A performer's guide to Gene Scheer's Voices from World War II

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A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO GENE SCHEER’S

VOICES FROM WORLD WAR II

A Written Document

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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B.M.E., Simpson College, 2004
M.M., Louisiana State University, 2006
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ABSTRACT

Though primarily known as a lyricist and librettist, Gene Scheer is beginning to emerge as an important composer of American art and popular song. This document presents Scheer’s song cycle for baritone, entitled *Voices from World War II* (Holding Each Other, The German U-Boat, At Howard Hawks’ House, Omaha Beach, and Morrison Shelter). The document includes biographical information about the composer and arranger, an overview of the song cycle, and a performer’s guide to each song. A conclusion of *Voices from World War II* follows the analysis of the songs. Appendices include the texts from *Voices from World War II*, a discography, a list of published songs and choral pieces, a list of operas and oratorio for which Scheer has written the libretti, a transcription of the phone interview with the composer, and a letter of permission.

KEYWORDS: Gene Scheer, World War II, song cycle
INTRODUCTION

Though primarily known as a lyricist and librettist, Gene Scheer is beginning to emerge as an important composer of American art and popular song. This document presents a performer’s guide to Scheer’s song cycle for baritone, entitled *Voices from World War II*. It is comprised of five songs based upon recollections of survivors of the Second World War. The document includes biographical information about the composer and his piano arranger. An overview of the song cycle, as well as a performer’s guide to each song follows. The appendices include the texts from the cycle, a discography, a list of Scheer’s published songs and choral pieces, a list of operas for which Scheer has served as librettist, a transcription of the phone interview with the composer, and a letter of permission.

My interest in Gene Scheer’s song cycle *Voices from World War II* was piqued when I was given a copy of Nathan Gunn’s album entitled, *Debut- American Anthem- From Ragtime to Art Song*, during my sophomore year at Simpson College, in Indianola, Iowa. The album featured two songs from this cycle: *Holding Each Other* and *At Howard Hawks’ House*, as well as two other songs by Scheer entitled *Lean Away* and *American Anthem*. I was drawn to the immediacy of Scheer’s communication. Here is a composer who knows how to speak to his audience, and does so with boldness and grace.

As I researched the possible topics for this project, *Voices from World War II* found its way on the top of my list. The purpose of this document is to examine the five songs of this cycle, *Voices from World War II*, and offer performance and interpretive suggestions. Chapter one of this document, offers biographical information, a stylistic overview, and Scheer’s compositional process, as well as introduces Lee Musiker, the collaborative arranger of the piano part. The remaining portion of this chapter includes a brief explanation of the relationship and collaboration between the composer and arranger. Chapter two of this document addresses the
development of the song cycle, and will provide a performer’s guide which incorporates interpretive and technical advice, as well as thoughts from the composer.
American composer, librettist, and lyricist Gene Scheer was born April 4, 1958 in Manhattan, New York to Ray and Beverly Scheer. His parents were not musical, but classical music was present in his extended family. Scheer said, “My mother’s brother went to Juilliard and was actually a wonderful musician who played bass fiddle…so when he left Juilliard, just shortly after World War II, he wound up in music management as an executive director of the Pittsburgh Symphony.” Scheer mentioned that his uncle has a son that is a trombone player that studied at the Manhattan School of Music and Juilliard.

His parents divorced when he was a young child. After the divorce he was shuttled between households in the nearby towns Chester and Long Valley in northwest New Jersey, which is approximately an hour and a half outside of New York City.

I was not raised in an urban area. I was raised in the Northwest part of the state…There were a lot of dairy farms, a freight train that ran through it, a general store; people of course, when they think of New Jersey, don’t think of it like that.

When asked about some of his fondest memories about growing up in New Jersey, Scheer mentioned that he loved playing folk music with his brother, Sam.

Sam is a great folk guitar player. I played guitar at the time. We played a lot of music together. I am very close to my older brother. Still am. My fondest memories, probably, have to do with playing wiffle ball with him, playing music with him, and just hanging out.

Scheer’s parents taught in the same New Jersey school system. His father, Ray, taught eighth grade American History. His mother Beverly, taught second and third grade most of her

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1 Gene Scheer, phone interview by author, Vermillion, SD, November 11, 2010.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
career. As a student, Scheer was involved with the music and theater programs. He played guitar, and clarinet, sang in the choirs and performed in high school and community theater productions. He said, “I can’t remember a time I wasn’t interested in music. When I was in second grade, I would sing all the songs to the Fantastics. I had a good voice, and I just loved music.” He also said, “I was doing community-theater from the time I was fourteen or fifteen. I was pretty much doing theater my whole life, and that became my focus.”

When Scheer was not busy performing with his high school’s fine arts department, community theater, or spending time with his older brother, he had a couple of jobs that kept him busy and earned some money.

I worked as a stock boy in a department [of a store]; well, a precursor to Walmart…I also worked at a summer camp in Massachusetts basically every summer as a counselor when I was old enough to do so. I taught sports and directed plays.

Following his graduation from high school, Scheer attended Hamilton College in upstate New York with the intent to major in English. While pursuing his degree, he developed an interest in foreign language and studied German. His passion for the language strengthened when he visited Austria for the first time.

Hamilton was on the four-one-four system, so, that middle month of January, where you were supposed to do an intensive project, I went to Vienna for an immersion course for one month studying the language. While I was there, I wound up going to the Vienna State Opera twenty-six of thirty nights; I got standing room for a buck.

After his time in Vienna, he transferred from Hamilton College to The Eastman School of Music where he earned his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in vocal performance.

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
performance. His experience at Eastman was one that has served as a life-long lesson in motivation. He said, “…the other students [at Eastman] were so extraordinary, and they set such a [high] bar for seriousness and dedication. That is something that wove its way into my [work ethic], so that when I left school, I was ready to continue to learn, because of all these other young musicians who were into it, big time.”

Upon his graduation from The Eastman School of Music, Scheer returned to Vienna for eight years and began his professional career. He noted, “I wound up doing musicals; I wanted to be an opera singer, but my voice wasn’t quite good enough.” He continued, “…I was good, I did a lot of apprentice programs, but I wasn’t able to push it over the top to get hired to sing the Count in The Marriage of Figaro.” Instead of performing operatic roles, Scheer performed in long runs of musicals, primarily in Vienna. It was during long runs of these shows that he began writing lyrics for musicals and songs, as well as music and lead sheets for his own pieces. Composing songs, during long runs of shows, was his way of keeping his “soul alive.” When he realized that he had a talent for writing texts, he began writing “more vigorously” and in a “more engaged way.” Scheer began feeling confident in his capabilities for writing lyrics. He was less certain about his compositions.

I was writing some songs on my own, but not too many. I really didn’t trust myself as a composer, but I was writing texts for other composers. I was thirty-two, thirty-three years old when I came back to the states. Basically what happened; a number of prominent singers started to sing a whole bunch of songs I had written.

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
Scheer references his compositions as “dummy songs.”\textsuperscript{16} These “dummy songs,” however, attracted some of the most prominent American singers including Renée Fleming, Denyce Graves, and Nathan Gunn. The composer had developed a relationship with Nathan Gunn one summer while both were performing at a summer festival in Logan, Utah.

I got to know Nathan when I was working at the Utah Festival Opera. I was doing Gilbert and Sullivan’s \textit{Trial by Jury}. I was the Judge and Nathan was in the chorus as one of the soloists. He sang three little lines, and I turned to one of my colleagues and said, well that’s the best voice at the festival, and of course I was right. This was before Nathan won the Metropolitan Opera Commission [National Council Auditions] and his career exploded.\textsuperscript{17}

After networking with some of the previously mentioned artists, some of Scheer’s songs and a sample libretto landed in the hands of Francesca Zambello. She met with Scheer and told him that Tobias Picker was looking for a librettist. After some time, the two met and Scheer agreed to write a portion of the libretto for \textit{Thérèse Raquin} on speculation.\textsuperscript{18}

I wound up writing the libretto for \textit{Thérèse Raquin} for the Dallas Opera. The way it works is when you’re basically a nobody, it’s hard to get that first big break, and I was lucky to get it, but still, even at that point I wrote the first third of that libretto on ‘spec’ because I still had to prove myself. Tobias liked what I was doing and I got the job, and of course, he hired me for his commission of the Metropolitan Opera. By that point other people started to know who I was. My songs started to get done, and other opportunities for opera presented themselves; Jake Heggie, Jennifer Higdon, Steven Stuckey and other wonderful composers. I’ve been very fortunate working with these extraordinarily talented people, but that’s sort of how the whole thing progressed.\textsuperscript{19}

Beyond his admiration for those composers previously mentioned, Scheer finds the work of John Adams, specifically his orchestral music, “spectacular.”\textsuperscript{20} He is also a fan of popular

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
music. He notes, “I am just like everyone else of our generation, your generation and mine; Sondheim looms large. He’s a genius. His music and his lyrics are just extraordinary.” Scheer also enjoys the music of Frank Loesser, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, and Leonard Cohen. He said, “My latest passion is Leonard Cohen, I just cannot believe the poetry and the genius of his work. My ambition in life is to write a few songs as good as Leonard Cohen.”

His most significant mentor, however, was not a composer, but a performer: the well-regarded soprano, Jan DeGaetani.

Scheer’s voice teachers, while studying at Eastman, were Jan Degaetani and Thomas Paul. According to Scheer, Jan was “one of the most prominent singers of modern music in this country in the 70’s and 80’s.” He said, “all of the major composers of that time, Pierre Boulez, George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies, etc., all wrote songs for Jan, and she was noted, along with Phyllis Bryn-Julson, as one of the go to performers for modern music.” Degaetani’s career was one that impressed Scheer, but what spoke directly to him, was the way in which she approached her music and performances.

Jan had a concert at Carnegie Hall, and it was sold out. At the same time, she was preparing to sing at the Presbyterian Church. The thing that was so remarkable to me, and memorable, was that she prepared the exact same way to sing at the Presbyterian Church as she did to sing at Carnegie Hall, because for Jan it was about the music.

His study and experience with Ms. DeGaetani had a strong influence on the way in which he approached his work. He continued, “It wasn’t about her, it was about connecting to something that was larger than herself. That was the lesson and model that she set for me and for so many.

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
other students.”\textsuperscript{26} He also remarked, “Her way of approaching music was something that I adopted, and that informs all of the choices I make.”\textsuperscript{27}

Scheer frequently travels to see and hear his collaborations, but he currently works and resides in Manhattan with his wife Kristina Lechowski.

\textbf{Stylistic Overview}

The composer of \textit{Voices from World War II} is quick to say that his song cycle is not like \textit{Winterreise}, but it appeals to many because of the nature of his compositional style.

I think there’s a hunger for songs that bridge the gap between popular and classical. I think these songs are sort of in that in-between spot, and I think they’re good on their own regardless of how you want to categorize them, but I think that’s a part of the appeal; they land in that space between popular song and art song.\textsuperscript{28}

In 2002, Johanna Keller, writer for New Music Box: The Web Magazine from the American Music Center mentions in her article, that many recitals featuring new American art songs are occurring quite frequently.

In case you haven't heard, there is an art song renaissance happening in New York City. From major uptown concert halls to downtown clubs, the song and song recital are being reinterpreted, re-imagined, and revitalized. After suffering some benign neglect for a couple of decades, newly commissioned and composed songs seem to be everywhere. And, while these new American art songs are stylistically as individual as the composers and lyricists themselves, two trends are evident. First, the music is most often tonal and, secondly, elements of the vernacular (jazz, blues, pop, tango) are frequently incorporated.\textsuperscript{29}

Keller’s comments offer an apt description for Scheer’s style. Kevin Murphy, who was Nathan Gunn’s accompanist on his American Anthem debut album, characterized Scheer’s songs as

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.  \\
\end{flushright}
“Billy Joel art songs.” The composer laughed as he explained Kevin Murphy’s description of his compositions and noted, “I think that’s not so far off, quite frankly. They are very tune oriented because that’s who I am, and that’s what I’m drawn to, but that’s also what my skill set deals.”

Scheer is not afraid to hide the fact that he is not a formally trained composer. He is a songwriter who acts on instincts, which are influenced by his training as a singer. His knowledge of the voice allows him to create beautifully flowing melodic lines for all voice types. Some of these phrases are more challenging than others, but he understands how to create a singable line.

