternating modes is demonstrated in measures 52-65. (See example 28.) Beginning in G major at the words “Dear child” (m. 52), the mode becomes aeolian (mm. 54-56), then major (mm 57-58), then aeolian once again (m. 59). The phrase finishes in the major mode (mm. 60-61), but returns immediately to G aeolian for the instrumental interlude (mm.62-65).

Section C refreshes with a new C tonal center in the major mode. The melodic line is also a welcome change, a loose inversion of the arching melody previously heard (example 29, mm. 67-69.)

65

mf Now the dead move thro' all of us still glow-ing, -

mf Now the dead move thro' all of us still glow-ing, -

mf Now the dead move thro' all of us still glow-ing, -

mf Now the dead move thro' all of us still glow-ing, -

mf Now the dead move thro' all of us still glow-ing, -

Example 29, "All Souls," mm. 65-69
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The C major tonality soon moves through various modes in the tonal centers of D, C and B, culminating in B aeolian before a return to the G aeolian tonal center for Section D. (See table 16.) The return of the original melody in its original mode is unmistakable at the beginning of Section D, although the melody soon moves in a new direction as the poem becomes more positive. Rapid modal and tonal center changes propel the movement to the penultimate phrase in A aeolian—an arching melodic motive in imitation, appropriate for the text “and blend/ Our complex love” (example 30, mm. 135-137). A slower tempo and the new tonal center of D (aeolian in mm. 138-139, and major in mm. 140-141) sets apart the final text, “our mourning without end.” (See example 30, mm. 139-141.) The line is repeated sequentially in

145

(Example 30, cont.)

G aeolian (mm. 142-143), and the voices move to a G major triad (mm. 144-148).

At this point, a final moment of polymodality occurs between voices and instruments as the melody is expressed in the accompaniment in its original mode of G aeolian, resolving with the voices in G major in the last chord. (See example 30.)

“All Souls” portrays the variety of textures that are common in Parker’s writing. Textural changes, as with rhythm, melody, and dynamics, stem from Parker’s musical expression of the written word. Voices and instruments move in and out of imitation, homophony, duet, harmony and unison, creating a sweeping description of the poem that may be extremely simple or quite complex.

V: The Lion and the Rose

Vision is locked in stone.
The lion in the air is gone
With the great lion of the sun.
The sky is wild and cold.
The tawny fire is gone.
The hill where love did open like a rose
Is black. It snows.

Emptiness flows.
The flowers in the heart all close
Drowned in a heavy white. Love knows
That poverty untold,
The cave where nothing grows.
The flaming lions of the flesh are gone,
Their power withdrawn.

God of the empty room,
Thy will be done. Thy will be done:
Now shine the inward sun,
The beating heart that glows
Within the skeleton,
The magic rose, the purer living gold,
Shine now, grown old.

All that is young and bold,
The lion's roar, the flaming skin and wild,
Unearthly peace now cherish and enfold
And fresh sleep overcome,
That in this death-in-life, delicate, cold,
The spiritual rose
Flower among the snows—
The love surpassing love.

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Table 17: Flow Chart “The Lion and the Rose”

Mm. 1	25	55	83	124
A	B	C	D	
a	a'	a a'' b	a''' b'	
Bflat aeo/lyd	Eflat aeo/phr	Bflat phr Eflat aeo	Eflat	Bflat
mf f mp p mf		p mf f	mf f p ff	p
1	2	3	4	

“The Lion and the Rose” has a key signature of two flats (as in Movement I) and is musically divided into four parts, again relating to the poetic stanzas: Section A begins in B-flat aeolian and moves to E-flat aeolian; Section B is in E-flat phrygian; Section C begins in B-flat phrygian and moves through various tonal centers; and Section D has a primary tonal center of E-flat that returns to B-flat. Each of the sections have related melodic, rhythmic, and stylistic content. Much of the musical material in “The Lion and the Rose” also relates to the previous four movements. This may be seen in extensive use of pedal tones, quick rhythmic motives, the arching melody with an eighth-note pickup, and polymodal and polytonal writing. Another unifying element in this movement is the use of sectional tempo changes.

The uneven line length and rhyme pattern in this poem resulted in more changing meter than in any previous movements. The main time signatures, used in almost equal amount, are 3/4 and 4/4. There are areas where the changes occur quickly and some stable, lengthy sections in a single time signature, determined by the text stress and melodic style.

Section A begins in B-flat aeolian. An F pedal in the first two measures reinforces the fifth. The harmony resulting from the two-part vocal lines (ST/AB) in measure 5 also reinforces F by converging on G-flat (present in the current mode) and an altered E-natural. Both tones sung together create an upper and lower leading tone effect to F and the B-flat tonal center remains unmistakable. This motive occurs throughout the piece. (See example 31.)

May Santony Relentlessly ♩ = 60 Alice Parker

CHORUS

cl. *uf marc.* *cresc.* *f* *mf*

uf dark *f*

Vision - is locked in stone.

Vision - is locked in stone.

mp *mf*

Example 31, "The Lion and the Rose," mm. 1-7
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52 *poch. rit. ♩ = 66* *Stark*
p poco marc.
 God of the
 God of the

57 *uniso.*
 emp-ty room, thy will be done, thy will be
 emp-ty room, thy will be done, thy will be

62
 done.
 done.

Example 32, "The Lion and the Rose," mm. 52-69
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Handwritten musical score for Example 32, cont. The score is written on three systems of staves. The top system is for the Solo voice, with lyrics "Now shine the in-ward sun, the beat-ing heart that glows With-in the". The middle system is for the Chorus (CHO), with lyrics "Now shine the in-ward sun, the beat-ing heart that glows With". The bottom system is for the Piano (P), with lyrics "Now shine the in-ward sun, the beat-ing heart that glows With". The score includes tempo markings "♩ = 72" and "gently", and dynamic markings "up" and "mf". The Solo voice part is in E-flat major, and the Chorus part is in B-flat major. The Piano part is in E-flat major.

(Example 32, cont.)

Section A becomes gradually softer and moves to E-flat phrygian for the beginning of Section B (diagram 17.) Section B begins in a subdued manner, but evolves to a reappearance of the dramatic melodic style from Section A while moving to a B-flat tonal center. Section C presents the first two lines of stanza 3 in an austere descending choral line in B-flat phrygian over a B-flat to F sustained instrumental pedal. (See example 32, mm. 55-63.) A bright sudden change to G-flat major marks the unaccompanied entrance of the soli on the next line of text, "Now shine the inward sun" (example 32, mm. 65-66). Section C continues in the G-flat tonal center, ending on a B-flat major chord which prepares the E-flat tonal center that begins Section D. (See example 33, mm. 80-84.) The voices enter in measure 85 in duet texture with separate tonal centers and modes, soprano/tenor in B-flat aeolian and alto/bass in E-flat mixolydian. The vocal lines are accompanied by a simple E-

91 *poco rit* $\text{♩} = 60$

Un-earth-ly

Un-earth-ly

S
A
T
B

flam-ing- skin, and wild, Un-earth-ly peace now

flam-ing- skin, and wild, Un-earth-ly peace now

poco rit $\text{♩} = 60$

96

peace now cher-ish, - and en-fold — And - fresh sleep o-ver-come, -

peace now cher-ish, - and en-fold — And - fresh sleep o-ver-come, -

cher-ish and en - fold — And - fresh sleep o-ver-come, -

cher-ish and en - fold — And - fresh sleep o-ver-come, -

mp

mp

mp

mp

p

(Example 33, cont.)

flat mixolydian figure in the piano and imitative melodic motives in the woodwinds (example 33, mm. 85-90). A contrasting section in E-flat mixolydian follows as chorus and soli gently present lines 3-5 of stanza 4. The piece remains in an E-flat tonal center, climaxing solidly in an E-flat major 9th chord on the words, “spiritual rose,” followed by root position chords ii, iii, and IV, then quickly diminishing to two pitches, A-natural and B-natural, which act together as leading tones to the final tonal center of B-flat. (See example 34, mm. 107-112.) The last line of text is softly presented by the solo quartet, and then repeated by the choir. A final repetition of “surpassing love” occurs in the solo bass and the bassoon (mm. 117-119) and the piece ends quietly with a five measure instrumental phrase. (See example 34, mm. 120-124.)

106 *molto cresc.*

f *dim* *mp*

— spir - i - tual rose Flow - er a - mong the snows —

molto cresc. *f* *dim* *mp*

— spir - i - tual rose Flow - er a - mong the snows —

pno molto cresc. *winds* *f* *mp*

Red — * Red * Red, — *

Example 34, “The Lion and the Rose,” mm. 106-124
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110

p gently

the love sur-pass-ing love.

The love sur-pass-ing love,

p the

p the

clar. *mp*

p

pno. *p*

115

as an echo

sur-pass-ing love.

love sur-pass-ing love.

love sur-pass-ing love.

as an echo

p

più p

(Example 34, cont.)

120

poco rit.

p delicate

poco rit.

up

p

pp

(11) 49

5/8/90
N.Y.C.

(Example 34, cont.)

Table 18: Organizational Chart *Angels and Challengers*

Angels and Challengers
1990
Text by May Sarton
Duration: Approximately 18 minutes
SATB, SATB soli/Piano, bassoon, 2 clarinets, oboe

	I	II	III	IV	V
Title:	“Invocation”	“Song”	“Metamorphosis”	“All Souls”	“The Lion and the Rose”
Voicing:	SATB	SATB soli	SATB	SATB soli	SATB/SATB soli
Accompaniment:	pno/winds	pno/winds	winds	pno/winds	pno/winds
Time Signature:	2/2 (3/2)	4/4 (3/4)	4/4 (3/4, 3/2)	3/4	4/4, 3/4 (5/4, 2/4)
Tempo:	half = 60	quarter = 88	quarter = 100	quarter = 92	quarter = 60
Style indication:	Steadily	With vigor	Graciously	Waltzing	Relentlessly
Structural sections:	4	2 (7)	2	4	4
Basic tonality:	B-flat Aeolian	G	F Major	G Aeolian	B-flat Aeolian

Chapter 4

Songs from “The Dragon Quilt” Analysis

Songs from “The Dragon Quilt” consists of nine poems selected from *On Why the Quilt-Maker Became A Dragon*, a work by Sheila Nickerson which was published by Vanessapress in 1985. Sheila Nickerson was born and raised in New York City, and received a B.A. in English from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania.¹²⁴ She moved with her family to Alaska in 1971 and lived in Juneau for twenty-seven years.¹²⁵ During her time in Alaska, Nickerson raised three children and pursued a career in writing and teaching. She taught at a variety of schools and universities, and was an instructor and associate director of the University Within Walls, a statewide prison education program. She was Alaska’s poet laureate from 1977 to 1981, and served as editor for *Alaska’s Wildlife* magazine from 1985-1992. Nickerson’s involvement in educational symposiums and presentations on poetry and writing, nature, conservation, and women’s issues began in 1973 and continues to the present day. Her published material consists of thirteen books of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction, several magazine articles and essays, and over 300 poems in magazines and anthologies. Other poetry by Nickerson that has been set to music includes the collection, *Songs of the Pine-Wife*, selections from *Feast of the Animals*, and the poem, “Song of the Polar Bear.”¹²⁶ Nickerson continues to write and work out of her home in Bellingham, Washington.

