A Performer's Guide to Richard Danielpour's A Woman's Life

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A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO RICHARD DANIELPOUR’S

A WOMAN’S LIFE

A Monograph

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by
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ABSTRACT

This document serves as a guide to the song cycle *A Woman's Life* composed by Richard Danielpour in 2007. The document presents relevant biographical information on the composer and a discussion on his influences and style. Each movement of the cycle has been selected by Dr. Maya Angelou from her poetry collections and collectively forms the narrative of *A Woman's Life*. A brief discussion is presented on the life and some of the works of Angelou. Readers of this document will gain further insight into the life of soprano Angela Brown, for whom the cycle was composed. A discussion on the performance history of the work will also be presented. This will include suggestions and recommendations for the performance of each song within the cycle.
INTRODUCTION

Richard Danielpour composed the song cycle *A Woman’s Life* for the opera singer Angela Brown in 2007. Danielpour and Brown had previously collaborated on Danielpour’s opera *Margaret Garner* in 2005. It was this encounter that inspired him to compose a work expressly for her. Danielpour consulted with Brown to identify poetry of interest to her. She unhesitatingly suggested the poetry of Maya Angelou.\(^1\) Danielpour had previously collaborated with Maya Angelou and approached her with his desire for poems that addressed issues of womanhood from childhood to old age. He was delighted when she revealed that she already had poems that track the life of a woman throughout her collections of poetry. Danielpour has set seven of the eight poems Angelou presented. The work was composed for soprano and orchestra and was later reduced for piano. Angelou described the subject matter of the narrative as being universal and relevant to the lives of all women.\(^2\) Danielpour has described his compositional technique as being a combination of several styles.\(^3\) Chapter one presents a discussion of the life, influences and style of Danielpour. Chapter two presents information on Dr. Maya

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Angelou, soprano Angela Brown, and the performance history and reception of the work. Chapter three presents a detailed look at the work, which includes information on the poetry and the musical setting. This also takes into consideration the vocal line, its range, form, rhythmic and harmonic structure, and the musical and the artistic demands. Lastly, performance suggestions are presented.

* A Woman's Life demonstrates the genius of Maya Angelou, one of the greatest artists of our times. Richard Danielpour, a composer who is making significant contributions in his field, has elevated the work while maintaining the purity of Angelou’s heightened speech throughout the cycle. 
CHAPTER 1: RICHARD DANIELPOUR

A Portrait of the Composer

Richard Danielpour was born in New York on January 28, 1956 to Iranian immigrant parents, Dr. Said and Mehri Danielpour. The couple later gave birth to Richard Danielpour’s sister Debbie and remained in New York until 1963. It was during this year that the Danielpours relocated to Iran. Dr. Said Danielpour was a businessman and poet. He relocated his family in order to attend to some business interests. In an interview with Royal S. Brown the composer recounts that the trip originally scheduled for a few months lasted for almost a year. While in Iran, the young Danielpour became very ill with kidney inflammation. His illness limited his school attendance. With little forms of entertainment available he recalls how he was “confined” to his mother’s record collection. The collection included works by Mozart, Chopin, Debussy, and Tchaikovsky. The composer explained how he devoured those recordings because “frankly there wasn’t anything more interesting.” These composers became some of his earliest influences.

Upon their return to the USA the family settled in the Palm Beach, Florida area. By this time Danielpour’s mother was engrossed in her career as a sculptor.

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Among her commissions have been the Shah of Iran and Empress Farah, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and baseball Hall of Fame’s, Henry “Hank” Aaron.\(^6\)

Danielpour’s early music education was minimal. His sister began taking lessons when he was eleven or twelve. Though his parents strongly encouraged him to take lessons, he refused. He recounts how his heroes at that time had nothing to do with music but instead were the stars of the baseball field. That inspired him to become a batboy for the Atlanta Braves at the age of thirteen. Danielpour admits that he secretly thought his friends would ostracize him if they knew he was taking piano lessons. He describes himself as a precocious child who taught himself piano because it was “fairly interesting and since John Lennon and Paul McCartney played the piano, I decided I might as well do it too.”\(^7\) As a result Danielpour began secretly learning his sister’s lessons. He taught himself to read music enough to enable him to write down his compositions and it wasn’t until the age of sixteen that he started formal music lessons.