I am a singer, albeit, not working as a singer anymore, and not good enough to sing on the operatic stage, but singing is important in my life. I’ve sung all these [his song cycle]. I’ve sung Winterreise. I’ve sung Schöne Müllerin. I’ve sung all these things, and all these show songs and popular songs, so, it’s sort of a natural process for me to think as a singer would think. I think if my songs have a particular strength, it is that they’re very singable, because that’s who I am.

Surprise is another strong feature of Scheer’s compositional style. He referenced Sondheim in saying, “What does each of the great songs have in common? What he said, is that they have a sense of surprise, and that they somehow allow you to view the world a little bit differently than you thought before you heard the song.” The element of surprise in Scheer’s compositions is of the utmost importance in terms of developing the dramatic context throughout the course of the song, for example, the audience should be quite surprised by the German U-boat captain sparing the lives of the merchant marines in the second song of the cycle.

30 Scheer, phone interview.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
Compositional Process

Most composers have their own unique process for developing their creations. Scheer’s process is one that is initially informed by his extensive work in theater and then followed by his natural instincts as a singer. He said, “before the words or the music; the scene comes. You have to figure out the content of the song and what the dramatic context is for the song; at least, that’s for me, how songs emerge.” He continues, “In fact, it’s one thing to say a song is a love song, but to me it has to be about a specific person and a specific situation.” Each of the World War II songs, he says, “is an anecdote, which has a beginning, middle and end, but they come from life experiences of real characters.” For Scheer, song is about drama. The first step of his compositional process is “to discover who the person is, and why they feel the need to tell the story they’re about to tell.”

After creating the scene and developing the character, the lyrics and music follow. He says that, “the lyrics come first and then I work on the music, but I ping pong back and forth sometimes.” Regarding the development of his melodic lines, the composer admits that he does not have a specific process other than trusting his instincts as a singer.

Because I’m not a trained composer I think it’s a little bit of happenstance. I fiddle with tunes. I fiddle with harmonic vocabulary for songs, but it truthfully is a very instinctual process. I say that not because of an applaud lessening, but it’s probably a byproduct of my limitations, rather than my assets, but I do what I do with my instincts.
When all of the elements of scene, character, lyrics and music come together, he has crafted a story telling song that will allow the audience to experience the situation as it once happened. His ability to capture and recreate aspects of the human condition is assured.

**Musiker Biographical Information**

Lee Musiker was born in Brooklyn, New York, where he began his studies in classical music in piano at the age of four. As he matured and became a better-informed classical musician, he began studies in other genres of music including Broadway and jazz. Musiker continued his studies at the Manhattan School of Music and the Eastman School of Music. Upon the completion of his degrees, he toured with the Buddy Rich Band and played in orchestras for several Broadway shows including *Beauty and the Beast, Cats, and Crazy for You*. As a conductor, pianist, composer, and arranger, Musiker has been awarded prestigious honors including an Emmy Award and being named a Steinway Artist. He has performed with nearly fifty symphony orchestras and has served as the music director for artists including Jerry Lewis and Maureen McGovern. He currently directs and is the pianist for Tony Bennett’s band.

I first met Tony back in 1982, on a triple bill with Buddy Rich and Sarah Vaughn at the Westbury Music Fair in New York, so it’s a huge thrill for me now, all these years later, to be accompanying him, night after night. In fact, I just did two sold-out shows with him back at Westbury. It takes me back to where it all began.

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42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Regen, 2009.
Musiker, along with having impressive performing credentials, is an educator. He has held faculty positions at New York University, The Mannes School of Music, and The New School.\(^{45}\) Musiker’s advice to aspiring artists is “Study classical music, theory, counterpoint, harmony, and orchestration. Be fully prepared with a thorough background.”\(^{46}\)

**Scheer and Musiker Relationship and Collaboration**

Scheer and Musiker first met at the Eastman School of Music where Scheer studied vocal performance as an undergraduate, and Musiker studied jazz composition as a graduate student. Scheer said, “He [Musikier] was not a close friend of mine, but was someone that I admired.”\(^{47}\) A chance meeting on the streets of New York City upon Scheer’s return from Europe was the event that essentially began their work together.

I bumped into him in New York soon after moving back from Europe and I said, you know I have some songs I’d love for you to play through, and that’s how the whole thing started. I don’t see him frequently, but when there’s someone I want to play something of this style, he’s the only person I go to, when he’s available.\(^{48}\)

Scheer presented his songs to Musiker and an agreement was made that Musiker would help arrange the accompaniments in the five songs in *Voices from World War II*. Scheer is always quick to acknowledge Musiker’s contributions. In a Facebook message received from the composer on December 22, 2010, he answered a question that stated, “What percentage of the accompaniment was written by you, and how much of it was kicked up by Lee?” His simple answer was, “50/50.”\(^{49}\) Scheer had the vocal lines written and had concrete ideas of what his accompaniments should sound like. The accompaniment in *Voices from World War II was*

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\(^{45}\) Los Angeles Philharmonic.

\(^{46}\) Regen, 2009.

\(^{47}\) Scheer, phone interview.

\(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) Gene Scheer, Facebook interview by author, Vermillion, SD, December 22, 2010.
developed to some extent before sharing them with the collaborator. In a phone conversation with the composer, he said, “He made a lot of suggestions in terms of the accompaniment. I played through them and described what I wanted, and then he would fill it in.”\textsuperscript{50} Scheer further explained, “that’s why I put his name on everything; to acknowledge his contributions, which is enormous to the finished product.”\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{50} Scheer, phone interview.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
CHAPTER 2
THE SONG CYCLE

Conception and Premiere

In an interview with Paula Marantz Cohen at Drexel University, Scheer said, “I have written songs, specifically for Nathan [Gunn], and I’ve written songs for Denyce [Graves], without question.”52 After having developed a relationship with Nathan Gunn, Scheer decided that he wanted to write a song cycle for him to perform. He said, “The original idea was to write five songs based on anecdotes from the different wars America has been involved in, so, it would have been one memory from the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and Vietnam; maybe Korea.”53

In 1994 Scheer was performing in Eugene, Oregon. When he was not rehearsing, he remembered that he spent a good amount of time in Portland. He said, “Portland is a wonderful city, and it has the greatest bookstore in the country called Powell’s.”54 It was at this bookstore where Scheer found new inspiration for his song cycle. He notes, “I found a book called *Voices from World War II* [Letters: Voices from World War II].”55 “I looked at this book and I realized, oh my goodness, I think I can use all these anecdotes from this book.”56 He began writing his own poetry based on anecdotes in the book, and found four ideal texts for the song cycle. Still, Scheer needed one more source for a fifth song in his cycle.


53 Gene Scheer, phone interview.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.
Omaha Beach came from another source. That came from video footage that was during 1994; it was right around that time because it was the 50th anniversary of D-Day. There was a lot of stuff on C-span. They were interviewing vets about their experiences and so forth, and one vet told a story that’s depicting in large measure, Omaha Beach the song.57

Having the sources of the texts for his song cycle in five movements, Scheer completed his adaption of the anecdotes and then completed the songs over the course of a year.

I remember that because it took about a year, maybe less than a year to write the whole song cycle. I did other things too. When I say a year, it wasn’t like I was working for a year on the song cycle; at the time I was doing a lot of performing: going around the country doing a lot of operetta.58

Nathan Gunn performed these songs all over the world, and chose to feature two of them on his debut recording. Scheer did not recall the exact time, date, and place of the premiere of the song cycle, but Mr. Gunn had presented a recital at the 92nd Street YMCA that had featured Voices from World War II and was reviewed by the New York Times.59 He said, “That might have been the premiere. I don’t think it was the premiere actually. He probably sang them somewhere else, but that was the big performance because it was reviewed by the Times.”60

The painful and the light-spirited were juxtaposed more starkly in Gene Scheer's "Voices of World War II." In five concise movements Mr. Scheer describes a child's view of his elders' trepidation when war is declared; a sailor's gratitude to a German U-boat captain for allowing a crew to leave before sinking its ship; and a harrowing description of the landing on Omaha Beach, flanked by descriptions of a soldier's leave in Hollywood and London. Mr. Scheer's eclectic music evokes the period without becoming a pastiche, and Mr. Gunn found ways to convey the texts subtly but directly.61

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
Holding Each Other (Oswego, New York)

**Holding Each Other**

I was a child when war was declared.
I remember people with gray hair
Standing in the middle of the street that night,
Holding each other in the pale moonlight.

I stared out my window and watched them embrace
And memorized each somber face.
Some silent secret they all seemed to share
Transformed the street to a church in prayer.

When I recall that painful time
That picture often comes to mind,
People standing in the street that night
Holding each other in the pale moonlight.

Since that time war has taken friends
And each loss makes me think again
Of a bitter grief too deep to be spoken
When I was eight and first saw hearts broken.

When I recall that painful time
That picture often comes to mind,
People standing in the street that night
Holding each other in the pale moonlight.

**Performance Guide**

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - The United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan...As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense...With confidence in our armed forces - with the unbounded determination of our people - we will gain the inevitable triumph - so help us God.\(^{62}\)

The first song of *Voices From World War II* musically depicts William Dolan’s childhood recollections on the night war was declared, as he observed the scene on the streets of Oswego [sic]\(^{63}\), New York the night war was declared. “Holding Each Other,” is approximately three minutes and thirteen seconds. Scheer was very specific in his markings regarding tempi,


\(^{63}\) The town listed in the original source is “Owego, New York”. 

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dynamics and articulations. The beginning of the song, in F minor, is marked at a mezzo-piano dynamic with a semplice articulation. The combination of tonality, dynamic, and articulation provide a subtle, yet dark and somber musical texture foreshadowing the sadness Dolan witnesses that night. Andante moderato marked atop both accompaniment and vocal lines suggests the initial tempo for the song, which is a safe tempo for the storytelling aspect of this song. The poco ritardando written in both accompaniment and vocal lines in measure four serves two purposes: it marks the end of the four-measure introduction to the song, and it prepares the entrance of the vocal line in the following measure.

As the vocalist begins in measure five, a piano dynamic combined with an articulation marked sempre legato dolce is noted by the composer to define the spirit of a soft-spoken gentleman beginning his story. The singer should portray this gentleman by singing with a soft and well-supported tone, though not with an airy quality. A decrescendo is marked in the accompaniment line on the downbeat of measure eight and carries through the bar where the dynamic is a pianissimo. In so doing, Scheer has captured the natural fall of spoken word.

In the next phrase Scheer’s lyrics state, “I remember people with gray hair standing in the middle of the street that night, holding each other in the pale moonlight.” Scheer and Musiker have incorporated many interesting moments in this phrase. A crescendo marked in measure ten serves as a suspense builder as the vocal line ascends to an unexpected Cb₄ and supported by a modulation in the piano. While the Cb₄ is supported in the bass line, the singer must take care with the intonation. This sudden unexpected modulation should be a surprise to the audience. Scheer then uses an accelerando to launch the song into a new key signature. There is a ritardando marked in the middle of measure twelve that should be observed by the pianist, but only slightly, as the vocalist is in the midst of singing a long phrase from measures nine through sixteen. The eight-measure phrase is difficult to perform in one breath, but can be achieved with
proper breath management. A *ritardando* denoted on the eighth notes in measure sixteen should broaden slightly more, so that the vocalist may take a deep enough breath to complete the next passage. *Tenuti* articulations are used for the first time in measure seventeen in the treble line of the accompaniment. The articulations accentuate and give special importance to the text at this moment, which is the title of this song.

A prominent melodic and rhythmic motive or theme makes its first appearance in the accompaniment in measures nineteen through twenty-four. See Example 1. The rolled chord with a *tenuto* in measure nineteen represents the memory of people “holding each other.” The descending tone cluster in the right hand of the accompaniment, in measure twenty, represents a memory of the moon or “pale moonlight.” (Example 1)

Example 1: Holding Each Other, mm. 19-24

Measures twenty-five to thirty-two transitions back to the original key and melodic materials, with a slight variation of moving eighth notes in the treble to provide movement. The pianist should observe the *accelerando* in measure thirty-one similarly to measure eleven, but should allow the *poco ritardando* in measure thirty-two to broaden more than in the first verse because Scheer’s lyrics, this time, indicate the end of a thought.
The next section consists of a two part phrase. The first part (measures thirty-three through forty) includes text painting while the second part (measures forty-one through fifty-three) consists of a rangy passage with difficult leaps.