¹²⁴ Sheila Nickerson, personal Vitae dated 10/21/2004.

¹²⁵ Anne Hawley, “Poet Nickerson leads readers through a world of discovery,” *Anchorage Daily News* (March 21, 2004.) Accessed 4/14/04, available online at <<http://www.adn.com/life/story/4873847p-4809774c.html>>.

¹²⁶ Nickerson, Vitae.

Songs from "The Dragon Quilt" was commissioned by the Juneau, Alaska, Oratorio Choir and was first performed on December 1, 1984.¹²⁷ Parker had previously met the conductor, Allen MacKinnon, and agreed to compose a piece celebrating the 100th anniversary of the city of Juneau. The commission called for the use of regional Alaskan texts, and Parker's search for an appropriate text was extensive.

I . . . researched many Native American songs and prayers (wonderful, but didn't work for this); as well as local poets. When I found Sheila Nickerson, I knew she was the voice, but the poems I saw didn't work. Allen knew her, and decided to commission her to write a text for me to set. I waited quite a while for it – and when it came, it was a whole, wonderful book of poems, celebrating the landscape and history and heritage of coastal Alaska. Perfect – but way too long.¹²⁸

Because of the nature of the large work by Nickerson, Parker was unable to select individual poems in their entirety which fit into the musical concept she wished to portray. Generally, Parker's organizational process involves ordering individual poems, making decisions for each in terms of tempo, texture, length, and mood, and then relating each through tonal centers, modes and melodic styles.¹²⁹ However, for *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt,"* the challenge was different:

. . . I had this huge world in front of me, and had to piece out something that met Allen's needs. The quilt idea was immediately attractive, and those pattern-names became a theme that linked the movements. Then I began to see the different ideas that could be expressed: history, women's emancipation, merging with the season etc., climaxing in the storm at sea. I literally had to 'piece together' the different scraps of text from different parts of the poem. When I'd finished, the work was much longer and larger (full orchestra)

¹²⁷ Alice Parker, *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt"* (New York, ECS Publishing, 1984.)

¹²⁸ King, Interview.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

than Allen had first contracted for. Bless his heart, he went ahead and performed it as written, and it's had a couple of performances since.¹³⁰

During the course of composition, Parker and Nickerson became friends. Nickerson was impressed with the final product and narrated the first performance.¹³¹

The selected texts present a variety of themes, all with a decidedly feminine tone. Quilting, which has historically been done by groups of women as a shared experience, becomes a metaphor for memory, history, and the act of creation. The common grounds of human experience, of life, death, and religion, and the continuous question of the place of mankind in a changing natural world are united in the imagery of quilt construction.

The overall structure of *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt"* is, of course, related to the text, but as Parker "pieced together" the desired poetry, she was able to create a framework using the quilt patterns as a unifying element. The text also influenced the performing forces that were required: a narrator and soprano soloist, in addition to the chorus, make it possible to get through large quantities of text in a relatively short amount of time; the tonal colors of the full orchestra allow for the expression of various styles and moods, and specific instrumental combinations contribute to the formal structure.

This piece consists of nine short movements, from 41 to 124 measures. As in *Songstream*, there are no flats or sharps in the key signatures except for movement IV which has one sharp. Because the text is extensive, and the

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

performing forces are numerous, the written presentation of each poem will identify the performer(s) involved in its musical presentation.

The major unifying factor, as mentioned above, is the “quilt pattern” text. This text appears in every movement except numbers III and IV. (The quilt pattern text is indicated in the flow charts as “QP.”) Parker’s very recognizable melodic and rhythmic setting of this text first appears in the chorus at measure 15 of movement I. (See example 36.) This melody is repeated in its entirety or in part throughout the piece. Two short motives are especially frequent: the descending half-step and perfect fourth (m. 16, example 36), and the “Catch me if you can” motive (m.29, example 36). The orchestral motive that begins the piece is also a unifying element that recurs, sometimes as an instrumental introduction or interlude, and sometimes as accompaniment to the choral melody. (This motive may also be seen in its entirety or in parts and is referred to in the flow charts as “OT,” or “Orchestral Theme.”) The second measure of the motive demonstrates the melodic intervals of a descending half-step and perfect fourth that occur as part of the vocal “quilt pattern.” (See example 35.) Movements II, V, VI, VII and IX contain “quilt pattern” texts that are set differently and also contain recurring motives, but the setting described above appears most often and has the most influence on the musical structure. The frequent use of the interval of a fourth becomes a unifying factor in itself. Perfect fourths and augmented fourths (or tritones) are heard melodically and harmonically throughout the entire piece.

Tonal centers and modes are, in general, less defined in this piece than in the previous two selections. The perfect fourths referred to above, coupled with

Parker's continued use of perfect fifths and melodic accidentals, serve to create tonal/modal ambiguity. There are still extended periods of time where the music is largely in a specific mode, and others that may be identified as polymodal or polytonal. There are also significant portions of music that may be considered to be in a single tonal center, but without a particular mode. The nature of modes themselves (where many modes share the same seven pitches), sometimes leaves analysis open to several possibilities.

I: "Basket of Scraps"

Narrator: Unrolling the spool of time,
 we came to the bicentennial of America,
 the time to celebrate, record,
 collect the pictures of our years.
 We, the women, were asked
 to quilt that history down.
 You know how it goes—
 the visions we are meant to have,
 the primitive simplicity
 of how and where we live;
 it is expected.

Chorus: Basket of Scraps
 Nine Patch Block
 Diamond in the Square
 Lover's Knot
 Save All. Crazy
 Catch Me if You Can

 Women take up their cloth
 under the Tree Everlasting,
 lance the light with needles,
 border the day with silk.

 Birds in the Air
 Village Green
 Rocky Mountain Road

Grandma's Dream
 Cake Stand. Tulip
 Catch Me if You Can

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Table 19: Flow Chart "Basket of Scraps"

Mm. 1-----12 // 13-----33-----49-----74				
A	B	C	D	E
a (OT)	b (QP)		c	a/b
A	A		A aeo/Bflat E pedal-----	D A
f	mf/f		mp/mf	f
orch	narr ch/orch			
	1	2	3	4

Within the first movement, "Basket of Scraps," Parker defines the textual and musical ideas that infuse the entire piece. The text introduces both the purpose of the piece—a presentation of memory and history from the female perspective—and the quilting metaphor that unites the various topics. The movement is divided into five short sections, determined by performing forces and text: Section A is an orchestral introduction; Section B consists of solo narration; Section C is the first choral entrance on the quilting theme; Section D is a more melodic representation of the text, contrasting in style; and Section E is basically a musical repetition of Section C with different text. The predominant tonal center in each section is A. (See table 19.)

Section A is entirely orchestral, and introduces thematic material that is associated with the quilt pattern text, which often reappears. The 4/4 measure of the

Example 35, "Basket of Scraps," mm. 1-12
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SONGS FROM THE DRAGON QUILT

SHEILA NICKERSON

With cheerful energy $\downarrow = 120$

I BASKET OF SCRAPS

ALICE PARKER

With cheerful energy $\text{♩} = 120$

Flute

Alto in C

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Xylophone

Bells

Triangle

Drum

Rattle

Shells

Tam-Tam

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

5

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion WB
DR

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

This musical score is for a piece titled 'A.P./Dragon Quilt'. It features a variety of instruments and vocal parts. The woodwinds include Flute, Bassoon, Horn, and Trumpet. The brass section consists of Trombone and Timpani. The percussion section includes a snare drum (DR) and a wood block (WB). The strings include Harp, Violin I and II, Viola, V'cello, and Bass. The vocal parts include Soprano Solo, SA (Soprano Alto), and Chorus (TB - Tenor Bass). The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and the instruments are grouped by brackets on the left side.

10

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

TRI
WB
DR

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

10

I
Violin

II
Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

Narration

Unrolling the spool of time,
we came to the bicentennial
of America,
the time to celebrate, record,
collect the pictures of our years.
We, the women, were asked
to quilt that history down.
You know how it goes —
the visions we are meant to have
the primitive simplicity
of how and where we live;
it is expected.

(Example 35, con't)

[cut off on cue]

Narration

first motive consists of accented, rhythmic octaves on A, and occurs in various forms in all parts of the orchestra. The 7/8 measure utilizes the descending half-step, perfect fourth motive. (See example 35, mm. 1-2.) The introduction continues in this manner, rising by step and incorporating variations of the half-step perfect fourth motive, culminating in a descending passage that stops abruptly on an open fifth of B and E, sustained only in the harp and cello. (See example 35, mm. 3-12.)

The narrative silence is broken suddenly as Section C begins with an orchestral entrance that is similar to the beginning, this time on E. The quilt pattern motive is sung in a two-part (SA/TB) canon. Voice parts are doubled by the flute and the bassoon, as a rhythmic accompaniment based on fifths and fourths is heard in the strings (example 36, mm. 15-32). Tonally, each phrase of the melody is independent, but each can be related to the tonal center of A. The phrase, “Basket of Scraps,” is in A major (m. 15), followed by “Nine Patch Block,” on a melody based upon a Neapolitan function in B-flat major (m. 16). This moves to a C-sharp major melody on “Diamond in the Square” (m. 19) and can be viewed as an altered chord based on the third scale degree of A major. The Neapolitan B-flat returns on “Lover’s Knot” (mm. 21-22) in a suddenly smooth, waltzing 3/4. “Lover’s Knot” is then repeated in A aeolian (mm. 23-24) which continues through “Save All” (m. 24). “Crazy” marks a return to C-sharp major (m. 27) and the final portion of text, “Catch Me if You Can” implies A phrygian (m. 29). (See example 36, mm. 13-29.)

Example 36, "Basket of Scraps," mm. 13-34
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A

13

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion
TRI
WB
DR

Harp

Soprano
Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I
Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

f marc.

Bas-Ket of scraps, Nine patch block,

f marc.

Bas-Ket of scraps,

B

24

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion TRI

Harp

B

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

30

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion TRI DR

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

Catch me if—you can, Catch me, Wom-en

mf poco leg.

div. Catch me if—you can Catch me.