Danielpour identifies one of his early influences as Philippe Drevet. Drevet, who resides in southern France and Florida, left a lasting impression on the composer and they continue to maintain a close friendship. It was Drevet who first taught the young Danielpour how to listen attentively to what he was playing and how to process and absorb what he was hearing. Danielpour credits his time with his piano teacher Lorin Hollander in New York, as being the most influential. While studying piano and composition at the New England Conservatory of Music he would take the train to New

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\(^7\) Royal S. Brown, “An Interview with Richard Danielpour,” Fanfare xx/5 (May/June 1996-7), 44.
York to have afternoon-long piano lessons with Hollander. Danielpour describes Hollander’s approach to teaching as similar to that of his previous teacher, Drevet. Hollander also stressed the importance of listening and absorbing every note.  

Danielpour attended Oberlin College for one year as a pianist. He later transferred to the New England Conservatory where he earned a Bachelor of Music in 1980. He later earned a Master of Music in 1982 and a doctoral degree in 1986 from the Juilliard School. His composition teachers included Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin, and he studied piano with Theodore Lettvin, and Gabriel Chodos. As a student Danielpour excelled as a pianist. In his interview with Ann McCutchan, Danielpour explained:

I also started musical life as a pianist and I was fairly good, very capable. But I grew up around some great pianists — in the practice room next to me at New England Conservatory was Christopher O’Riley playing Petrouchka so loudly that I couldn’t hear myself. Here was someone with a big sound and a big technique, and eventually I realized the thing to do was to ask him to play my music, which I did.

It was Hollander who encouraged Danielpour to pursue composing fulltime. Danielpour recalls him saying, “Why are you wasting your time moving your fingers? There are lots of us who can be your hands. Just write. We’ll take care of the rest.”


Danielpour continued to perform and compose simultaneously until the age of twenty-four. It was then that he realized the difficulty of trying to balance both extremely demanding areas. Concert performance was considered a viable way to make a living as a musician. Embarking on a career in composition was considered high risk at the time, as very few composers actually were able to acquire recording contracts. Despite the possibility of facing a life filled with financial challenges as a composer, Danielpour made his decision and it would change his life significantly. When asked many years later about this choice Danielpour was very open and honest. He explains:

There are two basic reasons I compose. One is that composing is what I do best, and the other is that I can’t possibly conceive of wanting to do anything else. Life is hard enough without having to do something one dislikes. And to some extent, writing has got to be a natural process. It has to be the thing you do better than anything else.\(^{12}\)

Danielpour’s decision to solely pursue his compositional career was a good choice as he immediately gained much support and attention early in his career. His many awards include a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, Charles Ives Fellowship, and a Fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin. He was a recipient of fellowships from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He received five fellowships from MacDowell Colony, a Jerome Foundation Award, and the Bearns Prize from Columbia University. Danielpour has received grants and residencies from the Barlow Foundation, Yaddo, the Copland House, and the American Academy in Rome. Danielpour has also received two Rockefeller Foundation Grants and a Grammy Award.\(^{13}\)

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Works

Richard Danielpour’s compositions have been in high demand from early in his career. He is only the third composer ever signed to an exclusive recording contract by Columbia/Sony. The other two were Igor Stravinsky and Aaron Copland. He has been commissioned by some of the world’s leading musical institutions. These include the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, the National Symphony, Pacific Symphony, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Absolute Vodka, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, the Isaac and Linda Stern Foundation, Concertante, and most recently, the Sejong Soloists. G. Schirmer, Associated Music Publisher, has published much of Danielpour’s early output. Since 2009 Lean Kat Music, Bill Holab Music, has published his later works.

Danielpour has a total of one hundred and six published works. This includes seventeen orchestra works and nineteen works for different types of soloist and orchestra. He has fifteen works for small ensemble, two works for soloist with large ensemble, and ten works for soloist and small ensemble. He has published three works for wind ensemble and four pieces for solo piano. His choral output includes one work for a cappella chorus and four works composed for chorus and orchestral ensemble. He has composed one opera and two ballets.