An example of his use of text painting is observed in measure thirty-seven through measure forty as the accompaniment assumes a hymn-like texture as the verse states “transformed the street to a church in prayer.” (Example 2)

Example 2: Holding Each Other – mm. 37-40

The composer avoids the obvious of coming to rest on that text by marking *accelerando* in measure forty. By increasing the tempo, Scheer creates a heightened sense of anxiety. This is an important element in defining the story line of this song. The singer should treat the half note on measure forty as a dotted quarter note, so that he will have enough time to breathe for the next vocal passage. The music in part two of the phrase is challenging because of wide ranges and difficult intervallic descending leaps. The singer must be completely independent from the piano line as he makes the octave leap in measure forty-six while maintaining a controlled *mezzo forte* dynamic. The latter half of measure forty-six serves as a transition point, and sets up the new key area of $E$ minor. Scheer has surprised the audience once again by incorporating a direct modulation in this measure. (Example 3)
Example 3: Holding Each Other – mm. 44-46

As the accelerated tempo moves this section, the listener is drawn back by the “holding each other” and “pale moonlight” motives in measures forty-nine and fifty this time pitched a step higher. (Example 4)

Example 4: Holding Each Other – mm. 47-54

The piano in measure fifty-four prepares the next phrase (measures fifty-five through seventy). Representing the weight and heavy-heartedness associated with the potentialities of war, tenuti should be carefully articulated by the pianist in measures fifty-five through fifty-seven. In measure fifty-eight, the singer should allow adequate time for a deep breath before the
next phrase. In his reference book, *Recent American Art Song: A Guide*, Keith Clifton says that [Holding Each Other] “requires solid vocal control.” The passage (measures fifty-eight through sixty-eight) requires a sound breathing technique and vocal control because of the length of the phrase. Though Scheer marks an *accelerando* in measure sixty-one to help the line move more quickly, the vocalist must pace himself to sing this phrase in one breath to accommodate the lyrics. While the singer moves through this difficult passage, the composer incorporates one more modulation in measures sixty-one and sixty-two into E minor, which will become the final key area for this piece. The rolled chords in measures sixty-six, sixty-nine and seventy represent three different ideas: initially, going back to the time he was eight, secondly, a return from vivid memory to reality, and last, a poignant text coloration through an *arpeggiated* chord of the word “broken.” (Example 5)

Example 5: Holding Each Other – mm. 63-70

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The final phrase of this song (measures seventy through eighty-five) encompasses challenging tessitura in its climax. Scheer has masterfully incorporated text painting again to accentuate the word “painful” on the two highest notes in the song [F#₄ and G₄]. (Example 6)

Example 6: Holding Each Other- mm. 71-72

As for the final phrase, a breath is necessary after the word “other” in measure seventy-eight, so that the singer has ample air to sing a sustained line through the end of the song. In the final phrase the “holding each other” and “pale moonlight” motives are restated. The final chord cluster, utilizing only white keys on the piano suggests an eerie calm of the moonlight and a fading dynamic. (Example 7)
Example 7: Holding Each Other – mm. 77-85

To accommodate the *piano* dynamic in measure seventy-nine to the end of the song, one may choose to sing the final E4 in a very light mixed voice or *voix mixe*. It is also important to note that *mezzo forte* is the loudest dynamic listed in this song, therefore the element of restrained elation becomes important in this setting.

The range (Bb₂- G₄) and *tessitura* of “Holding Each Other,” though difficult, should not be problematic for the advanced singer. The highest note is performed only once and only for the duration of an eighth note. (Example 8)
Example 8: Holding Each Other mm. 71-72

The most challenging passage of this song comes at the end when the singer must sustain E₄ starting on measures eighty through eighty-five with a mixed voice. Singing this phrase takes a well-developed vocal color, with excellent breath management. “Holding Each Other” is an excellent vehicle for expressive singing, which can leave an audience, spellbound.

The German U-boat Captain (Merchant Marine Ship, Gulf of Oman)

The German U-boat Captain
The bullhorn off the starboard bow woke me up that morning.
I heard a German U-boat captain calling out a warning!

“My orders are to sink your ship.
You see that she’s outgunned.
But sailors I am tired of war.
I’m sick of all we’ve done!
I’ll give you twenty minutes for you to safely flee.”

So we lowered down our lifeboats into the white-capped sea!
After twenty minutes had gone by I heard our ship go down
And thought of all the sailors who in the war had drown.
But I watched the sun come up that day from the safety of the shore
And since that time I have been blessed to witness many more.

And ev’ry time I see a child laugh or play a game,
I pray that German captain today can do the same.
Performance Guide

The second song in Scheer’s song cycle is a musical interpretation of Paul Austin’s story about an unexpected moment of compassion from a Nazi U-boat commander. “The German U-boat Captain,” is approximately two minutes and twenty-nine seconds. The beginning of this song, marked “flowing,” is in the time signature three-eight. Abrupt changes in meter are used throughout this piece for dramatic development. The use of bass clef registration, for both lines of the accompaniment, help create a sense of dark imagery. The score includes *marcato* accents which highlight the down beats of measures one, two, and three in the right hand. This represents the sound of the general quarters alarm waking up the crew, while the constant movement of sixteenth notes in the left hand represents a water motive, the Gulf of Oman. (Example 9)

Example 9: German U-Boat – mm. 1-3

The three-eight alarm motive is temporarily interrupted in measure five as the vocal line begins in two-four to support the natural syllabic accents of the text. The entrance pitch of the voice can be found by listening to and retaining F₂ and F₄ from the down beats of measures one and three. (Example 10)
Example 10: German U-Boat – mm. 1-8

The meter shift back to two-four is used again to accommodate the text, “I heard a German U-boat captain calling out a warning.” The *ritardando* in measure fourteen needs to be observed to help set up the unanticipated modulation in measure fifteen. (Example 11)

Example 11: German U-Boat – mm. 12-15
Example 11 Continued:

Example 11: German U-Boat – mm. 12-15

In the next section (measures fifteen through twenty-nine), Scheer uses longer note values in the piano to create the illusion of time going in slow motion. The *subito piano* and *tenuto* in the piano in measure twenty-one must be a strong contrast to the *mezzo forte* beginning in measure seventeen. This gives the listener the sense of surprise needed to capture the mental and emotional state of the war weary captain. The sailors of the merchant marine ship are now at the mercy of the captain. Scheer intensifies the drama in measures twenty-six through twenty-eight by the addition of *sforzando* and *staccato* in the bass line of the piano to represent the pounding hearts of the merchant marines as they anxiously await their fate. The captain of the u-boat states, “I’ll give you twenty minutes for you to safely flee.” The bass line notes stop and a motive representing an answered prayer in the accompaniment line, occurs at the end of measure twenty-eight to the *fermata* in measure twenty-nine. (Example 12)
Example 12: German U-Boat – mm. 23-29

The accompaniment in measures thirty and thirty-one represent several different ideas important to the overall shape of this piece. The ascending chords in the treble clef accompaniment in measure thirty represent a torpedo approaching the merchant marine ship. The descending chromatic sixteenth note patterns in the left hand of the accompaniment in measure thirty represent the sailors of the merchant marine ship lowering down onto lifeboats. The accented chords in the right and left hand in measure thirty-one represent the torpedo hitting the merchant marine ship. The Gb in the left hand of the accompaniment in measure thirty-one represents the sunken ship. (Example 13)
Example 13: German U-Boat – mm. 27-31

Measure thirty-two through fifty-two transitions back to the original key and melodic materials. The time signature three-eight marks the return of the “general quarters alarm” and “Gulf of Oman” motives. Repeating these motives again in the middle of the song suggests that the sound of the alarm and the movement of the water is something Paul Austin will never forget. (Example 14)

Example 14: German U-Boat – mm. 31-35
In measure fifty-three, Scheer moves the song forward with a climactic phrase in a high tessitura. He has supported the vocal line by scoring a sforzando in the accompaniment on beat two of measure fifty-three while the vocalist sings an F₄. He has also marked a ritardando and crescendo on the third beat of measure fifty-four to help the singer prepare to sing a fortissimo G₄ on the downbeat of measure fifty-five. The following tempo allows the singer to descend easily into measure fifty-seven. (Example 15)

Example 15: German U-Boat – mm. 54-57

The ritardando and decrescendo marked in the accompaniment line in measure fifty-seven through sixty should be observed so the vocalist has time to regroup from singing the highest passage in the song. The mezzo piano dynamic marked in measures fifty-nine through sixty-three accommodate the text, which is recitative like. Keith Clifton says in his book, Recent
American Art Song: A Guide, [German U-boat Captain is] “a large and dramatic song, often in declamatory style.”65 (Example 16)

Example 16: German U-Boat – mm. 59-62
The “prayer” motive returns at the end of measure sixty-two. This motive, played retrograde from its earlier hearing in measure twenty-eight, represents a prayer for the German captain who spared his life that day. (Example 17)

Example 17: German U-Boat – mm. 27-30; 59-63

As the vocalist sings his final line in the song, the composer repeats the same melodic and rhythmic motive to show that the memory of the torpedo sinking the ship and the men lowering to their lifeboats is still very clear and present in his mind. (Example 18)

Example 18: German U-Boot – mm. 64-65

The composer then brings the time signature back to three-eight, where the constant memory of safely being on the Gulf of Oman and the compassion of the German officer that day will be forever in the heart and mind of Paul Austin.

The range $[Ab_2-G_4]$ and tessitura of “The German U-boat Captain,” though difficult, should not be problematic for the advanced singer.

At Howard Hawks’ House (Beverly Hills, California)

At Howard Hawks’ House
My buddy and I were on liberty in Hollywood
Searching for twenty-four hours of thrills.
When we were invited for some drinks at Howard Hawks’
On Carroll drive in Beverly Hills.

Howard was engaged to a movie star.
The beautiful Miss Evelyn Keyes.
The phone rang, I answered it and heard her lovely voice
And said: Oh, woh, woh, woh, please!

Your voice has enraptured me.
You really are a wonder. You really are a wonder, my dear.
You must come and be our mascot and lead us into battle
And we will have nothing, nothing to fear.

She said, “Who is speaking? This is not the Howie, This is not the Howie I adore.”

I said, “I am sergeant Mysak of the U.S. Marine Corps!”

Howard grabbed the phone and said, “It’s too late to come over! The sun’ll be up in just a little while.”
He said, “Don’t worry sarge, tomorrow night’s a party! You’ve got my word I promise that I’ll
Personally introduce you to a major motion movie
Major motion movie star!
Tomorrow night Mysak, you’ll be sipping cocktails
With no less than Hedy, Hedy Lamar!”

But we were due at the base next morning
And could not spend another night.
We were called to the Pacific
To a war we had to fight.

And that’s exactly how I came to lose the chance,
The chance to win Hedy, Hedy’s heart!
Who says war’s not frustrating
And doesn’t tear you apart

My buddy and I were on liberty in Hollywood
Searching for twenty four hours of thrills
When we were invited for some drinks at Howard Hawks’
On Carroll drive in Beverly Hills!

Performance Guide

The third entry in the cycle is a swing-style song about Ben [sic] Mysak’s recollection of thrill seeking in Hollywood, California, before going off to war. Keith Clifton suggests it is “a lively song in a quasi-Broadway style about having fun on leave from war.” This description is apt because of Scheer’s training, aesthetic, and experiences in musical theater.

66 Name in the original source is “Bru Mysak”.

At about two and a half minutes in duration, this fast-paced song features an accompaniment that recalls the big bands of the World War II era. It is rich with prominent accents and syncopations. The song begins in common time and the composer indicates, “swing-feel” for the vocal line. Approaching this song as a jazz vocalist or “crooner” will help to capture the mood. After a four measure piano introduction, the first phrase consists of measures five through twelve. In this section, staccato chords played by the pianist assist the vocalist in his efforts of performing a line that involves the articulation of a wordy text. (Example 19)

Example 19: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 1-6

Measures fourteen through thirty incorporate a jazzy and syncopated accompaniment paired with a vocal line that is very chromatic, so it is imperative that the singer remains independent from the accompaniment line. Though the accompaniment supports the vocal line harmonically, hearing and singing these pitches accurately can be difficult. The singer is encouraged to sing each section on a neutral syllable focusing primarily on the movement of the notes, while listening closely to the inner voices of the piano part.
The next vocal phrase (measure thirty-one through thirty-eight) features a phone conversation between Mysak and film actress Evelyn Keyes, who was “best known for her role as Suellen O’Hara in the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind.*” In the course of this conversation, the singer should utilize a character voice to represent Ms. Keyes. (Example 20)

Example 20: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 28-34

Immediately following the moment with Evelyn Keyes, the narrator introduces himself as “sergeant Mysak of the U.S. Marine corps.” As Mysak introduces himself, Scheer has cleverly and directly incorporated in the vocal line, the beginning theme of the Marines’ Hymn [From the Halls of Montezuma, to the shores of Tripoly]. (Example 21)

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Example 21: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 32-38

Of more interest in the accompaniment is the fact that it becomes an accented marching band under the hymn. The interlude that follows, in measures thirty-eight through forty-one, is important because it goes back to the swing style.