A.P./Dragon Quilt

7

150

(Example 36 con't)

At this point, an E pedal in the bass instruments strengthens the A tonal center, solidified by the cadence in measure 32.¹³² (See example 36, mm. 15-32.)

There is an immediate change of volume and style in the following measure at the beginning of Section D. Although the octave motion in the harp, viola and cello imitates the introduction motive, it is subdued and becomes an E pedal which continues to reinforce the tonal center of A. (See example 36, mm. 33-34.) The chorus sings a stepwise melody in imitative fashion (again SA/TB). Parts of this section are partially polymodal, with the alto (and violin II, which doubles it), in B-flat harmonic minor, and all other voices and instruments, including the soprano melody, in A aeolian (table 19). The A tonal center is maintained until movement to D phrygian prepares the orchestral entrance on a unison D at the beginning of Section E.

Section E is heralded by a return of the introductory orchestral theme which moves to a choral entrance in A major on the quilting patterns music from Section C. The choral music here is the same albeit with a different text, but the duet has been switched, so that the female voices now follow the males. Accompaniment in the strings is slightly altered, and the doubling instruments are now the trombone and trumpet. The entire orchestra joins the choir for the last nine measures of the movement, which ends in rhythmic and accented manner in open fifths on the text, "Catch me". (See example 37, mm. 71-74.)

¹³² This discussion is meant as a demonstration of Parker's tonal complexities that may occur within a simple framework. In the context of a rehearsal situation, the music is best approached in a melodic fashion and learned by pitch relationships.

Example 37, "Basket of Scraps," mm. 71-74
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71

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

mp

f

mf

sf

div 71

Catch me if - you can,

Catch me,

Catch me!

Catch me if - you can,

Catch me if - you can.

Catch me,

Catch me!

mf

sf

f

II: "Sunshine and Shadow"

Narrator: Then we came to the centennial of my town
 (let it have any name.)
 We got the visions down:
 Black Velvet Raven
 Alpenglow
 Discovery of Gold
 Old Courthouse
 Log Cabin Church
 Skunk Cabbage

Soprano: O remember . . .
 Remember all the stitches,
 borders and batting,
 the albums, autograph and applique,
 the baskets and the cakes,
 the children shared and yards filled up
 with running through the crocuses,
 with sunshine and shadow.

Chorus: Sunshine and Shadow
 Noon and Night
 Circles and Crosses
 Star and Chain
 Kaleidoscope
 Catch Me if You Can

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Table 20: Flow Chart "Sunshine and Shadow"

Mm.	1-----17-----26-----41			
A	B		C	D
	a		b (QP)	c (OT)
	Aflat aeo		Aflat C#	Eflat
	mp	f	p mp mf	mp mf f
narr	SS/ch/orch		ch/orch	orch
1	2/3		3	

Movement II continues with the dual themes of feminine memory and quilting, although this text is more specific to the commission for the city of Juneau, Alaska. There are four sections, three of which correspond to the divisions in the text: Section A is delivered by the narrator; Section B is sung by the soprano, accompanied by the chorus, strings, harp, and brass and is in A-flat aeolian; the solo soprano and brass instruments drop out during Section C as the chorus lists the quilt patterns in varying modes, beginning in A-flat harmonic minor and progressing to C-sharp aeolian; followed by Section D, where the orchestra plays thematic material from the first movement, beginning on a B-flat unison and ending on an E-flat unison.

Marked “tenderly” and at half the tempo of the previous movement (quarter note = 60), “Sunshine and Shadow” is an interesting and welcome contrast in mood. Sections B and C remain at a steady 4/4. The soprano solo line reveals the remarkable attention that has been paid to the rhythmic setting of the text. Along with the melodic steps and leaps, the poetry is beautifully expressed and clearly heard. (See the solo soprano line in example 38, mm. 1-17.) The soprano melody in Section B is accompanied by simple syncopated rhythmic patterns in the orchestra and the chorus that create forward motion underneath the somewhat free rhythm of the soprano. It is mostly in A-flat aeolian, using seven flats. (There is often a melodic B-double flat that implies a phrygian influence.) The melody is supported by a harmony that moves up or down by step, resulting in brief one-measure tonal center departures that return often to A-flat. (See example 38, mm. 10-15.) Choral parts are doubled by horns and trombone.

Example 38, "Sunshine and Shadow," mm. 1-21
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II SUNSHINE AND SHADOW

Then we came to the centennial
of my town
(let it have any name).

We got the visions down:
Black Velvet Raven
Alpenglow
Discovery of Gold
Old Courthouse
Log Cabin Church
Skunk Cabbage

Tenderly $\text{♩} = 60$

Horn 1+2 *Cue*

Trumpet 2 *Cue*

Trombone *p*

Timpani

Percussion

Harp *mp*

Soprano Solo *mp*
O re-mem-ber, Re-mem-ber all the stich-es, — Re-mem-ber, — bor-

SA *unis. p*

Chorus *Re-mem-ber, Re-mem-ber, Re-mem-ber,*

TB

Tenderly $\text{♩} = 60$
cantabile

I Violin *mp*

II Violin *at 1*

Viola *p mp*

V'cello *p mp*

Bass *pizz. mp*

5

G

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

ders and bat-ting, - the al-bums, au-to-graph and ap-pli-qué, the bas-kets and the cakes, the

Re-mem-ber, — 0 — Re-mem-ber, —

poco a poco dim.

poco a poco dim.

poco a poco dim.

9

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

child-ten shared, and yards filled up with run-ning thro' the cro-cus-es, with sun-shine — and —

Re-mem-ber sun-shine,

A.P./Dragon Quilt

18

159

(Example 38' con't)

13

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

13

19

160

Example 38 con't

18

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano
Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

II

Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

There is a change in texture, melody and harmony in Section C as the chorus, in four parts doubled by the strings, presents a quilt pattern text with a different melodic motive (example 38, mm. 16-21.) The part-writing is in a more traditional style and the section ends in C-sharp aeolian with the “Catch Me if You Can” motive. (See example 36, m. 29.)

Section D is a sudden return to the tempo and mood of the first movement, at quarter note = 120. It begins *mezzo piano* on a unison B-flat with the orchestral theme from the introduction. There is a gradual crescendo and ascending melodic movement that culminates on a unison F. A completely silent quarter note rest is followed by the “Catch Me if You Can” motive played softly by the flute and bassoon. An accented *forte* cadence on E-flat ends the movement.

III: “Black Velvet Raven”

Narrator: American Indians thought
all that was
rested on the back of a turtle.

And according to Tlingkit mythology,
God Raven was white in the beginning;
Raven was the beginning.

Chorus: Color begins with the rain.
Sound begins with the rain.
Listen to timber in spring.

Fish fly out from the mouth of the spruce,
flowers from the eye of the fish,
trees from the ears of the totems—
from Whale, Dog Shark, Raven.

All becomes more clear in rain.
 Raven. Raven.
 Song of meadows and of whales.

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Table 21: Flow Chart “Black Velvet Raven”

Mm. 1-----18-----27-----44-----60					
A		B			
a		b (through-composed)			
F aeol(ambiguous)		C aeol			
p		p	mp	mf	mp f mf pp
narr/orch		ch/orch			
1 2		3	4		5

The historical perspective of the text now leaps back to the original peoples of the Alaskan coastline and their philosophy of the beginning of life. The only reference to the quilting theme is the title, “Black Velvet Raven,” which was sung in the list of quilt patterns in movement II. (See poem on page 148.) Here, it relates to the raven in Native American lore and religion.

This movement is presented in two parts, Section A by the narrator accompanied by percussion and alto flute in F aeolian, and Section B by the chorus in C aeolian, with the addition of harp, horns and bassoon. (See table 21.) There are no strings in this movement. The accompaniment binds the movement with an ostinato pattern in the xylophone and the alto flute melody which continues throughout. There is an obvious Native American influence to the music, made evident immediately by the use of percussion instruments such as a drum, a rattle,

shells, and a tam-tam. The alto flute, performed with grace notes and a flutter tongue technique also brings to mind indigenous American music.

The tempo is quarter note = 72, the time signature is 4/4, and the stylistic marking is “mysteriously.” There is no variation in tempo until the *molto ritard* in the last two measures. Much of the choral rhythm is sustained, and the greatest motion occurs in the xylophone ostinato and other percussion.

The accompanied narration of Section A begins as a simple drum beat pattern which becomes more complex as instruments are added in single layers. The flute melody is tonally ambiguous, and the entrance of the xylophone exhibits no obvious tonal center. However, the G pitch is accentuated in the flute and in the entrance of the harp.

Section B comprises the remainder of the piece, but it does have a division within itself, marked mostly by a return of the non-melodic percussion instruments in measure 44, and recognizable as the last poetic stanza. (See table 21.) The first two lines of choral text are sung in unison by the sopranos and altos on a rising melody that is mostly stepwise in C aeolian (example 39, mm. 18-24). The two parts divide for the next two phrases, moving in contrasting motion (mm. 27-33). The tenor and bass voices sing an accompanying rhythmic motive in four parts, tenors on a tritone of D and A-flat, and basses on a tritone of E-flat and A-natural. This very dissonant combination is partially doubled by the harp and second horn. (See example 39.) All four vocal parts then come together in a harmony full of dissonant intervals such as seconds, major sevenths, and tritones. At measure 44 (table 21), the xylophone ostinato pattern doubles in rhythmic speed, from eighth

Example 39, “Black Velvet Raven,” mm. 18-37
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L

18

Flute

Acto Fl.

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Xylo

Tri
Percussion

Rattle
Shells
v Tam-Tam

Harp

Soprano
Solo

SA

Chorus

TB

B

I

Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

poco more.

unis. p 18

Col-or be-gins with the rain.

Sound begins with the

M

23

Flute

Alto Fl

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Xylo

percussion

Tam-Tam

Harp

Soprano Solo

SA

Chorus

T

B

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

(Example 39 con't)

notes to sixteenths. Reintroduction of the percussion instruments and a gradual crescendo leads to a homophonic *forte* entrance of the choir. The voices in two parts and in octaves (ST/AB), present together and in imitation the remainder of the text, moving mostly in contrasting motion. A *pianissimo* repetition of the tenor/bass tritone motive (example 39, mm. 23-26) finishes the piece.

IV: "Dragon Cloud"

Narrator: This is the vision of the quilt-maker
rising from the table of cloth:
the flat, square pictures fall
to the floor like an outworn skin.
Reptilian, transcendent, I arise.
With wings, scale and tail
I burst through windows
past gardens, fences,
the patchwork neighborhood
I have sewed together all these years
and offered as the history of my time.
Miraculously (and this is news:
miracles aren't really miracles
but a sudden coming awake,)
I could take the shape I chose,
and what I chose was a dragon shape,
for the dragon, made of cloud,
is life itself.