Danielpour’s music has been championed by such soloists as Yo-Yo Ma, Jessye Norman, Dawn Upshaw, Emanuel Ax. Chamber ensembles including the Guarneri, Emerson, American String Quartets and conductors such as Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Masur, Charles Dutoit, David Zinman, Zdenek Macal, and Philippe Entremont have all supported Danielpour’s output. Danielpour’s critically acclaimed opera, Margaret Garner, written in collaboration with Nobel Laureate librettist Toni Morrison, premiered in May 2005 at the Michigan Opera Theatre and received its New York premiere in 2007 at New York City Opera, conducted by George Manahan. It is the success of the opera that led to the creation of Danielpour’s most recent success, the song cycle A Woman’s Life.\(^{16}\) The song cycle will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

**Style and Process**

Richard Danielpour has become one of the most sought-after composers of his generation. He is described as a composer whose voice is distinctively American. His style is of a rich neo-Romantic heritage with influences from pivotal composers like Britten, Copland, Bernstein, and Barber.\(^{17}\) Danielpour has commented that "music [must] have an immediate visceral impact and elicit a visceral response."\(^{18}\) This natural and instinctual progression in his music heightens its appeal. Throughout Danielpour’s music expansive, sweeping, romantic gestures can be heard. A signature element is his use of distinctive rhythmic patterns. These energetic rhythmic accentuations are often contrasted

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\(^{18}\) Ibid.
with striking, introspective, and beautiful melodies. His orchestrations are described as rich, enticing, and brilliantly juxtaposed. All these elements of contrast could easily overwhelm the senses of the unsuspecting listener. Danielpour, however, is able to achieve a cohesiveness that only few can create.

Laurie Shulman points out that like many American composers of his generation, Danielpour no longer is associated with the serial techniques, which were important to his early works. Shulman writes that Danielpour has long since found a voice that we can describe only as distinctly American. Although he is often described as a neo-romantic composer, this “American voice” is perhaps as a result of his broadly based and widely varied musical vocabulary. Danielpour credits the English rock group The Beatles as an early influence. His style draws freely from pop, rock, and jazz idioms. He cites the music of John Adams, Christopher Rouse, and Joseph Schwantner as later influences particularly in his use of percussion throughout his work. In his vocal works, which display what Schulman refers to as “pristine idiomatic writing,” he has collaborated increasingly with living poets. Many of his instrumental works are given evocative titles that refer to extra-musical sources.

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21 Ibid.
Schulman explains that he balances surface clarity with complex formal structures. He often combines simple elements with more involved and complicated textures, and he uses a great variety of color. 

Danielpour’s music is often described as accessible as it seems seamless in its flow and logical in its structure. Robert Schwartz in an interview mentions that even on first hearing, Danielpour’s music imparts certain inevitability. In another interview Danielpour explains this by saying:

There has to be something in the piece that pushes everything forward so that each moment beckons the next one... My goal is to have the listeners mind never wandering and in order to make sure that that happens you have to have a piece in which each moment that follows the previous moment makes sense, is never predictable, but always inevitable.

Robert Schwartz explains that this inevitability, when combined with tonal harmonies, American-sounding rhythmic accentuations, an easy lyricism, and a keen understanding of instrumental color, creates Danielpour’s winning compositional formula.

As mentioned before, there is a progressive flow in his melodies that heightens the universal appeal. He often juxtaposes flowing melodies with contemporary rhythmic motives and jazz harmonies. This sometimes blurs the lines of traditional harmonic function. His music often possesses a certain simplicity with which his audiences are able to easily identify.

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22 Laurie Shulman. "Danielpour, Richard" Grove Music Online.

23 Richard Danielpour, Interview by Carline Waugh, January/March 2015. Appendix A.

Below that seemingly simple surface lays complex modalities with energetic rhythmic accents. When asked about the importance of accessibility of his music Danielpour had this to say:

My favorite music is the kind of music which is simple on the surface but complex underneath (like Mozart!) the surface, ...if it's complex on the surface it becomes not accessible on the first hearing and I found that the music that is very complex on the surface is usually quite simple underneath it all... I’ve never "tried" to make music accessible to the listener - that's just part of having a natural inclination to know what works in music - that's called talent... (Fortunately I have a little of it....) 25

Leonard Bernstein has been significantly influential in the life of Danielpour and has been a major champion of his music. In an interview Danielpour discussed his outlook on composing as a career and Bernstein’s influence on this. Danielpour explains:

Bernstein once told me that in the end, what a composer really does is share love. I’ve heard the same thing said in different ways, by people who are courageous enough to say it. By making music, a composer is sharing something ineffable— it’s a natural process of putting it out and having it come back. I don’t write music because I want to express myself. That is something that happens in spite of me. For me, more and more, writing is about listening and waiting. It’s about receiving rather than willing something into being. 26

Danielpour “shares love” or gives of himself as a composer but also as he is an educator.