At the interlude, famed film director, Howard Hawks takes control of the phone conversation in measure forty-three stating, “it’s too late to come over, the sun’ll be up in just a little while.” The vocalist should portray the voice of Howard Hawks differently than that of Ben Mysak. Developing three different character voices in this song for Ben Mysak, Evelyn
Keyes, and Howard Hawks is an important element in telling the story and maintaining the drama. Howard Hawks, in measures forty-six through fifty-eight, promises Mysak that he will be “sipping cocktails” with a “major motion movie star.” In this section, the composer repeats the texts “major motion movie” to stress the importance of the movie star with whom the two Marines could connect. Scheer also repeats the first name of the actress “Hedy, Hedy Lamar [sic]” so that it is easily understood for the listener. “Hedy Lamarr was an Austrian-born American actress known primarily for her celebrity in a film career as a major contract star of MGM’s ‘Golden Age.’”69  (Example 22)

Example 22: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 50-52; 56-57

The meeting between the Marines and the movie stars, unfortunately, never happens as they “were called to the Pacific to a war we had to fight.” In measure sixty-two through measure

sixty-six, the Marines’ hymn returns once again in the vocal line to represent the bravery of the Marines as they answer their call to battle. (Example 23)

Example 23: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 62-66

The next vocal entrance in measure sixty-seven through measure seventy conveys Ben Mysak’s anxiety over losing “the chance to win Hedy’s heart.” The vocal line ends in measure seventy on an F₄, which incidentally is the highest note in the song representing his pain relevant to missing the opportunity to meet and win the heart of a beautiful actress. (Example 24)

Example 24: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 65-70
Example 24 Continued:

Example 24: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 65-70

Measure seventy-one through seventy-three are marked with marcato in both voice and piano, and should be overly articulated in a straight rhythm, intentionally breaking the previous swing feel, to convey the frustration at how war spoils even the little details of life. (Example 25)

Example 25: Howard Hawk’s – mm. 71-73

The return of the swing-feel in the vocal line happens in measure seventy-five and stays that way through the end featuring a repetition of text from the beginning, “my buddy and I were on libery in Hollywood, searching twenty-four hours of thrills.” Scheer has rhythmically altered the vocal line at the end of this piece to reiterate Mysak’s memory of thrill seeking in Beverly Hills prior to going to war in the Pacific. In doing this, Scheer has also created a grandiose big band finale.
The range [Ab$_2$-F$_4$] and tessitura of “At Howard Hawks’ House,” is more comfortable than the previous selections in this song cycle, however, the rhythmic detail and chromatic vocal line are challenging, even for the advanced singer.

**Omaha Beach (Normandy)**

*Omaha Beach*
I stood next to thirty-five friends on the Higgins boat.
Some wept, others were sick, no one spoke.
Five-inch guns were blasting over our heads.
Limbs floated by of the dead.
I caught my friend Harry’s eye.
He tried to make me smile,
Opened his fatigues and showed me a polka dot tie.

Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.

Off the sides of the boat we heard the shrill bullets sound.
Suddenly we took a shell and the boat went down.
Over the side over the side, one hundred yards from shore.
I looked back, half my friends I’d see no more.

Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.

Finally I crawled to the sanguine shore.
Bodies and bullets and blood drenched sand.
Hour by hour hour by hour, just a few yards more.
Inch by inch we took our stand.
Just then a moment of calm I ran and dove over an embankment
And landed on a corpse none could identify.
But I saw the polka dot tie.

Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Performance Guide

Lieutenant General Omar Bradley once said after the war ended, “I have returned many times to honor the valiant men who died…every man who set foot on Omaha Beach was a hero.” The forth song in Voices From World War II is a musical interpretation of Earl Macholl’s horrifying experience on Omaha Beach as Allied powers confronted the German occupation of France.

“Omaha Beach” is approximately four minutes and twenty seconds. The surreal scene of that landing on June 6, 1944 is represented in the widely separated tonal clusters in the accompaniment. (Example 26)

Example 26: Omaha Beach – mm. 1-3

Keith Clifton describes this song as an, “Intense, dissonant song about the terror of war on the front lines.” He also mentions that the song is in a style that is “mostly recitative.” Colla voce marked in the first measure should be closely observed by the pianist, because of the freedom in the vocal line allowed by the composer.

Scheer masterfully introduces the vocal line, which follows a natural flow of speech. The ghostly melodic line is in the key center of D minor. The pianist plays a chord cluster in the

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70 Worldwar-2.net.


72 Ibid.
right hand that sounds consistently throughout the course of the first verse. This cluster of
pitches [C#, D, Eb, A] appears throughout the entirety of the song. This motive punctuates
events as they are reported almost like the shutter click of a camera creating flash back moments
for this soldier. (Example 27)

Example 27: Omaha Beach – mm. 1-7

Scheer treats the cluster chord motive differently in measure twelve. Here he uses it to punctuate
the painful and vivid memory of seeing a polka dot tie. (Example 28)
Example 28: Omaha Beach – mm. 10-12

The hymn-like refrain “young blood in the holy water,” first appears in measures thirteen through eighteen and is repeated three times in the song. The non-dissonant accompaniment depicts the religious nature of Earl Macholl’s experience that day. (Example 29)

Example 29: Omaha Beach – mm. 13-18

Dissonance returns in measure nineteen where this sound is associated with bullets and shells whizzing by the soldiers’ boat. (Example 30)
Example 30: Omaha Beach – mm. 17-21

Earl Macholl’s boat is hit by a shell and goes down. An ascending thirty-second note figure in measure twenty-four represents his struggle to the surface of the “holy water.”

(Example 31)

Example 31: Omaha Beach – mm. 22-24

The ascending chromatic passage in the right hand of the accompaniment in measure twenty-six represents those soldiers who are slowly swimming to shore, while the descending chromatic excerpt represents those who lost their lives that day off the coast of France.

(Example 32)
Example 32: Omaha Beach – mm. 25-26

The tonal refrain is repeated in a modified form in measures twenty-nine through thirty-four.

Earl Macholl’s arrival on the shoreline and his crawling on the beach are represented by a trill in the piano in measures thirty-five through forty. (Example 33)

Example 33: Omaha Beach – mm. 33-40

The return of the thirty-second note figure from measure twenty-four signifies Mr. Macholl’s inch-by-inch advancement on Omaha beach in measure forty. (Example 34)
Example 34: Omaha Beach – mm. 37-40

Measure forty-two repeats the same chromatic ascending and descending passages that first appeared in measure twenty-six, this time to contrast Macholl’s slow advance with other soldiers around him who are killed as they take their stand. (Example 35)

Example 35: Omaha Beach – mm. 41-42

The audience will easily recognize the “polka dot tie” motive which returns in measure forty-six. (Example 36)
Example 36: Omaha Beach – mm. 45-46

The singer should take a slight *rubato* at this moment to allow that chord cluster to ring. Scheer adjusts the meter in measures forty-eight through fifty-one to accommodate the text. (Example 37)

Example 37: Omaha Beach – mm. 45-51
He has done this throughout the piece in such a flowing manner that one loses the sense of time passing except during the refrain “young blood in the holy water.” This undoubtedly represents the seemingly endless day experienced by the survivors.

Scheer ends the song with another repetition of the “holy water” refrain. This is immediately followed by the “polka dot tie” motive repeated three times as if the chiming of funeral bells at church. (Example 38)

Example 38: Omaha Beach – mm. 56-60

The range [A₂-F₄] and tessitura of “Omaha Beach,” should be relatively comfortable for the baritone voice. The rhythmic structure is not difficult, though one will note the changes in meter. The most challenging part of the melodic line occurs on passages with chromatic notes, but these are usually doubled in the piano. (Example 39)

Example 39: Omaha Beach – mm. 25-26
The two climactic high notes on F₄ are approached with a \textit{crescendo} in the piano to help the singer feel supported. (Example 40)

Example 40: Omaha Beach – mm. 25-27; 41-43

While performing this extraordinarily sad song, the singer should remember to allow the emotions, but not so much as to negatively affect the technique.

\textbf{Morrison Shelter (London)}

\textit{Morrison Shelter}  
\textit{I was a soldier far from home.}  
\textit{A gentle woman came and spoke to me.}  
\textit{Sensing my utter weariness, she invited me to tea.}  
\textit{The kitchen was small, four chairs and a Morrison table,}  
\textit{Steel top and bottom four sturdy iron legs,}  
\textit{Surrounded on three sides by wire mesh.}  
\textit{She placed the teapot on the tabletop.}  
\textit{Two fine Spode china cups and a tin of biscuits.}  
\textit{With the blinds drawn and the tea and conversation}  
\textit{I almost forgot I was in London in the middle of the war.}  
\textit{She stood and poured a second cup of tea}
When we were jolted by the air raid siren sound.
She calmly set the teapot down and quickly went into the next room.
Within a moment she returned with two sleepy children wrapped in quilts.

She placed the children ‘neath the table top and kissed them both tenderly,
Kissed them tenderly and carefully she tucked the bedding around their chins.
She asked about my California home, about my friends and family.
We talked until we heard the all clear signal and said, goodbye.

I still see that woman pouring tea with terror in her eyes as she spoke to me.
Her children nestled and secure, embraced by the Morrison shelter
And their mother’s courage to endure.

Performance Guide

The final movement of “Voices From World War II” is a musical interpretation of Jim
Prundale’s [sic]73 “brief meeting [with] a frightened British mother.”74

“Morrison Shelter” is approximately four minutes and ten seconds. In the tonal area of B
minor, this piece notes two specific instructions for the pianist: *sempre legato*, which has been
seen with frequency throughout the cycle, and play G₃ “m.d.” (*main droite*), designating the right
hand because of the distance between notes in the bass clef accompaniment. Keith Clifton
describes several features of the song suggesting a “lyric vocal line with abrupt shifts of harmony
and meter.”75 These characteristics help to dramatize the text, especially as new thoughts are
introduced, and emotions are intensified. Each of these sections is easily identified by changing
key signatures.

The lyrics in the first vocal section (measures five through twenty-one) are set so the
singer can sing can breathe at punctuation marks, which essentially helps the natural flow of the
story. Scheer supports the vocal line in measure fifteen by using a *crescendo* in the piano part as
the singer’s line rises. However, the singer should keep the *crescendo* in check and observe the

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73 Name in the original source is “Jim Jackson” from Prunedale, California.
75 Ibid.
moderate dynamics (*mezzo piano* to *mezzo forte*). The exhaustion expressed by the serviceman is heightened with a mild *ritardando*, and a slight lift following “weariness” is both aesthetic and practical. (Example 41)

![Musical notation](image)

Example 41: Morrison Shelter – mm. 13-16

The next phrase (measure twenty-two through thirty-two) in the tonal area of *F#* minor, is accompanied by a change in meter to three-eight, and then in measure twenty-three to three-four, and then again in measure twenty-five to common time to accommodate the natural word flow. The text in measures twenty-five through thirty describes the appearance of the shelter. Scheer states, “the writer confused Anderson Shelter with Morrison Shelter. It took me sometime to realize that what he was describing was a Morrison Shelter, which he had misidentified. An interesting note.”\(^{76}\) As the description of the Morrison table finishes, the scene transforms as the two sit down for tea at this table.