Soprano: I am the song of the crocus,
the soul of the toad
sleeping in winter mud.
I am the mother of darkness
rising out of mountain ponds.

Mother of worms and streams,
this is my song:
Mud, root, spruce,
beach, coast, cloud,
skunk cabbage and slug,
soul of whale and soul of shell,

climb the ladder of rain.
 I am the top.
 I am the roof of the rain.

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Table 22: Flow Chart “Dragon Cloud”

Mm.	1-----19-----30-----47-----60
A	B
	a b
	E A Eflat C chromatic mvt. F#
	F# pedal---- G pedal---
	p mf f mp mf mp mf f mf
narr	SS/orch
	1 2 3

The text for movement IV supplies the title of Nickerson’s work, *On Why the Quilt-Maker Became a Dragon*. It combines the qualities of the Native American inspired poetry in movement III with the main theme of quilting as an act of creation and a vehicle for remembrance. The many references to “mother” once again exhibit the feminine perspective. This lengthy text is presented in two parts, Section A as an unaccompanied narration, and Section B with the soprano soloist and orchestra in an ambiguous tonality that never quite resolves. (See table 22.)

There are similarities between this movement and the previous one because of the nature of the text. A flute melody that resembles the alto flute in movement III acts as a counter-melody to the soprano throughout movement IV. The melodic character is distinguished by careful text rhythm, stepwise motion, and large leaps for dramatic purposes. (See soprano melody in example 42, mm. 42-57.) The

Example 40, “Dragon Cloud,” mm. 3-12
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8

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

soul — of the toad — sleep-ing — in win-ter mud.

accompaniment is supportive and mostly sustained except for the flute, and occasional doubling or imitation of the soprano in the first violin and bassoon. The tempo is slightly slower than III, at quarter note = 60, and the 3/4 meter does not change.

After the narration, Section B begins with a single F# in the horn, a pedal tone that continues in one instrument or another until for the first eighteen measures, even while the soprano melody (doubled by the first violin) is in E harmonic minor. (See example 40, mm. 3-12.)

Stanza 2 is sung in separate lyrical phrases, with melodic interplay between the soprano, first violin, bassoon and flute. There is movement through A aeolian and a series of tonal centers as the music intensifies. The beginning of stanza 3 is marked by stylistic changes as heavily accented dotted quarter notes (editorial instructions are *molto marcato*, *quasi sfz*) in the accompaniment emphasize a G pedal and a descending scale in the strings, horns and bassoon. The soprano sings the text, “Mud, root, spruce, beach, coast, cloud” in a rising, accented and emphatic melodic line which emphasizes C as a tonal center. Expressing each line of poetry with individualized care, the melody continues to rise, moving through tonal centers of A and E. Text painting accentuates the rise to the climax on the phrase, “climb the ladder of rain,” which is twice set to an ascending whole tone scale, first on A, then on B-flat. (See example 42, mm. 44-48.) The textual and musical pinnacle is attained as the soprano sings a B-natural resolving to A# against a sustained B in the first violin (example 42, m. 54) on the text “I am the roof.” The following measure contains a *ritard* and instrumental *forte-piano* as the soprano finishes the line, “of

Example 41, “Dragon Cloud,” mm. 42-57
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Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

42 *shell, ——— climb — the ladder of rain, climb —*

A.P./Dragon Quilt

47 177

(Example 41 con't)

Q4

47

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

Q4

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

A.P./Dragon Quilt

48

53

rit., colla voce

a tempo

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion

Harp

Soprano
Solo

Chorus

rit.

a tempo

53

I am the roof

of the rain.

rit., colla voce

a tempo

I
Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

the rain” *mezzo piano*, ending on an F#, thus returning to the pedal pitch of the beginning. (See example 42, mm. 55-56.) The piece ends the way it began, with the five measure flute melody in E aeolian accompanied by the horns, and joined by the strings on the last pitch in a *pianissimo* unison F#.

V: “Alpenglow”

Narrator: Sisters of thread,
I leave you here,
inviting you to follow
up where flowers truly bloom
in calico beneath the snow,
up where flowers grow
forever in my rainbow hold,
no cold, no cold at all.

Chorus: I am in a meadow,
mountains not too far away,
flowers at hand.
A magical raven
brings me a message
in a lupine seed, a song:
there is a town of gold,
but not where you expect.

Follow deeper, into the meadow’s heart.
Ask dandelions where to go.
Ask dandelions. Ask Alpenglow.
Ask dandelions where to go.

Delectable Mountains
Snow Flower
Weeping Willow Tree
Maple Leaf
Hovering Hawk
Alpenglow

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Table 23: Flow Chart “Alpenglow”

Mm.	1-----35-----65-----93		
A	B	C	D
<hr/>			
	a	b	c(QP)/a/b
	F maj	Bflat	Gflat F
	A	D aeo	polymodal F maj
	mp	mf	f p
	mp	mf	p mp f p pp
narr	SA/orch	TB/orch	ch/orch
1	2	3	4

“Alpenglow” is an expression of the beauty of nature and brings the return of the quilt pattern text. Quilt patterns listed in this movement are related to nature. Four distinct sections include: Section A, an unaccompanied narration; Section B, soprano/alto duet accompanied by strings, harp and woodwinds in F major; Section C, a tenor/bass duet which moves through several tonal centers and is accompanied by strings (minus violins), harp and horns; and Section D, which includes all four vocal parts on three separate texts, joined again by woodwinds and violins in the general tonal center of F major. Sections A and B contrast in melody, harmony and style, and share only an accompaniment figure in the harp (example 42).



Example 42, “Alpenglow,” mm. 1, 37

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Example 43, “Alpenglow,” mm. 23-33
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Handwritten musical score for a symphony orchestra and vocal soloist. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for Flute, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Timpani, Percussion, Harp, and Soprano Solo. The second system includes staves for Chorus, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, V'cello, and Bass. The music is written in 2/4 time. The Soprano Solo part includes lyrics: "song:", "there is", and "there". The Chorus part includes lyrics: "song:", "there is", and "there". The Violin I part includes a handwritten note: "[no trill]".

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

28

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

28

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

a town of gold.

but not

where you ex - pect.

is a town of gold.

but not where you ex - pect.

Section D combines the alto melody from Section B with the tenor/bass duet in Section C, thus unifying the entire movement.

“Alpenglow” immediately differs from previous movements because of its 6/8 meter. The stylistic marking is “lyrically” and the tempo is eighth note = 208. With no meter or tempo changes in the piece, the 6/8 fosters a lilting melody that is entirely suitable to the text.

A two measure introduction begins with the harp motive (example 42), with strings and bassoon reinforcing C (as V of F). Altos enter followed by an imitative counter-melody in the soprano. The music moves through B-flat and G-flat major before returning to F (see table 23). A melismatic presentation of the word “song” combines with an instrumental interplay of related melodic lines (example 43, mm. 23-26). All come to rest on the downbeat of measure 27, leading to a soft, *marcato* delivery of the line, “there is a town of gold, but not where you expect” (example 43, mm. 27-33.) This simple soprano melody is imitated at the whole step by the alto line, and both voice parts finish on an interval implying C major (or V of F major). Vocal parts are doubled by the first and second violins, and imitated further in the viola and cello parts. (See example 43, mm. 27-33.)

The vocal duet in Section C occurs between tenor and bass voices, doubled by the horns and accompanied by harp and lower strings (no violins). There is a feeling of metrical change because of duple division in the melody although the flowing harp motive maintains the 6/8 motion (example 44, mm. 55-57, 59). Melodic style in Section C contrasts greatly with the flowing nature of Section B. Vocal lines move by step and small intervals, sometimes in separate modes and/or

Example 44, “Alpenglow,” mm. 55-59
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[illegible]

tonal centers accompanied by ambiguous tonal motives in the orchestra. (See example 44, mm. 55-59.) A tritone pattern in the instrumental bass, cello and harp (F# to C) complicates the tonal center further.

Section D returns to a tonal center of F, and combines the melody from Section B (sung in the alto line and doubled by the viola) with the tenor/bass duet from Section C (doubled by the horns) and a new soprano melody set to the quilt pattern text (doubled by the flute). The alto line here is almost identical to the melody of Section B with equivalent tonal center movement, and the male voice duet is different in terms of tonal centers and melodic intervals, but is entirely recognizable as the music from Section C. The soprano melody derives its first four pitches from the alto melody (example 45, mm. 66-67), and then states each quilt pattern as a counter-melody to the alto, arching over the other parts (mm. 68-75). Orchestral movement consists of doubling instruments, a slow-moving bass line that most often supports the tonal centers of the tenor/bass duet, and several parts that perform ostinato patterns which contribute to the light style and forward motion. These are found in the harp, and in the first and second violins. (See example 45.) At the end of the separate text lines, all parts diminish to a gentle eight measure coda and the piece ends quietly in unresolved open fifths of F, C and G.

Example 45, “Alpenglow,” mm. 66-75
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66

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

S

A

Chorus

T

B

I

Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

VI: "Storm at Sea"

(Stanza 1)

Narrator:

I carry the record of exploration.
Sir Francis Drake came out
of my imagination.
Magellan sails my mind.
Cook, LaPerouse, Malaspina—
those who found Alaska's coast—
ride in my bloodstreams forever.
Those who gave themselves to shipwreck,
who entered the brokenness of shells,
sleep in my lullaby of mist.
I can recall them at will,
recite their names like a chant,
sing the words of their logs.
Just listen to the ships
that foundered in Alaska:

(Stanza 2)

Sophia, Three Saints, Clara Nevada
Elna, Crown Reefer, Catherine Sudden
Challenge, Chatham, Delhi
Zapora
Edith, Sadie, John P Gaines
Star of Bengal, Golden Forest
Defiance, Bertha, Star of Falkland
Dawson City, Dora
Prince George and Princess Kathleen
Courtney Ford and Jabez Howes
P J Adler, Panoceanic Faith
Tahoma, Coldbrook, Kayak
Prinsendam

(Stanza 3)

Chorus:

Mariner's Compass
Ocean Waves
Streak of Lightning
Storm at Sea
Lost Ship
Seek No Further

(Stanza 4)

Narrator:

Let me tell (for we will not quilt)
the story of the SS Princess Sophia.
She left Skagway for Seattle
on the night of October 23, 1918,
with 343 men, women and children.
Her hold held horses and gold,

a summer's haul from the Yukon and beyond,
and Christmas parcels for soldiers in France.
She was the last ship out before winter,
glory and celebration,
bright lights on the dark way south.
At 2:00 a.m., in a blizzard,
she struck Vanderbilt Reef,
40 miles north of Juneau in Lynn Canal.
She foundered for two days while Captain Locke
refused aid. A sister ship, Princess Alice,
was on her way from Vancouver.
There was no immediate danger.
Standing by was a chain of ships
like a song:

(Stanza 5) U S Lighthouse, Tender Cedar,
USS Peterson, King & Winge,
Estabeth, Anita Phillips,
Amy, Excursion, Elinor,
Elsinore, Lone Fisherman.