He serves on the faculties of both the Curtis Institute of Music and the Manhattan School of Music and he presents master classes and participates in residencies throughout the United States.

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25 Richard Danielpour, Interview by Carline Waugh.

CHAPTER: 2 MAYA ANGELOU, ANGELA BROWN, AND THE PREMIER

A Portrait of the Poet

On May 28, 2014 the world mourned the death of the poet, author, singer, dancer, and actress Dr. Maya Angelou. A complete discussion of the life and works of this phenomenal artist would extend beyond the scope of this paper, as her contributions have been vast. Significant research has been conducted and presented about her life and works. Angelou has also written seven autobiographies adding to the abundance of literature. I have dedicated a part of this chapter to discuss how a few of her written works have informed our knowledge of her life and story.

Angelou’s first autobiographical work, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* gives us much insight into the early years of her life. From this we know that Angelou was born Marguerite Annie Johnson on April 4, 1928. She was born in St. Louis, Missouri to Vivian (Baxter) Johnson, a nurse and card dealer and Bailey Johnson, a doorman and dietitian for the United States Navy. Vivian and Bailey Johnson endured a difficult divorce. As a result Angelou and her older brother Bailey Jr. were sent to live with their grandmother in Stamps, Arkansas.27

When Angelou was eight years old her father returned her and her brother to their mother's care in St. Louis. It was here that Angelou was sexually abused and raped by her mother's boyfriend, a man named Freeman. She told her brother, who informed the rest of her family. After a short trial Freeman was found guilty but was jailed for only one day.

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Shortly after his release he was beaten to death presumably by Angelou's uncles. Angelou and her brother were again sent to their grandmother. While there, Angelou would be rendered mute for the next five years. She later credits a teacher and friend of her family, Mrs. Bertha Flowers, and her study of books and literature with helping her to regain her speech.28

After graduating from the eighth grade, Angelou and her brother moved to California where they resided with their mother once again. While there, she demonstrated her potential for success as she worked as the first black female streetcar conductor in San Francisco. Angelou had difficulties during her teenage years with her father’s girlfriend and as a result she wandered around southern California for some time. At one point she was even forced to reside in a junkyard. After reestablishing a close relationship with her mother, Angelou gave birth to her son, Guy Johnson at the age of seventeen years. She recounts much of this period of her life in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which was published in 1969 by Random House publishing.29

*Gather Together in My Name* is Angelou’s second autobiography published in 1974. This tracks her life from the ages of seventeen to nineteen. During this period she struggled to provide for herself and her son. She was introduced to drugs, prostitution, and other illicit activities and wrestled for economic survival as a teenage mother.30

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29 Ibid.

Despite many challenges, Angelou excelled as a result of her business acumen along with her participation in a production of *Porgy and Bess*, which toured Europe. This tour was sponsored by the United States State Department and provided much of the material for her third autobiography *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas* 31 This volume which was published in 1976 recounts a time of great success for Angelou as a dancer. During this period she also faced many personal difficulties. During this time her grandmother died, she married and divorced shortly after, and she struggled bitterly with isolation from her son Guy.

Angelou’s family and those within close circles referred to her by various names. She maintained her stage name ‘Rita Johnson’ until her marriage to Tosh Angelos in 1952.32 At that time, at the behest of her manager, the name change occurred from ‘Rita Johnson’ to ‘Maya Angelou’. This was in an attempt to maintain a unique stage personality. *The Heart of a Woman* and *All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes* are the works that track Angelou’s life as an activist involved in social causes. We also see her experiences as she relocated to Ghana, West Africa. Angelou’s later encounters are depicted in *A Song Flung Up to Heaven* and *Mom & Me & Mom*. These narratives track her return to the United States and give a detailed look at her relationship with her mother Vivian Baxter. Most of what we know about Angelou comes from her autobiographies as they span a significant portion of her life.