Prundale continues his story in measure thirty-three in a rather ambiguous key area. Because of changing tonalities, the singer must listen acutely to the piano part and the accompanist should closely follow the singer allowing for necessary *rubato*, though the singer should not linger. (Example 42)

\(^{76}\) Gene Scheer, email interview by author, Vermillion, SD, December 4, 2010.
Example 42: Morrison Shelter – mm. 35

The key changes again in measure thirty-six to the tonal area of Bb minor, representing yet another thought featuring the text “with the blinds drawn and the tea and conversation, I almost forgot I was in London in the middle of the war.” Scheer changes the meter to six-four in measure thirty-nine to slow the movement and present the sense of irony.

The next section (measures forty through sixty-eight) is the most formidable passage in the cycle because of the demanding range and tessitura, combined with rapidly changing meters. Although the piano doubles the entrance, it is rhythmically complex, and the singer must coordinate with the syncopated bass line of the piano. The pianist, in measure forty-eight, should not be hesitant in observing the sforzando and marcato accents over each chord, as the composer has associated sforzando with the word “jolted.” (Example 43)
Example 43: Morrison Shelter – mm. 47-48

Text painting continues in measures fifty through fifty-five, where the vocal line imitates the sustained drone of an air raid siren. The singer may effectively mimic the sound of an air raid siren by singing the F₄ in a well-supported, but straight tone. The accompaniment in measures fifty-one and fifty-two, and again in measures fifty-four and fifty-five, presents a motive that expands the sound of the siren. (Example 44)

Example 44: Morrison Shelter – mm. 47-55
Example 44 Continued:

Following the air raid siren, the mother scurries off to fetch her children. The intensity in this song has now reached a boiling point. The highest note in the song cycle [Ab₄] occurs on the downbeat of measure fifty-nine. This, however, is only one of several challenging aspects of this section of music. Measures fifty-six through sixty-nine include fourteen time signature alterations—one for each measure. The changes in time represent the mother’s anxiety and confusion of not really knowing what to do to ensure her children’s safety. (Example 45)
Example 45 Continued:

Scheer brings back the air raid sirens, intermittently, to remind the listener of the continued threat. Eventually, the sounds fade and the composer purposefully does not finish the theme. (Example 46)

Example 46: Morrison Shelter – mm. 66-73
The next vocal moment finds the mother securing her children in the Morrison shelter and continuing the conversation. Measures eighty-seven through ninety-three are recitative-like and should be performed in a conversational style. The pianist should follow the singer, accordingly. The song closes with a return to the opening key center giving the cycle a sense of closure.

The range [A₂-Ab₄] and tessitura in this final song is demanding. To meet these challenges effectively, the singer must carefully pace the performances of the first four songs. The singer should possess a well-controlled, comfortable Ab₄. The rhythmic complexity will require carefully coordinated ensemble between the performers. Morrison Shelter is a varied, dramatic song that challenges the advanced singer.
CONCLUSION

Gene Scheer’s *Voices from World War II* is a creative and well-crafted song cycle for baritone and piano. It has been performed by singers, both student and professional. The cycle should be considered for art song recitals by more advanced singers. According to the composer, the cycle was written with the intent that it can be performed either in its entirety or excerpted. *Voices from World War II* serves as a worthy teaching tool for mastering technical issues, including: *passaggio* singing, rhythmic accuracy, intonation, shading and nuance in dynamics and *tempi*, and breath management.

If performing this cycle in its entirety, vocal pacing is important. Scheer says, “They are not easy songs. I don’t think they’re ridiculously hard, but they’re rangy, there’s no question about it.”

Scheer offers one bit of advice that is good practice for his songs.

One thing I will say is when you’re singing the songs just remember that you’re creating them in that moment. You’re not relating something that you’ve read and you’re telling the audience about it, because right now you are those people and you are telling a story that has never been told before… Give it a sense of immediacy that this is happening right now, in this moment.

Maintaining the drama by “creating in the moment” will keep the audience engaged and eager to learn how each story progresses. This aspect of storytelling makes it equally important to the successful performance of this cycle.

Gene Scheer, with the help of Lee Musiker, has musically brought to life five universal stories about five individuals caught up in the life altering atmosphere of World War II. He accomplishes this by capturing the spirit of recollections of William Dolan, Paul Austin, Ben [sic] Mysak, Earl Macholl, and Jim Prundale [sic]. Apart from providing a performance guide that will inform and provide technical and dramatic suggestions to musicians preparing *Voices*

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77 Scheer, phone interview.

78 Ibid.
from World War II for presentation, it is hoped that this document will introduce others to the songs of this worthy composer.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Scheer, Gene. Email interview by the author. Vermillion, SD, 4 December 2010.


Holding Each Other
I was a child when war was declared.
I remember people with gray hair
Standing in the middle of the street that night,
Holding each other in the pale moon light.

I stared out my window and watched them embrace
And memorized each somber face.
Some silent secret they all seemed to share
Transformed the street to a church in prayer.

When I recall that painful time
That picture often comes to mind,
People standing in the street that night
Holding each other in the pale moon light.

Since that time war has taken friends
And each loss makes me think again
Of a bitter grief too deep to be spoken
When I was eight and first saw hearts broken.

When I recall that painful time
That picture often comes to mind,
People standing in the street that night
Holding each other in the pale moon light.

The German U-Boat Captain
The bullhorn off the starboard bow woke me up that morning.
I heard a German U-boat captain calling out a warning!

“My orders are to sink your ship.
You see that she’s outgunned.
But sailors I am tired of war.
I’m sick of all we’ve done!
I’ll give you twenty minutes for you to safely flee.”

So we lowered down our lifeboats into the white-capped sea!
After twenty minutes had gone by I heard our ship go down
And thought of all the sailors who in the war had drown.
But I watched the sun come up that day from the safety of the shore
And since that time I have been blessed to witness many more.

And ev’ry time I see a child laugh or play a game,
I pray that German captain today can do the same.
At Howard Hawks’ House
My buddy and I were on liberty in Hollywood
Searching for twenty-four hours of thrills.
When we were invited for some drinks at Howard Hawks’
On Carroll drive in Beverly Hills.

Howard was engaged to a movie star.
The beautiful Miss Evelyn Keyes.
The phone rang, I answered it and heard her lovely voice
And said: Oh, woh, woh, woh, please!

Your voice has enraptured me.
You really are a wonder. You really are a wonder, my dear.
You must come and be our mascot and lead us into battle
And we will have nothing, nothing to fear.

She said, “Who is speaking? This is not the Howie,
This is not the Howie I adore.”

I said, “I am sergeant Mysak of the U.S. Marine Corps!”

Howard grabbed the phone and said,
“It’s too late to come over! The sun’ll be up in just a little while.”
He said, “Don’t worry sarge, tomorrow night’s a party!
You’ve got my word I promise that I’ll
Personally introduce you to a major motion movie
Major motion movie star!
Tomorrow night Mysak, you’ll be sipping cocktails
With no less than Hedy, Hedy Lamar!”

But we were due at the base the next morning
And could not spend another night.
We were called to the Pacific
To a war we had to fight.

And that’s exactly how I came to lose the chance,
The chance to win Hedy, Hedy’s heart!
Who says war’s not frustrating
And doesn’t tear you apart

My buddy and I were on liberty in Hollywood
Searching for twenty four hours of thrills
When we were invited for some drinks at Howard Hawks’
On Carroll drive in Beverly Hills!
Omaha Beach
I stood next to thirty-five friends on the Higgins boat.
Some wept, others were sick, no one spoke.
Five-inch guns were blasting over our heads.
Limbs floated by of the dead.
I caught my friend Harry’s eye.
He tried to make me smile,
Opened his fatigues and showed me a polka dot tie.

Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.

Off the sides of the boat we heard the shrill bullets sound.
Suddenly we took a shell and the boat went down.
Over the side over the side, one hundred yards from shore.
I looked back, half my friends I’d see no more.

Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.

Finally I crawled to the sanguine shore.
Bodies and bullets and blood drenched sand.
Hour by hour hour by hour, just a few yards more.
Inch by inch we took our stand.
Just then a moment of calm I ran and dove over an embankment
And landed on a corpse none could identify.
But I saw the polka dot tie.

Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.
Young blood in the holy water.

Morrison Shelter
I was a soldier far from home.
A gentle woman came and spoke to me.
Sensing my utter weariness, she invited me to tea.
The kitchen was small, four chairs and a Morrison table,
Steel top and bottom four sturdy iron legs,
Surrounded on three sides by wire mesh.
She placed the teapot on the tabletop.

Two fine Spode china cups and a tin of biscuits.
With the blinds drawn and the tea and conversation
I almost forgot I was in London in the middle of the war.
She stood and poured a second cup of tea
When we were jolted by the air raid siren sound.
She calmly set the teapot down and quickly went into the next room.
Within a moment she returned with two sleepy children wrapped in quilts.

She placed the children ’neath the table top and kissed them both tenderly,
Kissed them tenderly and carefully she tucked the bedding around their chins.
She asked about my California home, about my friends and family.
We talked until we heard the all clear signal and said, goodbye.

I still see that woman pouring tea with terror in her eyes as she spoke to me.
Her children nestled and secure, embraced by the Morrison shelter
And their mother’s courage to endure.
APPENDIX B
DISCOGRAPHY


*Just Before Sunrise* (Legacy Recording), 2007. Nathan Gunn sings music by a variety of contemporary composers including music by Gene Scheer. Personnel includes Kristin Chenoweth, vocals; Nathan Brown, guitar, electric guitar; Grace Paradise, harp; Belinda Whitney, viola; Richard Brice, viola; Brian Miller, Kathleen Nester, flute, piccolo, recorder; Guy Klucevsek, accordion; Paul Garment, clarinet, bass clarinet; Lino Gomez, bass clarinet; Russ Rizner-French, horn; Eldar Djangiroc, piano; Marco Panascia, acoustic bass; Peter Donovan, electric bass; Todd Strait, drums.

*The War: A Ken Burns Film [Soundtrack]* (Legacy Recording), 2007. The soundtrack to the series by Ken Burns features music by Gene Scheer and other performers and composers.

*Kaleidoscope* (Carmen), 2004. Denyce Graves sings crossover tunes, including music by Gene Scheer. Denyce Graves vocals with Lee Musiker, piano, musical director; Jay Leonhart, bass; Rick Heckman, english horn.


*Debut- American Anthem- From Ragtime to Art Song* (EMI Classics), 1999. Nathan Gunn, baritone, and Kevin Murphy, accompanist, perform music by Gene Scheer and other composers.

APPENDIX C
SONG LIST

Song Cycles

Baritone

Voices from World War II
Song Cycle for Baritone and Piano (orchestration available)
  1. Holding Each Other
  2. The German U-boat Captain
  3. At Howard Hawks’ House
  4. Omaha Beach
  5. Morrison Shelter

Individually Published Songs

Just You
Christmas Once More
American Anthem
Lean Away
Another New Voice Teacher
Just Before Sunrise
Say Anything

Published Choral Arrangements

American Anthem (SATB and Piano (orchestration available))
American Anthem (TTBB and Piano)
American Anthem (SSA and Piano)
Christmas Once More (SATB and Piano (orchestration available))
American Anthem (Women’s Barbershop)
APPENDIX D
LIBRETTI

_Moby Dick_
Opera in two acts
Composer: Jake Heggie
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on the Herman Melville novel)
Premiere: Winspear Opera House, The Dallas Opera, Dallas, TX, 2010

_August 4, 1964_
Oratorio
Composer: Steven Stucky
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on research involving Lyndon B. Johnson and events that occurred on August 4, 1964)
Premiere: Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas, TX, 2008

_Three Decembers_ (originally entitled _Last Acts_)
Chamber opera in two acts
Composer: Jake Heggie
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on Terrence McNally’s play _Some Christmas Letters_)
Premiere: Cullen Theatre at the Wortham Center, Houston Grand Opera, Houston, TX, 2008

_For a Look or a Touch_
Music drama for one actor and baritone
Composer: Jake Heggie
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on interviews from the documentary _Paragraph 175_)
Premiere: Nordstrom Recital Hall, Seattle, WA, 2007

_To Hell and Back_
Opera in one act
Composer: Jake Heggie
Libretto: Gene Scheer (based on _The Rape of Persephone_)
Premiere: Mountain View Performing Arts Center, Palo Alto, CA, 2006

_The Star Gatherer_
Children’s opera
Composer: Stephen Paulus
Libretto: Gene Scheer
Premiere: St. John’s Boys’ Choir, Collegeville, MN, 2006