(Stanza 6) In the first dark
of October 25, in raging snow,
Sophia rolled off the reef and sank.
No one survived. No one. But they didn't
drown. They died of exposure, or suffocated
in oil, along with porpoises and murrens.
The final conversation with Sophia
went like this:
Sophia: "Taking water and foundering.
For God's sake come and save us."
Cedar: "Coming full speed but cannot see
on account of thick snows and taking heavy seas."
Sophia: "All right, but for God's sake hurry.
"Water coming in the room." Soon after:
"Just time to say goodbye. We are foundering."

(Stanza 7)
Chorus:

Goodbye. Goodbye.
There is only time to say Goodbye.
There is no time.
There is only time to say Goodbye.

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Table 24: Flow Chart “Storm at Sea”

Mm.	1-----22-----36-----51 // 52-----73---81-----92-----119
A	B C D
	a(QP) b(inst) a c
	E E/chromatic
	E pedal-----E bells----- E timpani- E pedal---
	p p mp pp pp mf p mf f mp f p ff ppp
narr	narr/TB/orch narr TB/orch +SA
1	2 3 4 6 7

This long and dramatic text is a remembrance of death and tragedy due to natural forces and human failings. The quilt patterns listed in the third stanza all relate to storms or ships. Parker has set this difficult poetry as a dramatic reading supported by chorus and orchestra. There are seven stanzas of poetry that are presented in four sections, two of unaccompanied narration and two of varying combinations of music and narration. Section A is the unaccompanied narration of the first stanza. Section B consists of the delivery of stanzas 2, 4 and 5 by the narrator, while the tenor and bass voices sing the quilt pattern text from stanza 3, accompanied by the strings, harp, bells and timpani in a tonal center of E. Section C is the unaccompanied narration of stanza 6, followed by Section D, an extremely chromatic, repetitive delivery of stanza 7 that builds to include all vocal parts and the full orchestra, ending in a tonal return to E. (See table 24.) This movement is united through the use of pedals and several melodic motives that are related to previous material, especially motives based on the intervals of a half step and a fourth. The half-step, perfect fourth motive, first seen in the orchestral introduction

of movement I (example 35, m.2), appears melodically in all voices here and becomes an extended pattern in this movement, beginning on E, and ending an octave below.



Example 46, “Storm at Sea,” cello mm. 24-29
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The mood of “Storm at Sea” contrasts greatly to “Dragon Cloud,” as indicated by the marking “with sombre intensity,” and a slowly moving 3/2 meter at half-note = 60. Measured melodic movement, sung mostly in a duet texture, and bass pedals create a deliberate intensity. There is a hemiola that occurs in cello pattern (example 46, mm. 27-28), but overall the rhythmic movement is straightforward.

During the last line of narration in stanza 1, a sustained E is struck in the bells and in octaves in the harp, sounding the pitch for the vocal bass entrance in Section B. As the narrator continues with the list of ships from stanza 2, the bass and tenor voices alternately present the quilt patterns in a 10 measure duet that is sung twice. (The repetition begins at m.12 in example 47.) Recognizable unifying intervals are heard in the half step/augmented fourth of “Storm at Sea” in the tenor line, and the descending step motion (the “sighing motive”) of “Seek No Further.” (See example 47, mm. 15 and 8-11.)

Example 47, “Storm at Sea,” mm. 8-18
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12 = 1/2 Repeat

8

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

Percussion

Harp

Narrator Sadie, John P. Gaines/Star of Bengal, Golden Forest/Defiance, Bertha, Star of Falkland/Dawson City, Dora/Prince George and

8

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

Fur-ther,- Seek No Fur-ther. Seek No Fur-ther. Mar-in-ers Com-pass

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

Percussion

Harp

Narrator Princess Kathleen/Courtney Ford and Jabez Howes/P.J.Adler, Panoeceanic Faith/Tahoma, Coldbrook, Kayak,

13

Chorus

O-cean Waves — Storm — at Sea Seek No Fur-ther —

— Streak of Light-ning — Last — Ship Seek No

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

Vocal doubling occurs in the viola and cello as the instrumental bass and bells play an E pedal (example 47, mm. 8-18.) The voices drop out as the narration of stanza 4 begins and low strings begin the pattern based on the half step/perfect fourth motive (example 46, mm. 24-29). As the narrator describes the shipwreck (from stanza 4, line 12, “At 2:00 a.m. ...”), the male voices reenter and sing the quilt pattern duet once again. During the narration of stanza 5, the music fades as the voices drop out, followed by the two violin parts. An E pedal is maintained by timpani, bells, harp, viola and bass. The cello part divides, with the half step/perfect fourth pattern in cello 1, and a complete ascending chromatic scale in cello 2, all culminating in a unison E in the last measure of the section (example 48, mm. 46-51.) The E chromatic scale becomes an additional repeated element in the next musical section.

Section C is the unaccompanied narration of Stanza 6, as the sinking of the ship is described. The last line of text is spoken over the entrance of the cello and bass, beginning Section D. A pattern played in the bass instruments here is the hemiola portion of the extended pattern used previously (example 46, mm. 27-28). The entire final section builds upon the manipulation of motives and patterns that have already been introduced, including the extended descending half step/perfect fourth pattern, the ascending chromatic scale, the descending stepwise “sighing motive,” and the E pedal. The half step interval (rising or falling) is always used to set the word “Goodbye.” Melodic lines throughout are chromatic and full of accidentals, but the E center is maintained through the use of recurrent pedals, especially in the timpani, and melodic arrivals on E.

Example 48, "Storm at Sea," mm. 45-51
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AA

45

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

Percussion

Harp

Narrator Cedar, USS Peterson, King & Winge, Estabeth, Anita Phillips, Amy, Excursion, Elinor, Elsinore, Lone Fisherman.

45

AA

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

A.P./Dragon Quilt

Example 49, “Storm at Sea,” mm. 95-104
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Bass

(Example 49 con't)

Many repetitions of the four lines of text are organized into four long phrases, each becoming more intense (see table 24) and varied by instrumental and vocal texture and melodic manipulations. The final expression is the most dramatic and is preceded by an interlude of bass instruments plus viola that builds to the climax. (See example 49, mm. 95-99.) Full orchestra enters *fortissimo* on the downbeat of measure 100, all in the descending or ascending half step/perfect fourth pattern. Horns double the vocal entrance, as the full chorus enters homophonically on the “Goodbye” sighing motive, beginning in stacked thirds, and moving in contrasting motion to a highly dissonant sustained chord (example 49, mm. 100-104). Gradually thinning texture and diminishing dynamics lead to a final choral entrance as the E pedal returns in force in the timpani, harp, bells, violin, cello and bass. A quiet resolution to the open fifth of E and B is interrupted only by a last accented F-natural to E in the cello.

VII: “Tree Everlasting”

Narrator:	Centennial, centennial: what are one hundred years but a hundred appliques? How many stitches does one year take? How many spools of thread? How many times must the needle go in and out, up and down? What does it take to anchor ravens in flight?
-----------	---

Chorus:	Tree Everlasting Path of Thorns Crosses and Losses Tree of Life
---------	--

Seek No Further
World Without End

Soprano:
(first time in entirety)
Chorus:
(second time, in part)

Snail and mouse and blueberry bush
porcupine, loon and toad,
dragonfly, seal and mink
killer whale
seashell and petal and wind:
Take my scales
and give me your skin
Let me remake the world.

Halibut, ptarmigan, deer
hummingbird, squirrel and owl
humpback whale:
Bring me your voices
let me come out
more shapely than clouds.
Let me marry you all
with wreaths of crocuses
bracelets of pearls
Let me remake the world.

Soprano:

Grouse and shell,
spruce and rock,
blood and salt,
berry and bone,

I carry you all
in my waterfall love.
I dance for you all
in the storm of my love.
I gather you all
in the rain of my love.
You are the words,
I am the notes;
the coast,
the orchestra I conduct.

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Table 25: Flow Chart “Tree Everlasting”

(VIIA)		(VIIB)				
Mm.	1-----18/1-----22-----42-----52-----77-----106					
A	B	/C	D	E		F
a(OT)b(QP)/ c			c'	d	c''	c
	E maj	/C maj	Gflat – C maj			C maj
	f	p / mp	f	p f	mf	p mp
narr	ch/orch	/ SS/orch				SS/SA/orch
1	2	3	4	5	6	(3 & 4)

Movement VII’s text seeks to resolve the conflicting emotions of the previous poetry and place it into an overall perspective provided by religion, history and nature. Parker has divided this text into two separate parts. VIIA is in two sections; Section A being an unaccompanied narration of stanza 1, and Section B an eighteen measure choral presentation of the quilt pattern text in stanza 2, accompanied by full orchestra and with an unsettled tonal center. VIIB presents the rest of the text in four sections. Sections C, D, and E are performed by the solo soprano and orchestra and consist of stanzas 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Although the tonal center fluctuates frequently, Sections A and B both begin and end in C major and utilize similar melodic and harmonic material. Section C contains contrasting melodic and harmonic material with repeated changes in tonal centers, returning to C major for the beginning of Section D. Finally, in Section E, the solo soprano is joined by the choral sopranos and altos in a combined presentation of the first two poetic stanzas which employs musical material from Sections C and D. Again, C major is the dominant tonal/modal center. (See table 25.)

Example 50, "Tree Everlasting," VIIA, mm. 1-4
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[VIIA]

With vigor ♩ = 120

agitato

✓ Flute

✓ Bassoon

✓ Horn
1
2

✓ Trumpet

✓ Trombone

Timpani

Xyloph.

Tri
percussion WB
Dr

Harp

Soprano
Solo

SA

✓ Chorus

TB

I

Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

calmly, poco legato

mp 3

Tree Ev-er - last-ing.

mp 3

Tree Ev-er - last-ing.

molto marc.

molto marc.

molto marc.