Angelou’s poetry also gives a detailed look at some of her experiences. Her first collection of poetry, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’fore I Diiie* was published in

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31 Lyman B. Hagen, *Heart of a Woman, Mind of a Writer, and Soul of a Poet*, 3.

1971. This was almost two years after the publication of her first autobiographical book. This collection of poetry also allows readers to get little glimpses of some of her experiences, yet they present themes in a universal manner. These themes include the struggles of women and their ability to overcome challenges.

*Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well* was published in 1975. This volume consists of thirty-six poems. The poems are divided into five sections. Collectively the poems cover themes associated with fears of growing old, loneliness associated with the loss of love, and isolation. *And Still I Rise* is a collection of poems that celebrate life and the human ability to overcome obstacles. This volume was published in 1978 and is the most critically acclaimed volume even today. Love, loss, longing, solitude, celebration, survival, and oppression are themes within this collection. Many of these themes are also present in the volume *Shaker, Why Don’t You Sing?* which was published in 1983. Angelou also discusses everyday occurrences and the celebration of marriage and mourning of its end. The collection is also considered a reflection on the end of her own marriage. *Phenomenal Woman* and *Poetry for Young People* are few other noteworthy works that present themes from Angelou’s own life.

Angelou’s life and works have served as an inspiration to many including Angela Brown, the soprano for whom the cycle *A Woman’s Life* was written. In an interview, Angela Brown stated that in meeting with Angelou to discuss the cycle “she wanted to know about my life… I thought it was going to be a thing where she was going to pen something about my life, but it worked out better.” Angelou selected individual poems from some of her collections to create *A Woman’s Life.*

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33 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15 2015. Appendix B.
These poems represent some of Angelou’s own narrative but are also experiences that are universal, as any woman can identify with many of the themes.

A Portrait of the Performer

American soprano Angela Brown was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1964. She was born to parents Freddie Mae and Walter Clyde Brown. Some of her earliest musical experiences occurred while singing at her grandfather’s church in Indianapolis. Brown attended the Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis where she enjoyed singing in the school’s choirs. She also performed in the school’s musicals.\(^{34}\) Robert Fleck was her high school music teacher who encouraged her early demonstrations of talent in the late 1970s. Brown’s father who was a practical man encouraged her to explore other vocations as a fallback trade. Brown started working as a dietary assistant at a Methodist Hospital as a result of her father’s encouragement.\(^{35}\)

Brown experienced the tragic loss of her younger brother who died from bacterial meningitis. She was devastated by the loss, which caused her to question and assess her religious beliefs. Her early Baptist upbringing could not fill the void of losing her brother and as a result she turned to the Seventh-day Adventist Church for refuge. This pointed Brown to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church’s school Oakwood University in Huntsville


Alabama. This school has a rich history of music education and Brown attended with the intention of becoming a professional gospel singer.\(^{36}\)

While at Oakwood, Brown studied with Ginger Bazley who acted not only as a voice teacher but also as a mentor to her. Bazley encouraged her to pursue classical voice. Bazley recommended that Brown study at Indiana University with her former teacher Virginia Zeani. While at Indiana University Brown was challenged by the Romanian dramatic coloratura Zeani who told her that a gospel career would be easy for her to achieve. Zeani however pointed out that becoming the world’s next \textit{Spinto} or Verdi Soprano would require much effort.\(^{37}\) Brown embraced this challenge and after graduating from Indiana University in 1997 she went on to win many awards and distinctions including the National Metropolitan Opera Council Auditions and the Indiana University African American Arts Institute’s inaugural Herman C. Hudson Alumni Award in 2006. The Alumni award is given annually to recognize outstanding contributions made in the arts by former members of the institute. Ms. Brown was featured in “Nineteen Stars of Indiana,” a book by Michael S. Maurer about nineteen, living Hoosier women with successful and inspirational life stories, released by Indiana University Press in December 2008. In Fall 2009, she received the Governor’s Arts Award from the Governor of Indiana. She also received a Spirit of the Prairie Award from Conner Prairie in Indiana and was inducted into the Indianapolis Public Schools Hall of Fame.\(^{38}\)

\(^{36}\) Evan West, “The Soprano Angela Brown Already Knows She’s Diva. This Month She Gets to Show the World.”