_An American Tragedy_
Opera in two acts
Composer: Tobias Picker
Librettist: Gene Scheer (based on the Theodore Dreiser novel)
Premiere: The Metropolitan Opera, New York City, NY, 2005
Thérèse Raquin
Opera in two acts
Composer: Tobias Picker
Librettist: Gene Scheer (based on the Emile Zola novel)
Premiere: The Dallas Opera, Dallas, TX, 2001
APPENDIX E
TRANSCRIPTION OF PHONE INTERVIEW WITH SCHEER

G: Hey, Brandon.
B: Good Morning, how are you?
G: Doing ok’…I’m sorry, I’m in a diner, if it’s too loud, let me know and I’ll leave.
B: Ha, ok..fair enough. Can you hear me ok?
G: I can hear you great.
B: Alright, awesome. I’ve got you on speakerphone and I have my recorder going and here we are.
G: Super. So, tell me about your project.
B: My project. This is my final lecture recital and monograph for my doctorate at Louisiana State University. My teacher gave me the idea that I need to do a prominent living composer that is hot on the scene.
G: That is very kind.
B: Yeah. I dug into these songs and I really like them a lot.
G: Thanks, I’m really glad you’re enjoying the music. It really means a lot to me.
B: It’s great stuff and it shows how versatile you are as a musician, writer, all that good stuff, so.
G: Well thanks. How can I help?
B: Ok, well I’m just going to start out with sort of some, I need to basically start the paper with a biography. I’m going to ask a lot of questions about sort of, where you were born and go from there.
G: Ok- just ask questions and I’ll answer them.
B: Alright- when were you born?
G: 1958
B: Where were you born?
G: New York City
B: What are the names of your parents.
B: Did you often move as a child, or did you live in New York your whole life?
G: Well, actually what happened with me, I was born in Manhattan what turned out to be 3 of 4 kids, my parents they divorced, uh, they uh, it’s a familiar story. So they moved out to New Jersey. I was raised in New Jersey, not raised in an urban part, I was raised in the northwest part of the state.

B: Ok.

G: It was very rural, actually. The town I grew up in, you know, had a lot of dairy farms, there was a freight train that ran through it, and a general store. People don’t think of, when they think of New Jersey, don’t think of that. Of course it was only an hour and twenty minutes, hour and a half outside of New York City but it was actually pretty rural. As I grew up, a lot of those farms were bought up and turned into developments, but when I was a kid it was still pretty rural, it wasn’t really suburban-suburbia-it was too far outside of the city.

B: Cool. Did you live in a town, or did actually you live out on a farm?

G: I lived, no I didn’t live on a farm; my parents were both school teachers and I lived in Chester and Long Valley New Jersey, they are two town that are 5 miles apart. So I was in the same school system then entire time I was in school as a kid.

B: Very cool- now you said that your parents were teachers. What were they teaching?

G: My dad taught 8th grade American History, my Mom was an elementary school teacher. She taught first, second, and third grade over, well, second and third grade for most of her career.

B: Very cool. Now growing up as a kid, and you know, even getting into high school, did have sort of odd jobs that earned you cash?

G: Sure. I worked as a stock boy in a department, you know, well what was a precursor to Walmart. There were no Walmarts, at least I don’t remember Walmarts frankly, but maybe there were, but I don’t remember-but not in New Jersey, but it was that kind of store. I worked at a summer camp in Massachusetts basically every summer as a counselor when I was old enough to do so, and then I always taught sports and also I directed plays.

B: Very neat. What are some of your fondest memories growing up in New Jersey?

G: Well, I played a lot of folk music with my brother Sam. My older brother Sam is a great, still is a great folk guitar player. So we grew up, and I played guitar at the time, we played a lot of music together. I’m very close to my older brother. Still am. So some of my fondest memories have to do with playing wiffle ball with him, and playing music with him, and just sort of hanging out. Also, I was very involved with music in the public school system.

B: Awesome.

G: I played clarinet in band. I was in band all the way through and of course chorus. Then I was in all of the shows. I was in community-theater from the time I was fourteen or fifteen, so I’ve really been doing theater pretty much all my life, and that became my focus. I originally went to Hamilton College, which is in upstate New York, and I was an English major for a few years, I was also studying German…I’ll just rift here; fill in the blanks here.

B: Sure.
G: So what happened, I went to Hamilton for 2 years where I was an English major and they had a 4-1-4 system. That middle one month, January, where you supposed to do an extensive project, I was studying German and I went to Vienna to an immersion course basically for one month to learn the language, while I was there I wound up going to the Vienna State Opera 26 out of 30 nights. I went to standing room for a buck, and when I came back I applied to Eastman. I transferred to a music school. I was a transformative and I wound up checking in and was going as a voice performance major at Eastman. So that’s what my degrees are in. I got my bachelors and my masters. And then I wound up going to Europe and I lived in Europe for about, almost eight, well in total ten years, but the first stint was eight years and I lived in Vienna and I wound up doing musicals. I wanted to be an opera singer, but my voice wasn’t quite good enough, so I wound up doing musicals and theater and even made a film, I was in a film, the film was a small budget thing while I was over there, but by this point I was speaking German pretty well. I worked for…well…really what happened with me Brandon was that while I was there, I was trying to make my plot as a musician, but my voice didn’t cut it, so I was good, I did a lot of the apprentice programs, but I wasn’t able to push it over the top to get hired as the Count in the Marriage of Figaro, or something like that, but I was good on stage, so I wound up working extensively in musical theater, mostly in Vienna. While I was doing that, just to keep my soul alive, cause I was doing long runs of shows, I started writing. I’d always been writing a little bit, but I started writing more vigorously, in a more engaged way. So by that time I wrote a musical, the text of a musical, with another composer writing the music. I was writing some songs on my own, but not too many. I really didn’t trust myself as a composer, but I was writing texts for other composers, but when I came back, I was thirty-two, thirty-three years old, I came back to the states. Basically what happened, a whole bunch of songs I had written had a number of prominent singers started to sing my songs. Renee Flemming was one of the early proponents of my songs and basically I was showing, the way it really happened, was I was writing texts for other composers and I would write dummy tunes, right? For the music, I mean the text, you know what I’m talking about?

B: Yeah.

G: So I would write these dummy tunes, and I would play them for Renee and others and Renee said, you know I don’t want to sing this, I want to sing the dummy tune, the dummy down converted tunes, you know, rather than the composer you’re working with-so she started doing them-and Nathan Gunn and Denyce Graves among others started singing the songs. Once my songs started getting sung by these prominent singers, I decided that basically I had been in theater mostly my whole life, I had been working on shows, writing some shows, so I had some things to show, you know? Nathan Gunn made a connection and introduced me to Francesca Zambello who is a very prominent stage director, and I met her and with the advancement of media, I sent her some of my songs, and the text that I had written for a libretto, although its hard to call it a libretto because it was really more for a musical because it was based on measure for measure, which never got done, but she liked it enough and my songs enough that I met with her and at the end of the meeting she said I know a composer who is looking for a librettist, would you be interested in meeting him, and I said sure, and that composer was Tobias Picker and I wound up writing the libretto for Therese Raquin for the Dallas Opera. You know, the way it works is when you’re basically a nobody, it’s hard to get that first big break, and I was lucky to get it, but still even at that point I wrote the first third of that libretto on spec because I still had to prove myself. Tobias liked what I was doing and I got the job, and of course he hired me for his commission of the Metropolitan Opera and by that point other people started to know who I
was and my songs started to get done and other opportunities for opera presented themselves, Jake Heggie, Jennifer Higdon, Steven Stuckey and other wonderful composers. I’ve been very fortunate working with these extraordinarily talented people but that’s sort of how the whole thing progressed.

B: Sure. Wow. Now would you say that those composers would be, I don’t know, you just expressed your fondness for those composers, are there specific composers that you are not so fond of, or maybe you don’t want to answer that.

G: Na, I wouldn’t answer in the negative. There are a lot of composers I respect a lot. John Adams is a great composer, I love his orchestral music, I think it’s spectacular. He’s clearly a very talented person. I’m not a huge Philip Glass fan, but I saw Satyagraha at the Met and I thought it was absolutely brilliant. Even if there are certain composers you don’t like all of their output, something might come along that really, I’m sure there are people that that feel the same way about me, there’s a piece that comes along and you go oh my goodness that is really extraordinary. I don’t know if you know that piece, but they’re doing it again at the Met and Rick Croft is playing Ghandi and it is a spectacular piece. So the point is, I really love that music by Phillip Glass; I thought it was fantastic. There are a number of composers I respect enormously. That said, I am just like everyone else of our generation, your generation and mine, I mean, you know, Sondheim looms large. He’s a genius. His music and his lyrics are just extraordinary.

B: Sure.

G: I also love Frank Loesser, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, I mean there a lot of wonderful song writers and a lot of popular song writers, listen my ambition in my life is to write a few songs as good as Leonard Cohen. I mean, the guy is…the lyrics are extraordinary. I’m a big Dylan fan too. My latest passion is Leonard Cohen, I just cannot believe the poetry and the genius of his work. I just think it’s incredible. There are lots of tributaries flowing into the stream. I’m not a classical music snob, I just like to listen to different things, popular music, particularly the American songs, but I like lots of different things. There are lots of tributaries flowing into the stream. Luckily we don’t have to choose, right? We can hear it all.

B: Yeah. We have a lot of similar tastes. Who would you consider your mentors when you were going through the process?

G: My most significant mentor was Jan Degaetani. Jan Dagaetani was my teacher at Eastman who, my other teacher was Tom Paul, he was my voice teacher, when I met Jan, I really felt that she was voice teacher then, and I had a fellowship at Aspen, I had two fellowships at Aspen actually, and I studied with Jan that summer, and the fall after I got my masters I worked as a waiter in Rochester saving money to go to Europe, and hopefully, at the time, dreaming that I would be an opera singer. The people that were hiring didn’t have the same vision that I had (laughter), but I studied with Jan that fall and lived at her house with her and her husband Phil who became good friends of mine, and I don’t know if you know Jan Degaetani, but google it and you’ll find her. Jan Degaetani was one of the most prominent singers of modern music in this country in the 70s and 80s of all of the major composers of that time, Pierre Boulez, George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies, they all wrote songs for Jan and she was noted as, along with Phyllis Bryn-Julson, as one of the go to performers for modern music. But she didn’t just sing modern music, she sang everything man, but that was her specialty. It wasn’t that music was
actually speaking to me particularly; it was Jan’s musicianship, her artistry, and her seriousness and passion with which she approached music. One of the things that was memorable to me was when I was living at her house, when I was working as a waiter, and also she was very generous in that I lived there for free, because she knew I was saving money, which was just awesome to me. When I was living there, Jan had a concert at Carnegie Hall, it was sold out, and at the same time she was preparing to sing at the Presbyterian Church, and someone asked her to sing. The thing that was so remarkable to me, and memorable, was that she prepared the exact same way to sing at the Presbyterian Church as she did to sing at Carnegie Hall, because for Jan it was about the music.

B: Absolutely.

G: It wasn’t about her, it was about connecting to something that was larger than herself. That was the lesson and the model that she set for me and for so many other students. I know that Dawn Upshaw studied with her, and Renee studied with her a little bit, but I know Dawn did, and many other singers. She was an extraordinary person and she was an extraordinary musician, just a brilliant musician, but mostly her seriousness and passion were unparalleled. So, honestly the biggest influences on me were Jan, and then the other students at Eastman. That’s what I really feel, is that the other students were so extraordinary, and they set such a bar for seriousness and dedication. That is something that wove its way into my DMA, so that when I left school, I was ready to continue to learn because of all these other young musicians who were into it, big time.

B: Terrific. Did you have composition teachers?

G: No. If you notice, my stuff is arranged—the songs you’re talking about, are arranged by Lee Musiker. The truth is, I always put the arranger on my music because I write them down as lead sheets, I play them, and I certainly have ideas how they’re going to go, but I needed to have them kicked up by someone who really was trained to do this, and so you’re talking to someone who, I’m sort of like, and I don’t mean in terms of importance because God knows this is nothing compared to Irving Berlin, but I write the songs I write, and they are frequently arranged by others are trained to do that. I’m writing a musical right now, and I’m doing more of the arranging, but as I was starting, in order to get them to standard I was looking for, I needed to get help. Lee Musiker was one of those students I was talking about at Eastman who was this extraordinary pianist who has gone on to be Tony Bennett’s music director. I don’t know if you know that. I asked him to work on these arrangements with me, and he did an incredible job. So I didn’t have composition teachers, I am definitely a self-taught composer and principally a lyricist—as you can see my output is 90% lyrics and 10% music.