VIIA quickly recovers from the intense drama of the “Storm at Sea.” Its eighteen measures consist of contrasting exchanges between orchestral forces (strings, percussion and woodwinds) and the chorus, supported and doubled by the brass instruments. (See example 50.) Each of these exchanges uses recognizable musical elements from previous movements. Agitated variations on the introductory orchestral motive (mm. 1, 3-4) and the descending half step/perfect fourth motive (m.4, flute, bassoon and xylophone) appear in the orchestra, while the quilt pattern text is set to short phrases taken from movements II, V, and VI (chorus, mm. 2-4). Section B begins in E major, then moves quickly through several tonal/modal centers, and ends quietly on an open fifth of B and F#, with a decidedly unfinished aural quality. The “Catch Me if You Can” motive is heard in the last two measures played by flute and bassoon.

In a triple meter of 12/8 and marked “playfully,” VIIB presents another quick change in style. The meter and melodic nature resemble the lilting qualities of movement V. Section C begins with a light accompaniment of solo strings, bassoon and percussion as the solo soprano presents the text of stanza 3 in much the same style as previous solo sections. An imitative counter-melody appears in the flute, and the first violin provides an undulating triplet pattern. Section C begins softly, grows to *forte*, assisted by the addition of the harp, horns, timpani and bells, and then diminishes to the beginning of Section D. Tonal centers are established by each phrase of the melody and change quickly, but all are closely related (by step) to the predominant key of C major.

Example 51, “Tree Everlasting,” VIIB, mm. 42-49
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42

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Rattle

Shell

Harp

Soprano Solo

42 Grouse — and shell, — spruce — and rock, —

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

46

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Tri
ercussion

Rattle

Harp

Soprano
Solo

Chorus

I
Violin

II
Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

46 blood and salt, ber-ry and bone.

This is a handwritten musical score for a piece titled 'A.P./Dragon Quilt'. The score is written on a system of staves for various instruments and voices. The instruments listed on the left are Flute, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Timpani, Triercussion (with a 'WB' marking), Rattle, Harp, Soprano Solo, Chorus, Violin I and II, Viola, V'cello, and Bass. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The Soprano Solo part includes the lyrics: '46 blood and salt, ber-ry and bone.' The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings like 'mf', 'mp', 'p', and 'f'. There are also some handwritten annotations and corrections throughout the score.

Section D (VIIB) begins in a similar melodic and harmonic manner as Section C, with the text of stanza 4. The interplay of the soprano melody and accompaniment is very much the same, although the text fosters melodic alteration at “Bring me your voices,” which is set to a relatively stable period of G-flat major. The stanza ends with a return to C major (table 25).

Section E signals an immediate melodic and harmonic change, as the soprano melody sings the first four lines of stanza 5 in a sequential series of the descending half step/perfect fourth motive (though in the fourth repetition, the first interval is a whole step—see example 51, m. 48), moving through a variety of tonal centers (more easily discerned in the accompaniment). This passage begins *forte* and diminishes by stages to *piano*. (See example 51, mm. 42-49.) A more fluid, arpeggiated melodic style is used to express the next three poetic lines as the solo soprano rises above the treble staff to G, B-flat and B-natural, respectively. The addition of *tutti* strings adds weight to the texture of the continuous triplet motion and basic bass line accompaniment. Tonal centers continue to fluctuate, beginning in F major, as a descending bass line moves the series of phrases to a tonal center of A. After a sudden *decrescendo*, the last four lines of text are performed softly by the soprano accompanied only by horns and bassoon, accented by the rattle and flute. A descending, arpeggiated horn melody returns the tonal center to C major.

The final section is a duet between the choral soprano and alto parts which consists of portions of the soprano melodies from Sections A and B sung in canon two beats apart (example 52, mm. 84-95). The segments of melody utilized come from the first five lines of text in stanza 3, and the first four textual lines in stanza 4

Example 52, "Tree Everlasting," VIIB, mm. 84-95
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PP

Handwritten musical score for "The Swan" by Debussy. The score is written on 18 staves, including instrumental and vocal parts. The instruments listed on the left are Flute, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Timpani, Bells, Percussion, Shale, Harp, Soprano Solo, Chorus, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, V'cello, and Bass. The score is in 3/4 time and begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked "Andante". The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings (e.g., *cresc.*, *mf*, *mp*, *pp*). The score is handwritten in ink on a single sheet of paper.

84

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

Percussion

Shale

Harp

Soprano Solo

84

Take my scales ——— and

sea-shell — and pet-al — and wind: Hal — i-but,

Chorus

sea-shell — and pet-al — and wind: Hal — i-but, ptar-mi-gan, deer.

pp

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

88

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

88 give me your skin; ———— Take my scales ————

S

ptar-mi-gan, deer, hum-ming-bird, — squir-rel and owl, hump-back whale: —

Chorus

A

hum-ming-bird — squir-rel and owl, hump-back whale, hump-back

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

92

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

92

S

Chorus

A

I

Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

Bring me your voic - es, ——— bring me your voic - es, ———

Bring me your voic-es, ——— bring me your voic-es, ———

whale : Bring me your voic-es, bring me your

(mostly the listing of animals). The lilting accompaniment returns and vocal parts are doubled by the viola and flute. Solo soprano enters (example 52, m. 86), singing a descant to the duet and using other portions of text from stanzas 3 and 4. All three vocal parts merge into an imitative delivery of the text, “Bring me your voices, let me re-make the world. (See example 52, mm. 92-95.) A final solo soprano statement finishes the movement.

Tonally, Section D continues to reinforce C. An interesting moment of polytonality occurs at measure 88 (example 52) where the vocal duet and its doubling instruments, violin II and viola, remain in C major as the soprano and the rest of the orchestra move simultaneously into D-flat major. This quickly resolves to a D center (example 52, mm. 89-92), then through G-flat (example 52, mm. 92-95), finally working back to C major to end.

VIII: “Hands All Around”

Narrator:	Suddenly I see, looking across my yard, the street, the next yard, and through the purple bush blooming against blue clapboard, and through the window framed by white shutters, into the lives of my neighbors . . . I see them. How can I say this? I see the light coming out of their heads, the way there is nothing between them and the people in the house beyond, and the house beyond that, all the way across the world, and that is how we are made.
-----------	---

Chorus: Hands All Around
Double Square
Triple Irish Chain
Honeycomb
Rainbow. Diamond.
Catch Me if You Can

Narrator: We are connected stitch by stitch,
each day a square,
each year another applique,
this town we celebrate
a tailor's web,
and I have tried to understand.

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Table 26: Flow Chart "Hands All Around"

Mm.	1-----25-----36-----50				
A	B	C		D	
	a(OT)b(QP)	c		a(OT)	
	D				
	f	mf	p	mf	f
narr	ch/orch	narr/orch		orch	
1	2	3			

The text for movement VIII speaks of connection as the metaphor of the quilt becomes even more apparent. This sense of connection is present in the musical setting as well, which consists entirely of music from previous movements. "Hands All Around" is in four sections: Section A is an unaccompanied narration of the first poetic stanza; Section B is easily recognizable as the original quilt pattern music from the first movement; Section C is an accompanied narration of the third stanza; and Section D is an orchestral section featuring musical material from the

beginning of movement I. All three musical sections maintain a central tonality of D. (See table 26.)

After the narration of the first stanza, Section B begins in the original tempo (quarter note = 120) with the rhythmic unison pattern on A which moves directly to D major at the choral entrance in the second measure. (See example 53, mm. 1-2.) The melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements in this section all correlate to its first rendition in movement I. The main differences are the text, the changed tonal center (this portion of movement I began in A major), and the fact that the vocal melody is now harmonized and in two parts (example 53, chorus parts mm. 2-7.) The melodic and tonal relationship of each vocal statement remains identical to the first movement until a more lengthy development of the “Catch Me if You Can” motive moves from D aeolian back to D major. The motion stops at the end of Section B with an emphatic, accented “Catch me!” A sustained D in the horn and instrumental bass connect to Section C.

As the narrator speaks the text of the third stanza, the strings play the quilt pattern music from movement II (example 38 mm. 17-21), with chordal and motivic accents in the harp. D remains as the tonal center. Section C serves as a brief quiet point between the contrasting styles of Sections B and D.

Section D is a repetition of the orchestral music from the beginning of movement I (example 35, mm.1-12), in a tonal center of A. This music was also heard as the ending segment of movement II, in which case the tonal center was E-flat. Here, it appears as a fifteen measure section with a basic tonal center of D. It

Example 53, “Hands All Around,” mm. 1-7
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VIII HANDS ALL AROUND

With cheerful energy $d = 120$

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Xylo (m 16)

percussion

Harp (m 25)

Soprano Solo

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

Suddenly I see,
looking across my yard,
the street,
the next yard,
and through the purple bush
blooming against blue clapboard,
and through the window
framed by white shutters,
into the lives of my neighbors . . .
I see them. How can I say this?
I see the light coming out
of their heads,
the way there is nothing between them
and the people in the house beyond,
and the house beyond that,
all the way across the world,
and that is how we are made.

With cheerful energy $\text{♩} = 120$

1

f marc.

Hands all a-round,
f marc.

Hands all a-round.

3

Flute

Bassoon

mf marc.

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

mf marc.

Timpani

Xylo

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

3

Double squares,

Tri-ple I-rish Chain

Chorus

Double squares,

Tri-ple I-rish Chain

Hands all a-round, Double squares,

Tri-ple I-rish Chain

Hands all a-round, Double squares,

Tri-ple I-rish Chain

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

col. vc.

is essentially unchanged, but is even more forceful as the fast descending motives near the end are doubled in octaves by the flute, bassoon, xylophone, and first violin.

IX

Catch Me if You Can

(Stanza 1)

Narrator: Let us be silent and listen
to the songs of ourselves.

(Stanza 2)

Chorus: Variable Star
Feathered Star
Traveling Star
Lemon Star
Christmas Star
Star of the West
Blazing Star
Falling Star
Star of Bethlehem
Broken Star

(Stanza 3)

Narrator: What if I made a song
of the names of the dead?

Chorus: Goodbye.

Narrator: What of the frozen family
found in a snow-covered hut
near Barrow, dead since 1510.
The forty-two year old woman had recently
delivered a baby, missing,
probably buried in a tunnel to the hut.
There was a young woman, too,
in her twenties.

(Stanza 4)

Consider these two deathbed claims:
St. Francis: I have sinned against
my brother, the ass.
Issa: This snow on the bedquilt:
It, too, is from heaven.

(Stanza 5)

Soprano:

Star of Asses, Birds and Bones
frozen in lost places,
Star of Babies and Brides,
burn into our hearts,
burn patterns into our hands
that hold the cloth of life.
Help us to see
into the radius of light.

(Stanza 6)

Narrator:

In the center stands the Tree of Life.
On the mountain shakes the spruce
that never felt the sword of thread.

(Stanza 7)

Chorus:

Wild Goose Chase
Wild Goose Chase
Variable Star
Broken Star
Catch Me if You Can
Catch Me if You Can

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Table 27: Flow Chart “Variable Star”

Mm.	1-----22-----30-----61-----71
	A B C D
	a(QP) b c d(OT)e(QP)
	Eflat phr Aflat phr A Gflat/Eflat A
	Bflat pedal---Eflat pedal A pedal-----
	p mf p pp mp ff mp p mp/f p
narr	ch/orch narr/ch/orch SS/orch narr/ch/orch
1 2 3 4 5 6/7	

Movement IX, with a text expressing meditation and hope, returns to the more serious spiritual character found in movements II, III, and VI. There are four musical sections for the presentation of seven poetic stanzas: Section A begins with

the narration of the first stanza immediately followed by a choral delivery of stanza 2; Section B is a narration of stanzas 3 and 4, and is alternated with the musical expression of “Goodbye” in the chorus and strings; Section C presents the text from stanza 5, sung by the solo soprano; and Section D is an alternation of textual lines from stanzas 6 and 7 between the narrator and the chorus. Movement IX consists of a great deal of previously used material. However, unlike movement VIII, there are no direct repetitions of large sections. The unifying factors in IX are found in the pervading use of melodic patterns that include the half step and/or the augmented fourth as well as orchestral textures and other melodic motives.

After the narration of the first sentence, a drumbeat and rattles are heard, setting the tempo of quarter note = 66. With the entrance of the alto flute and xylophone, there is no mistaking the return of material from the third movement, “Black Velvet Raven.” The chorus lists the quilt patterns from stanza 2 in staggered entrances of soprano, alto, and the combined forces of tenor and bass. Sopranos descend by half step, alto by whole step, and the male voices proceed stepwise in contrasting motion. (See example 54, mm. 6-15.) Vocal parts are doubled in the strings while the percussion and alto flute continue. A B-flat pedal in the instrumental bass underscores choral movement through E-flat phrygian for the first two phrases (example 54, mm. 6-12). The third phrase rises to A-flat phrygian with an E-flat pedal (example 54, mm. 13-15.) These imitated phrases result in dissonance created by the intervals of augmented fourths (between the final pitch of the soprano and alto, example 54, mm. 6, 10, and 13), and half steps which occur several times during the phrase between male and female voices.

Example 54, “Variable Star,” mm. 6-15
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(Example 54 con't)

The final phrase in Section A consists of imitative entrances based on the half step/perfect fourth motive beginning in the soprano over a B-flat pedal. A *poco ritard* and last imitation of the phrase in the cello leads to a B-flat *fermata*, which signals the end of Section A.

Section B is an alternating exchange between the narrator and the chorus and strings. After the narration of the first sentence in stanza 3, the chorus sings a single “Goodbye,” in imitation, continuing in the A-flat phrygian mode and doubled by the strings. The choral utterance occurs twice more after each of the next two narrated sentences, and the section concludes with the narration of stanza 4 over sustained strings.

Section C is a solo soprano performance of stanza 5 in the style of movement IV. Like “Dragon Cloud,” this section is in 3/4 time at quarter note = 60. A thin, sustained texture in the strings and horns accompanies the soaring soprano melody, accented by the motivic flute countermelody. The orchestra remains somewhat static as the soprano sings a highly chromatic line that climaxes in an A above the staff, and finishes with several repetitions of the flute motive. The beginning and ending tonal center in this section is A, but for much of the time, the soprano is in a different tonal center than the orchestra, creating dissonance and tension. For instance, at the melodic climax of the section, the instruments are in E-flat phrygian while the soprano is in G-flat aeolian (or F# aeolian—see example 55, mm. 50-53). This creates the B-double flat dissonance in the soprano against the B-flat of the second violin and E-flat in other instruments (m. 48). As the soprano rises to the high point (an A above the staff, and now in F# aeolian) along with the

Example 55, “Variable Star,” mm. 44-54
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yy

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

50

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

50 see in-to the red-i-us of light, Burn in-to our hearts,

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A.P./Dragon Quilt

(Example 55 con't)

flute, the same dissonances occur (example 55, m. 50). Section C ends in an open fifth on A and E, lending further ambiguity to the exact character of the tonal center.

Section D returns to the 4/4 time signature of Sections A and B, and continues with an eclectic mix of previous musical material. The text is performed as alternate presentations of stanzas 6 and 7 by the narrator and the chorus in the following manner:

Narrator: In the center stands the Tree of Life.

Chorus: Wild Goose Chase

Narrator: On the mountain shakes the spruce

Chorus: Wild Goose Chase

Narrator: that never felt the sword of thread.

Chorus: Variable Star, Broken Star, Catch Me if You Can.

The establishment of an A pedal begins the section in the horns, trumpet, trombone and timpani. This pedal continues in the horn for eight measures, emphasizing the A tonal center beneath the chromatic movement of the other instruments and vocal lines. (See example 56, mm. 61-66.) The two musical phrases on “Wild Goose Chase” are based on the recurring half step/perfect fourth motive. However, the motive is found in the four parts with different concluding intervals and contrasting motion between the male and female voices. The two phrases begin a step apart (example 56, mm. 62-65). Alternating with the choral phrases are rhythmic orchestral variations on the same pitches.

Example 56, “Variable Star,” mm. 60-71
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60

ZZ a tempo (♩ = 60)

Flute

Bassoon

Horn 1 2

Trumpet 2

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

percussion Tri Dr

Tam Tam

ZZ a tempo

Harp

Soprano Solo

Chorus

Wild Goose Chase

Wild Goose Chase

Wild Goose Chase

Wild Goose Chase

ZZ a tempo

I Violin

II Violin

Viola

V'cello

Bass

A.P./Dragon Quilt

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(Example 56 con't)

64

Flute

Bassoon

Horn

Trumpet

Trombone

Timpani

Bells

Percussion

Tri

Dr

Harp

Narrator

that never felt
the sword of thread.

64

mf

mp

Wild Goose Chase

Var-i-a-ble

Chorus

mf

mp

Wild Goose Chase

Var-i-a-ble

mf

Wild Goose Chase

Wild Goose Chase

I

Violin

II

Viola

V'cello

Bass

The loud, accented beginning of Section D gives way to a general *decrescendo* as the chorus presents the last four lines of text. Female voices sing “Variable Star” in the half step motive of the first section (example 54, m. 6), and are followed by the men on “Broken Star.” The text, “Catch Me if You Can,” maintains the same rhythm as on previous occasions, but is now a descending whole tone melody harmonized in thirds in the soprano and alto parts. Men’s voices join in for the repetition of the phrase, singing an ascending whole tone motive. All voices meet for a sustained unison A. (See example 56, mm. 68-71.) The last choral phrase is doubled in the strings, all instruments rest on beat 2 of the last measure, followed by a *pianissimo* (as harmonics in the strings), and sustained unison A for full orchestra (example 56, m. 71).

Table 28: Organizational Chart Songs from “The Dragon Quilt”

<p align="center"><i>Songs from “The Dragon Quilt”</i> 1984 Text by Sheila Nickerson Duration: Approximately 50 minutes SATB, Soprano solo, Narrator/Full orchestra</p>					
	I	II	III	IV	V
Title:	“Basket of Scraps”	“Sunshine and Shadow”	“Black Velvet Raven”	“Dragon Cloud”	“Alpenglow”
Voicing:	N/SATB	N/S/SATB	N/SATB	N/S	N/SATB
Time Signature:	4/4 (7/8, 3/4)	4/4 (7/8)	4/4	3/4	6/8
Tempo:	quarter = 120	quarter = 60	quarter = 72	quarter = 60	eighth = 208
Style indication:	With cheerful energy	Tenderly	Mysteriously	Quietly, sostenuto	Lyrically
Structural sections:	5	4	2	2	4
Basic tonality:	A	A-flat Aeolian	F/C Aeolian	E Aeolian	F Major
	VI	VII(A)	VII(B)	VIII	IX
Title:	“Storm at Sea”	“Tree Everlasting”		“Hands All Around”	“Catch Me If You Can”
Voicing:	N/SATB	N/SATB	S/SATB	N/S/SATB	N/SATB
Time Signature:	3/2	4/4	12/8	4/4 (7/8)	4/4 (3/4)
Tempo:	half = 60	quarter = 120	dotted quarter = 120	quarter = 120	quarter = 66
Style indication:	With sombre intensity	With vigor	Playfully	With cheerful energy	Mysteriously
Structural sections:	4	2	4	4	4
Basic tonality:	E	C Major	C Major	D	A

Chapter 5

Rehearsal Considerations and Interpretive Issues, Conclusion

Rehearsal Considerations and Interpretive Issues

The rehearsal of Parker's music should begin where the compositional process began—with a careful, dramatic reading of the poetry. A common understanding of poetic form, rhyme structure, meaning and mood will heighten awareness of the musical setting. Speaking the text in rhythm with dynamics and expressive markings allows singers to isolate the natural text stress and metrical feel that Parker attributed to the poetry. Noting changes in tempo, volume and texture which are due to the poetry will help shape and give direction to the first reading. Singers should also be encouraged to take note of changing vocal textures as they move between homophonic four-part, variations in duet texture, and imitative counterpoint.

Difficulties in rehearsal will most likely arise upon the first few readings of Parker's melodies due to their changing tonal centers and modes. Learning to hear this kind of melodic movement is what Parker refers to as attaining "prior aural knowledge."¹ A general education regarding basic modal forms and practice singing folk songs in these modes will supply a basis for understanding. Because of quickly changing or frequently altered modes, some traditional methods of sight-singing (such as *solfège*) are not helpful in the pieces studied here. Choral awareness of primary tonal centers and structural tonal and/or modal changes will aid in the comprehension of forward movement and overall structure. Specific pitch

¹Parker, *Hymn Singing*, 7.

problems should be approached by pointing out relationships between previous and subsequent pitches, or between vocal parts. Difficulties with dissonance are better approached melodically—horizontally rather than vertically.

Observance of Parker's expressive markings will help secure a more successful performance, but there is room for personal interpretation and expression. As Parker has stated, a "slavish adherence" to the page is not what she wants.² The wide-ranging subjects and moods contained in the three works considered here present a considerable challenge for the imaginative musician.

Songstream is accessible to a sensitive high school chorus, but has enough depth to satisfy college age or adult singers. Vocal ranges (bass E-d', tenor c-a', alto g-e", and soprano a-g#") are comfortable, voice parts are melodic, and there are great variations in expressive factors that keep it interesting. It could be performed with a choir of almost any size, but the intimate nature of the texts seems to suggest a smaller choir.