B: Sure, sure.

G: …and as I’m working with all of these other composers…one of the many reasons I work with these composers is that they have a skill set and a talent but a skill set I don’t have, so that’s why I’m drawn to working with Jake Heggie, Steve Stuckey, Jennifer Higdon and many others. So that’s just the truth of how I work. I religiously put the arranger on my work because I want to not pretend that I’m doing something that I’m not doing.

B: Absolutely. You told me that you played the clarinet growing up, and the guitar. You play the piano as well?
G: Yeah, I play piano, but that is part of the problem, I play the piano pretty…I’m pretty shitty at the piano. My musical life would have been a hell of a lot easier if all those years spent on the clarinet had been spent playing the piano. I do think that playing an instrument, I mean, there are singers that do become good musicians without playing an instrument, but it was pivotal for me. We would understand music, 10 or 15 years playing an instrument in orchestras and bands is really a way of hounding musicianship. I haven’t played clarinet in 20 years, you know, it did serve its function in teaching the rudiments of music, and to teach me to be a relatively or well qualified musician, but it wasn’t playing the piano would have…but another reason I ask these pianists to go over these arrangements is to make sure they work.

B: Sure. Gene, were your parents musical?

G: No, but my brother was a good folk musician and my mother’s brother went to Julliard and was actually a wonderful musician who played bass fiddle. So when he left Julliard, just shortly after World War II he wound up in music management with an executive director of the Pittsburgh Symphony, he had an illustrious career in orchestral management, even with the executive director of Carnegie Hall for a short time towards the end of his career. His son is also a musician. He went to the Manhattan School of Music and Julliard. He was a trombone player. So, there’s classical music in my extended family but not my immediate family.

B: Ok, ok. Now, you may have said this already, but when did your interest in music first start?

G: I can’t remember a time I wasn’t interested in music. When I was in 2nd grade, I would sing all the songs to the Fantastics. I had a good voice, and I just loved music. I don’t remember a time when music wasn’t a part of my life.

B: That’s terrific.

G: And what is most significant, I don’t remember a time, well I remember a time, but theater has been what I’ve done since I was 11 or 12; I’m 52 now. That’s a long time.

B: Sure. Did you say you were roughly 32 or 33 when you composed your first piece of music?

G: No. I was writing songs in Vienna the whole time through.

B: Ah.

G: When I came back to the states- see, because of everything I just told you about not being a classically trained composer, and having grown up in the classical music world, I couldn’t imagine the prominent opera singers would be interested, but they liked the tunes. I think what happened was, they just liked the tunes. When Renee said she wanted to sing, “lean away,”- I wrote “lean away” as a song-it was a dummy tune. Renee said I love the tune, I want to sing that tune and that’s sort of how it happened. What’s also happened Brandon, is that now that I’ve been doing this for 20 years, my music is getting a little bit more, you know I can take more ownership of the whole product now as the years go by. Luckily, these arrangers like Lee, in particular, are just extraordinary. The music came out, and I’m real proud of it.

B: Terrific. You’ve talked about your mentors. Would these people be the people that have had the most profound effect on your life and as a composer?
G: Well, not directly. I wasn’t composing, like I said I was trying to be an opera singer, I was working in musical theater and theater- there wasn’t a direct correlation, but I think the thing about Jan that was so extraordinary was her way of approaching music was something that I adopted and that informs all of the choices I make.

B: Terrific. If you had to put a stamp on your compositional style, how would you describe your style as a composer?

G: Popular art song. There is no question. Kevin Murphy, who was Nathan’s accompanist on his first album, American Anthem, he described them as a Billy Joel art song. (laughter) I think that’s not so far off quite frankly. I like Billy Joel- I’m not even a big Billy Joel fan, but that’s the way Kevin describes it. The point is that they’re very tune oriented because that’s who I am, and that’s what I’m drawn to, but also my skill set deals.

B: Sure. Now your list of published songs includes this song cycle as well as American anthem, and Say Anything. Is that true?

G: Yes, Say Anything is a song that I wrote a long time ago that Nathan put on his record. Funny, that’s a song that I really envision being sung by Joe Cocker. That’s what I sort of wrote it as, but of course Nathan did a lovely job with it. What I heard in my head was a shredded vocal cord singing that kind of desperate song. That’s one of the great things about it; you get surprised when people pick up things and put their own stamp on them.

B: Sure. Would you say that is the number of your published songs?

G: Yeah, I probably have 50 songs. I still have to publish another volume of popular songs because some people want them, and that’s on my to do list. You know, truthfully Brandon, we’re talking about, and I understand because you’re doing this paper, but 90%-95% of what I do, is write lyrics for other people. So my workday is absorbed with meeting deadlines for these various projects-operas and the other things I’m working on. I’m working on a musical, but in terms of my song output, I haven’t written songs in quite a while. The truth is, my work as a composer is a sliver of my professional life, and that’s the reality of making a living. I’m getting paid to write these opera libretti and also I love doing it and working with these brilliant people. I’m just trying to be descriptive of the situation I’m in.

B: That’s great, I’m getting great stuff. You said roughly 50 songs?

G: Yeah.

B: Do you have a list of those you might be able to email to me?

G: I’ll try to email you a list of a bunch of songs. You know a lot of them are songs. A lot of them are done Brandon, but a lot of them are lead sheets. I was writing lead sheets songs because that’s what I could do.

B: Sure, sure. There’s no huge rush on that, but I could include your published songs as well as your unpublished songs until they do get published.

G: Ok. I’ll try to get that to you, ok?
B: That would be awesome. Could you talk about the premiere of Voices from World War II a little bit?

G: Sure. I’ll tell you how this song cycle came about. I was in Portland, Oregon, and I wanted to write some songs for Nathan who was already a good friend of mine and had sung some of my stuff. I got to know Nathan and his wife Julie when I was working at Utah Festival Opera— I was doing Gilbert and Sullivan’s Trial by Jury and I was playing the judge and Nathan was in the chorus as one of the soloists. It was a small part in this little operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan and he sang three little lines, and I turned to one of my colleagues and said well that’s the best voice at the festival and of course I was right. (laughter) This was before Nathan won the Metropolitan Opera Commission and his career exploded. He was already married at the time, he got married when he was really young and we became good friends, he had sung a lot of stuff I wrote. I had an idea to write a song cycle. The original idea was to write 5 songs based on anecdotes, which is what I did, but 5 songs from the different wars America has been involved in. So it would have been 1 song from, 1 memory from the revolutionary war, one from the civil war, wwi, wwii, and Vietnam maybe Korea, so that was the idea for the song cycle. I was working in Eugene, Oregon, I don’t remember what show I was doing, but I was spending a lot of time in Portland. Portland is a wonderful city, and it has the greatest bookstore in the country called Powell’s, which they have Powell’s online now, but at the time it was the largest bookstore in the country. They had new and used books on the shelf, which is incredible. They take in like 3000 books a day. So you can find a lot of stuff, which is out of print and so forth. I found a book called Voices from World War II. I have the book. I’m at a diner right now, but I could get you the information on that book.

B: Yeah, I would love that.

G: So I looked at this book and I realized, oh my goodness, I think I can use all these anecdotes from this book. And that’s what I did with the exception of Omaha Beach, which came from another source. That came from video footage that was during 1994- I guess that’s when I wrote this stuff- it was right around that time because it was the 50th anniversary of D-day. There was a lot of stuff on c-span. They were interviewing vets about their experiences and so forth, and one vet told a story that’s depicting in large measure, Omaha Beach the song, ok?

B: Sure.

G: Other than that memory, the other ones came from this book. You know, Howard Hawk’s thing, the Morrison shelter thing, and so forth. I wrote these texts based on these memories and then wrote the songs. I was just thumbing through the book stacks looking through these used books about war memories and I actually purchased a number of books at the time with the idea of what I just described to you, the memories from different wars, and of course I wound up, of course, going the direction I went. That’s how the song cycle came to be.

B: You said that you broke ground in 1994? Roughly?

G: Yeah, yeah.

B: Great.
G: I remember that because it took about a year, maybe less than a year to write the whole song cycle. I did other things too. When I say a year, it wasn’t like I was working for a year on the song cycle, at the time I was doing a lot of performing going around the country doing a lot of operetta.

B: So did it premiere in 1995?

G: I’m sorry, I don’t remember.

B: Fair enough.

G: Nathan sang the songs in recital all over the place. One of the recitals was reviewed; you can get the review at the New York Times; he sang at the YMCA, YMHA on 92nd street. It’s a concert hall—very respectable. That was when it was reviewed by the New York Times’ ok? That might have been the premiere. I don’t think it was the premiere actually, he probably sang them somewhere else but that was the big performance, because it was reviewed by the Times’ and it got a nice review. He sang it all over the place. I wanted to record the songs, and have a few of them on the record—on a cd rather—but that’s on the to do list.

B: Awesome. Now I see that these were originally composed for chamber orchestra. Did you have that idea?

G: No, no, no, no, no. That’s just not true.

B: That’s not true?

G: That’s probably on the internet. That’s not true. That is completely not true. These songs were conceived and written for piano and voice. That’s all.

B: I’m glad to hear that, actually.

G: And then what happened was after they had been done like 20 times around the world, some opportunities became available to have the songs orchestrated. They were done by the Isis Chamber Orchestra. They were first done at the University of Illinois, which Nathan is an alum there, he is now a professor there; both he and his wife are. Julie, his wife, did the orchestration of that version, but yeah, that is just not true. In my mind, it is just for voice and piano.

B: Good, I’m really glad to hear that.

G: Yeah, that’s what I think. That’s how they were conceived and that’s how I think they work best.

B: I’m glad to hear that. I know you said there have been numerous performances of this song cycle; do you have any idea of how many times it has been performed?

G: No I don’t, but I know it gets done a lot because I get ascap royalties, it gets done all over the place. I mean, don’t get me wrong, it’s not like a Schubert song cycle, it’s not like Winterreise, but it gets done a fair amount. I think my generation and yours; I think there’s a hunger for songs that bridge the gap between popular and classical. I think these songs are sort of in that in between spot, and I think they’re good on their own regardless of how you want to categorize
them, but I think that’s a part of the appeal; that they land in that space between popular song and art song.

B: Sure. I was given a recording of Nathan Gunn’s American Anthem and when I first heard your tunes I was immediately drawn to them.

G: Thank you.

B: What’s your compositional process when beginning a new work?

G: First of all, with song, because I think theatrically, because that’s basically what I do, I think that’s true for song writing as well; people always ask what comes first, the words or the music? My answer is, before the words or the music; the scene comes. You have to figure out the content of the song and what is the dramatic context for the song. At least, that’s for me, how songs emerge. In fact, it’s one thing to say a songs a love song, but to me it has to be about a specific person and a specific situation. It’s one thing to write a love song— I don’t know how to do that. You ask me to write a love song about a person who broke up with his girlfriend and he’s sitting at a bar when the girl walks in with another guy, then I can start; there’s some sort of dramatic context. I think with the World War II songs, is that each one of them is an anecdote, which has a beginning, middle and end, but it also comes from a life experience of a real character. So, in terms of compositional process, is to discover whom that person is, and why they feel the need to tell the story they’re about to tell. That’s step one. And then, principally, the lyrics come first and then I work on the music, but I ping pong back and forth sometimes.

B: Sure. And then in regards to breaking down texts and making them sing-able, do you think of a tune, or how does that work?

G: Well, it’s sort of like the chicken and the egg. It’s sort of hard to know how it all works, but one thing I can say is that I grew up singing, and I am a singer, albeit, not working as a singer anymore, and not good enough to sing on the operatic stage (laughter), but singing is important in my life. I’ve sung all these. I’ve sung Winterriese. I’ve sung Schöne Mullerin. I’ve sung all these things and all these show songs and popular songs. So, it’s sort of a natural process for me to think as a singer would think. I think if my songs have one particular strength, it is that they’re very sing-able because that’s who I am, you know?

B: Absolutely. Do you have a process for developing musical ideas?