In general, rhythm will not be a problem, even in the 7/8 pieces, because it is so closely aligned with the text.

The real challenge of *Songstream* is to create a flow from one piece to the next, yet allow each movement to live within its own expressive character. For instance, the four 7/8 pieces are short, fast, similarly-textured, and have similar accompaniment patterns. It is up to the performers to demonstrate the differences: that "Mariposa" is light, but ironic; that "The Philosopher" is full of frustration and love; that "The Merry Maid" is bitter and sad; and that "Thursday" is trite and

² Meier, 41. See Parker quote on page 10.

somewhat cruel. Parker lends some expressive advice to this effect with some of her stylistic suggestions. For example, “The Philosopher” is marked, “Vehemently” and “Thursday” is to be sung “Saucily.” While these descriptions speak for themselves, the indication for “Passer Mortuus Est”, “Lightly, nostalgically,” appears somewhat puzzling. A look at the poem (page 71) reveals a text based upon the subject of death and loss of love. In this context then, “nostalgically” most likely refers to a bittersweet ache and longing rather than the saccharine happiness that is often associated with the word. “Lightly” assures that the rather morbid text is not sung too intensely.

The four-hand piano accompaniment requires two responsive pianists who understand the shades of expression in each piece. It is especially important that the pianist playing the bass part be able to maintain the rhythmic flow, and listen carefully for appropriate pedal use. The single accompaniment that is available is quite acceptable, but the four-hand version adds interest.

One important area to consider in *Songstream* is the function of the instrumental interludes. The placement of interludes within sections (shown in the flow charts in Chapter 2) can be viewed differently, depending upon the listener. While some interludes obviously belong with the previous material or the subsequent material, many are transitional, and a clear idea of their purpose affects the overall form.

The poetry and the vocal setting of *Angels and Challengers* make it most appropriate for college and adult choirs and the parts for the solo vocal quartet require strong, independent singers. While the instrumental parts are not

particularly difficult, capable woodwind players are necessary in order to perform with appropriate tone color, musical character, and intonation. Vocal ranges for the chorus (bass G flat-e flat', tenor B flat-a flat', alto g-f", soprano b flat-a flat") are comparable to those of the soloists (bass A-d', tenor f-a flat', alto c'-e flat", soprano c'-b flat").

The greatest rehearsal challenges in *Angels and Challengers* are the polymodal and/or polytonal sections that occur at several points in the cantata. The most complicated movement in this respect is number II, which is indicated for the solo quartet. Rehearsal of separate lines is necessary as independence of voices must be fostered in order to make sense of these sections. The voices and instruments should be aware of other lines that share the same rhythm, mode, melody, or tonal center.

Another challenge (which affects the independent lines as well) is that of intonation. Pedal tones must be constant, perfect fourths and fifths must be in tune, careful attention must be paid to half and whole steps, and all parts need to be aware of unisons and octaves. In other words, intense and active listening must be employed by each performer in order to stay in tune and in time.

Again, Parker's expressive markings offer great practical and interpretive assistance. For instance, there may be a tendency to over sing in Movement I as the long phrases rise above the pedal tones, but if dynamics, accents and breaths are observed, this should not be a problem. The quick changes in character and style in Movements II, IV and V are indicated by variations in many elements, including

dynamics, tempo, articulation, and mode. If these are not actively attended to, the degree of contrast will be lessened.

Experimentation with vocal tone quality would lend an interesting dimension to the contrasts of *Angels and Challengers*. The characters of each of the movements (or within particular movements) may be defined with vocal color, such as a somewhat straight and intense tone through the chant and drone of movement I, into the more operatic tone of the solo quartet in movement II. The final movement contains two different melodic/harmonic expressive “personalities” (one accented and dissonant, and one more legato and consonant) in addition to the solo quartet, and so offers opportunities to use vocal color as a deliberate vehicle of expression.

Variation is also possible in the choice of performers. It may be performed with piano alone, but when the wind instruments are used, new possibilities present themselves. For example, in the unfinished recording of this piece by The Singers of Melodious Accord (conducted by Parker), the second movement (written for solo vocal quartet) is performed with a full chorus, and movement III includes only winds in the accompaniment (no piano).³

Although *Songs from “The Dragon Quilt”* was commissioned for a specific occasion, the basic themes of the text are universal, and the quality of the music merits further performance. The substantial musical requirements limit it to presentation by a large experienced chorus and a college-level or professional orchestra. The soprano solo is demanding and calls for an expressive, independent singer with a musically keen ear. The narration must be presented with clarity and

³ Alice Parker and Melodious Accord, *Angels and Challengers*, Studio Recording in the possession of Melodious Accord, Inc. 2004.

expression, and a sense of timing is necessary for the accompanied sections. Vocal ranges are as follows: bass, E-e'; tenor, e-flat-g'; alto, b-e"; soprano b-a"; solo soprano, d'-b'.

The usual challenges that occur in a choral/orchestral work are present here. Crisp articulation and good breath support is necessary for the voices to be heard above the orchestra without tiring. When Parker's editorial markings are carefully followed, matters of breaths and phrasing require little time. Vocal rhythmic difficulties are best isolated and solved before pitches are introduced.

There are some pitch difficulties for the chorus due to the motivic character of much of the melodic material. Chromatic vocal lines and the frequency of the half step/augmented fourth interval create some challenging melodies and harmonies. Vocal warm-ups that employ the half step/perfect fourth motive will help singers to become more comfortable with the sound. The quilt pattern melody of movements I and VII (see example 37, mm. 15-34) presents a particularly difficult melody to learn, and must be approached as a series of melodic phrases related by step. In general, the voice leading between sections throughout the piece is usually stepwise, but the chorus should be made aware of instrumental cues and doubling in addition to the usual vocal relationships (such as duets, unisons, dissonances, etc). The vocal parts are doubled most of the time, but some entrances and areas of changing tonality will need to be rehearsed to create aural memory.

The orchestral preparation should also include a limited discussion of the text and how it relates to the general form. Detailed rehearsal of recurring instrumental motives in order to express their specific characters will save time in

the long run, and will aid in the aurally conceived form of the piece. Individual instrumentalists need to know whether they are functioning as solo orchestra, accompaniment (to narration, solo soprano, or chorus), or performing as an equal partner to the chorus by doubling voices or imitating choral lines.

Dramatic alterations in tempo, texture, volume and style must be emphasized, and recurring material needs to be played or sung in a way that is recognizable to the listener. Once again, observance of dynamics and editorial markings will help to ensure a performance that depicts the extremes of Nickerson's poetry. Serious thought should be given to performance aspects. The selection of the narrator is of extreme importance, and the presentation of the piece as a single entity from start to finish is essential.

Conclusion

All three works herein, *Songstream*, *Angels and Challengers*, and *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt,"* reflect the great care taken in their composition. While the pieces share similarities in text setting, melodic style, and modal harmony, they vary greatly in terms of the final performance due to forces required, musical structure, tonal manipulation and mood. The similarities and the differences can be attributed to Alice Parker's compositional process: select a quality text that is appropriate for a specific commission; develop a loose overall form based on the order of the text which includes tempo, tonality, and general character; and create a text rhythm and melody that help to heighten the poetic expression. Everything else, from the playful 7/8 duets of *Songstream*, to the intense polymodality of

Angels and Challengers, to the motivic drama of *Songs from "The Dragon Quilt"* is an expansion and development of that basic process.

This study has demonstrated that Parker's individualized use of modes in the realization of her melodies accounts for her personal style and sound. Because almost all of the works herein had a single tonal center, they often have the appearance of tonal simplicity. However, what may appear simple at a glance can be a quickly changing, sinuous weaving through many modes and tonal centers due to the winding, chromatic nature of the melody. This tonal/modal motion, coupled with melodic vocal counterpoint and supportive, interactive accompaniment yields an expressive style that is at once old and new.

Successful rehearsal and performance of any of these selections should stem from the compositional method as well. The importance of the text and its influence on all facets of the music must be stressed, and singers will greatly benefit from some instruction and practice in modal melody. Problems concerning text stress, phrasing or breathing may be solved by a careful observance of the music and editorial markings. However, Parker does encourage freedom from the written page, and expects musicians to take some liberties within the bounds of the character of the music.⁴ Choral singers will soon appreciate the interesting vocal lines, excellent voice leading, and natural flow of the text and melody.

Alice Parker's lifelong contribution to choral music extends to every arena: arrangement and composition, conducting, teaching, and writing. Although she is still perhaps best known as a choral arranger and as a champion of hymn singing,

⁴ Meier, 14.

Parker's extensive body of compositions is deserving of its place in modern choral repertoire. Her compositional method, based on modal counterpoint and heavily influenced by folk song, has resulted in music that is exceptionally varied, often challenging, and is derived from an honest, imaginative reading of a worthy text. Parker's compositions never lose sight of the poet, the musician or the listener.

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Appendix Consent Letters

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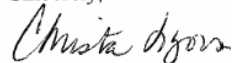
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Movement I: mm. 1-24; mm. 35-43

Mvt. II: mm. 1-6; mm. 15-36

Mvt. III: piano mm. 7-9; mm. 16-38

Mvt. IV: mm. 12-17; mm. 31-50

Mvt. V: mm. 1-15; mm. 29-43

Mvt. VI: mm. 1-15; mm. 35-41

Mvt. VII: mm. 7-20

Mvt. VIII: mm. 1-9; mm. 19-24

Mvt. IX: mm. 1-15; mm. 49-73; mm. 28-36

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Mvt. I: mm. 1-12; mm. 13-34; mm. 71-74

Mvt. II: mm. 1-21

Mvt. III: mm. 18-37

Mvt. IV: mm. 3-12; mm. 30-35; mm. 42-57

Mvt. V: harp mm. 1, 37; mm. 23-28; mm. 55-59; mm. 66-75

Mvt. VI: cello mm. 24-27; mm. 8-18; mm. 45-51; mm. 95-104

Mvt. VII: (A) mm. 1-4; (B) mm. 42-49; mm. 84-95

Mvt. VIII: mm. 1-7

Mvt. IX: mm. 6-15; mm. 44-54; mm. 60-66

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Vita

Jennifer S. King received a Bachelor's of Music in vocal performance from New Mexico State University in 1986. After the birth of her three children, she returned to her studies and received a Master's of Music in conducting from the University of New Mexico in 1996. A move to Louisiana in 1997 prompted enrollment in the graduate department of Louisiana State University. After finishing her coursework there, Jennifer taught for four years at the Louise S. McGehee School in New Orleans, and assisted with the North Shore Children's Chorus. She now lives with her husband and youngest child in the Netherlands.