G: No, I’m sorry. Again, because I’m not a trained composer I think it’s a little bit of habit stands. I fiddle with tunes; I fiddle with harmonic vocabulary for songs, but it truthfully is a very instinctual process. I say that not because of an applaud lessening, but it’s probably a byproduct of my limitations, rather than my assets, but I do what I do with my instincts.

B: In terms of an overview of Voices From World War II, I think I have most of that stuff…In terms of my performance guide; I want to talk briefly about each song, if that’s all right with you. Do you potentially have a score in front of you?

G: No, I’m sorry, I don’t, but I’ll do my best.

B: That’s all right. That’s fine. What did you learn about yourself as you worked on this song cycle?
G: No. I think it confirmed or reaffirmed something that I’d learned along the way, which is something that I had not even thought of; it’s something that Sondheim said, and the question was what do good songs have in common? There are all these different kinds of songs we’ve been talking about, whether it’s a Leonard Cohen song, or a Berlin song, or a Schubert song; what does each of the great songs have in common? What he said, and is something I think he’s right about, not surprisingly, is that they have a sense of surprise, and that somehow they allow you to view the world a little bit differently than you thought before you heard the song. You know, there is a way of saying I love you, there’s some way of exploring some aspect of the human condition; there’s some way in which, dramatically speaking, there’s some element of surprise, and I think that was what I was trying to keep my eye on in the songs because in each song, you know, the German U-boat captain, there’s actually a lyric that says I’m tired of this war and I have to destroy your ship but I don’t want to kill you. I think that added something that the audience didn’t know going in. Holding each other, too, there’s that moment in the song when the person is looking out and remembering this moment; what is that moment? In the end, what you’re really trying to do is get the audience to answer the question tell me more. That’s what I was trying to do with the songs. Of course, Morrison Shelter, the same thing where the guy admires this woman’s courage, and the fact that she asked all the questions about him and she’s here in this situation. So, I think it all falls in a question of where it starts and where is it going? Will it somehow engage you, by surprising you?

B: That’s great stuff. Throughout the course of this cycle, did you put in any rhythmic or melodic motives to bind everything together?

G: No. Leit motives in the entire song cycle, no. I mean if there are, they are unintentional.

B: There certainly are within each piece.

G: Yes, within each song there are musical themes, like in Omaha Beach and so forth, there are themes throughout the music I understand that, but as a cycle, no, I mean I’m not saying that they don’t exist, but that wasn’t part of my intention.

B: Right, right. That’s part of my job too, is to dig through the music and pull these things out. In Holding Each Other, I was drawn to that ethereal rolled chord, does that have any specific meaning?

G: I’m sorry Brandon. You’re breaking up. Can you repeat that?

B: Sure. In Holding Each Other, you have this ethereal sounding chord in the right hand of the accompaniment, would that be one of the motives in this piece?

G: I think it’s a representative motive, but I’ll let you, the performer, determine what it means. I don’t want to disappoint you, it was just an effect, an ethereal effect. To me, the most interesting thing musically, is that the chorus modulates.

B: Yes.

G: That’s the weird thing about the song. Before the choruses even, if I’m not mistaken, I believe the chorus modulates the first time through and in the middle of the chorus.

B: Yep.
G: And that is… I might be wrong, and I didn’t do it because I thought it had never been done before, but it’s pretty weird. The tune is a very traditional almost spiritual like tune. I think that’s the one thing musically that I remember sticking out, and thinking that’s pretty cool. One thing before it modulates and the second time through it’s in a different key; that happens all the time, but there’s actually a modulation in the middle of the chorus and that gives it a sort of transformative moment in terms of depicting what the story is all about.

B: Yeah, I thought that was really cool because all of those c-flats really sting, and that really just represents a biting, painful memory. I love that you said interpret this as you will, but I don’t want to be too far off on some of these…

G: [interrupting] I don’t think you should go there. Listen, just because something is in my head is a very limiting notion, I mean, hopefully if you like something that is good, then it will invite other interpretations. I mean, a most extreme example of this, and I’m not making any comparison, so don’t you dare suggest that I am, I’m just doing this to be descriptive; when you see a Shakespeare, there are lots of beautiful things that have been written about Shakespeare, that are not necessarily wrong, but Shakespeare was able to depict humanity and the human condition so incredibly well that there’s more there, you know there’s all sorts of sparks that fly in that other people can name and interpret, so feel free to interpret even if it’s not what was in my head. It doesn’t mean it’s not there. You know what I mean?

B: Sure. All right.

G: That’s my two cents. Again, it’s easier to see these things with real masters like Schubert and Shakespeare, but I’m just saying the point is even for a more modest work like mine, the principle is the same.

B: Ok. All right. I will definitely keep that in mind. That is one of my jobs for this project.

G: You have my blessing to go for it.

B: Thank you so much. (laughter) You know, I will definitely send you a copy if you’d like.

G: That would be great. I would love it man. Do you have my address? I forgot.

B: I do not have your address.

G: I’ll email it to you.

B: Do you have any specific words of advice for me as I continue to prepare this music? For artistic purposes? For specific vocal passages? Things like that?

G: I’ll give you one bit of advice, and this is probably good practice for my songs, but certainly for my songs and other songs as well, is that, [technically] I can’t give you help, you’re on your own, you sound great on the phone, and I’m sure it will be awesome. One thing I will say is when you’re singing the songs just remember that you’re creating them in that moment. You’re not relating something that you’ve read and you’re telling the audience about it, because right now you are those people and you are telling a story that has never been told before. When the words, I was a child when war was declared, imagine those words have never been sung before and furthermore you’re inventing them as you’re singing. Listen, I want to tell you, it’s like, you
know, we sit down at a table and I’m going to tell you a story. I want to tell you what happened. Give it a sense of immediacy that this is happening right now, in this moment. I think that goes for pretty much anything you sing. Particularly people who are singing art song, art popular songs or Billy Joel art songs, whatever you want to call them. You need that, because there is sense of preciousness of, you know I have prepares so freakin’ much, you know, I will now share this with you; I have listened to this phrase and I have practiced this 400,000 times in a practice room. You need to do all of that, don’t get me wrong, you need to do all of that so you’re ready to rock and roll when the moment happens, but when the moment happens, live in the moment. That’s my advice. That’s certainly true for these songs, but these are story songs, and you’re telling these stories for the first time; they’ve never been told before, and these words are popping into your head for the first time as you’re singing.

B: Sure.

G: And that will give it a sense of immediacy and will sort of bless the moment, you know as a cosmic egg is cracking that is about to bloom. That’s what you want.

B: Gene, I try to live my life that way my friend.

G: That’s good. Good luck with your project. I wish you all the best. I would love to hear a recording of you, and I would also love to see what you write.

B: That would be great. Could I ask for just five more minutes if you have it?

G: Sure.

B: Was this cycle composed with the intent that it should be performed in its entirety or could they be excerpted?

G: No. I’m happy when anyone wants to sing the songs. They can be performed as a whole or individually, I think.

B: Great. Because you’re a singer, these pieces can be used for the purposes of teaching, because they all present specific technical things as well.

G: Yeah, they’re not easy. They are not easy songs.

B: They’re not at all, but they’re wonderful.

G: I must say, I knew Nathan was singing them, and Nathan’s technique is sort of perfect, so that opened up a lot of possibilities. I don’t think they’re ridiculously hard, but they’re rangy, there’s no question about it. They’re rangy.

B: The a-flat at the end…

G: [interrupting] yeah, I know. I reluctantly put that in because I knew how hard that is for people to do, but Nathan had it, so…

B: Well, luckily I have it too, so…(laughter)

G: Excellent.
B: You said you were married?
G: Yeah.
B: What’s your wife’s name?
G: Her name is Kristina Lechowskki, and she spells Kristina with a K.
B: Ok, cool.
G: She’s Polish. She speaks Polish. She’s American, but both her parents are Polish. She was raised in Houston.
B: Do you guys have children?
G: No, we don’t have kids.
B: Do you have pets?
G: No, but we have to get a dog. Hopefully by the time you have this cycle we’ll have a doggy.
B: (laughter) Fair enough. Do you currently live in New York City?
G: Yeah, we live up by Columbia University.
B: Oh, wow. Cool. Is that up at like 120th and Amsterdam?
G: 123rd and Amsterdam. I am at a diner right now at 123rd and Amsterdam.
B: Love it. Love it. Gosh, do you have any other quotable things for me as I go forward?
G: I think you’re ready to go and have no fear. Embrace things with courage and you’ll be fine. It sounds like you’re well on your way. You know the songs really well, obviously, you’re great, your questions have been great, and again don’t worry about making…you can justify your work…don’t worry about what I think. I just wrote the songs.
B: Would you potentially have information for Lee Musiker?
G: I will tell you this, he is too busy to be contacted at the moment; I know that. He’s the busiest man in show business. He went to the Manhattan School of Music and Eastman and he has been one of the most prominent jazz pianists in the last 25 years, in particular playing for singers, he is Tony Bennett’s music director, he played with Louis McGovern for 3 years. He plays with Barb O’Keefe and Barb Cook’s and Tony Bennett’s music director. In terms of the American Song Book, God knows that’s the number one job in this country. He’s a spectacular pianist. He’s a spectacular musician. I said I met him at Eastman back in the day.
B: You were students together?
G: We were students at Eastman together. He was getting his masters in jazz composition and at the time I was an undergraduate. He was not a close friend of mine, but was someone that I admired. I use to hear him and a bunch of other guys all play jazz in Rochester at Acquava. I bumped into him in New York soon after moving back from Europe and I said you know I have
some songs I’d love for you to play through, and that’s how the whole thing started. I don’t see him frequently, but when there’s someone I want to play something of this style, he’s the only person I go to, when he’s available.

B: In terms of developing the accompaniment line, you were the one that primarily developed those, but he sort of put the finishing touches on them?

G: Yes, though I would say he did a lot more than putting on the finishing touches. He made a lot of suggestions in terms of the accompaniment. You know, I played them through, described what I wanted, and then he would definitely fill it in. That’s why I put his name on everything to acknowledge his contributions, which is enormous to the finished product.

B: Sure thing. Well, Gene, I really appreciate your time. I really got a kick out of meeting you in Dallas for Moby Dick.

G: Great. Well, good luck with this and I was just in Dallas two days ago.

B: Is it still warm down there?

G: It’s warmer there than it is in New York, but it was like 55-60. Maybe 65. But it’s colder here in New York.

B: Well I’ve moved from Dallas to South Dakota; I got a job teaching here at the University.

G: Oh, Fantastic.

B: So I’m sort of in a new place in my life, but I’m also going to be singing Schaunard in Des Moines Opera’s La Boheme this coming summer.

G: Oh, awesome. That’s great. I’m real glad to hear it. Listen, I appreciate your enthusiasm for the songs and I’m sure you’re going to write a great thing, and good luck with your doctorate. Your passion for music is infectious, that’s wonderful.

B: Well, thank you. I look forward to sharing these songs with, as Nathan Gunn has, you know I want to share them with the world.

G: All right. Keep it going.

B: Thanks, Gene. I appreciate your time.


B: Bye.
Dec 22, 2010

To whom it may concern,

I gladly give permission to Brandon Hendrickson to publish excerpts from my songs including "Voice from WWII" in his dissertation. If Mr. Hendrickson wants to publish his paper, he has my permission to do so and include the excerpts.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

460 La Salle St. Apt 1012
NY, NY 10027
VITA

Brandon Hendrickson, baritone, is a performer on both the recital and operatic stages. His roles include Leo (I Can’t Stand Wagner), Papageno (The Magic Flute), Germont (La Traviata), Bob (The Old Maid and the Thief), Guglielmo (Cosi fan tutte), Marcello (La Bohème), Albert (Werther), John Brooke (Little Women), Constantine (The Seagull), and Demetrius (A Midsummer Night’s Dream). His oratorio credits include Handel’s Messiah, Haydn’s Creation, Bach’s Magnificat, Faure’s Requiem, Duruflé’s Requiem, Mendelssohn’s Elijah, and Dubois’ Seven Last Words of Christ. As a recitalist, Brandon has performed in Iowa, South Dakota, Texas, and Louisiana. Mr. Hendrickson is currently Assistant Professor of Music-Voice/Opera at The University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

Mr. Hendrickson received his Bachelor of Music Education from Simpson College. He is a graduate from Louisiana State University with a Master of Music in voice, and is completing the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in vocal performance with a minor in voice pedagogy.