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

Brown greatly admires American soprano Leontyne Price and her portrayal of Aida has often been compared favorably to that of Ms. Price’s. She has been engaged by most of the leading opera houses and orchestras. These include the Metropolitan Opera, National Opera of Paris, Bilbao Opera- Spain, Teatro La Fenice, Hamburg Opera, Vienna Staatsoper, Capetown Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Pacific, Florentine Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Opera Birmingham, Dayton Opera, Florida Grand Opera, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia, Leipzip Radio Orchestra and many others. Her early success as Aida was immediately followed by the world premier performances of Richard Danielpour’s opera Margaret Garner in the role of Cilla with Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, and Michigan Opera Theater.39 It is this collaboration with Danielpour that ultimately led to the creation of the cycle, A Woman’s Life.

Angela Brown portrayed the character Cilla, the mother of Margret Garner’s husband in Danielpour’s opera Margaret Garner. This role was originally written for soprano Jessye Norman. When Ms. Norman withdrew from the production Brown was selected as a replacement. The reviews have been highly favorable for Brown’s performance of this role and her performance was an immediate inspiration for Danielpour. When asked about Browns performance, Danielpour had this to say:

Angela Brown in many ways stole the show at the premiere of Margaret Garner on May 7, 2005 in Detroit... It was because of her extraordinary voice and her

ability to deliver what was a secondary role in such an extraordinary way that I wanted to give her something of her own to sing.  

Danielpour enjoyed his work with Brown and both anticipated the opportunity to work together again and Danielpour conceived writing a song cycle for Brown. She immediately suggested setting the words of American poet, Maya Angelou. Danielpour, who had previously worked with Angelou for his work, Portraits, was eager to become immersed again in Angelou's legendary wisdom and the astounding beauty of her words.  

Angelou presented Danielpour with eight poems. Jessica Bliss and MiChelle Jones of The Tennessean paper described the day Danielpour told Angelou he wanted to create a musical piece based on her written work. Bliss and Jones tells us that he sat with Angelou — a woman he calls his "dear friend and spiritual mentor" — at a dining room table in her New York townhouse. She held his hand, closed her eyes and read aloud from a suite of poems she deemed perfect for the piece he envisioned — a cycle of a woman's life from childhood to old age. At times, she started singing and clapping along with the poems, and, at times, she repeated lines that were not repeated on the page. Danielpour in this interview describes the reading with much reverence. He states: "It was one of the greatest performances I have ever witnessed."  

Angelou’s dramatic

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40 Richard Danielpour, Interview by Carline Waugh, January/March 2015. Appendix A.


reading would become a significant inspiration for his setting of the text. When asked about the factors that inspired his writing Danielpour responded: “...the only thing that really affected it was the text itself and the way Maya Angelou read the text to me, she first introduced me to the poems in July 2006...”\textsuperscript{43}

Philip Lutz points out that Danielpour selected seven poems, which explore the complete life cycle of a woman from the innocent and exuberant childhood through sensual passion and romantic love to a resigned and reconciliatory old age. In the same interview Danielpour states that Ms. Angelou stressed the universal range of the poems. “They’re about all women’s lives,” she said.\textsuperscript{44} He points out that Angelou combines an explicit narrative, which is sometimes veiled with metaphors.

**The Premier of *A Woman’s Life***

Composer Burkhardt Reiter describes Danielpour’s musical treatment of the texts as eloquently set allowing the poetic themes to reside at the composition’s aesthetic forefront. He writes that the harmonic language of “*Life* is typical of Danielpour’s palette, replete with not-so-hidden allusions to Bernstein and Copland, packaged in a tidy and easily accessed formal design.”\textsuperscript{45}

In October 2009 the Pittsburgh Symphony’s Principal Guest Conductor Leonard Slatkin led the orchestra in the world premiere of *A Woman’s Life*. Angela Brown who is

\textsuperscript{43} Richard Danielpour, Interview by Carline Waugh, January/March 2015. Appendix A.


well known for her passionate performances, presented the cycle with much stage command that is described by Reiter in his review. He discusses her dramatic personification of the texts and how she created a seamless transition creating a narrative of one individual through all seven phases of the poems.46

The initial program with the Pittsburg Symphony was balanced with Peter Mennin’s Concertato for Orchestra (Moby Dick) and Sibelius’s Symphony No. 2. The reception of A Woman’s Life was favorable at this premier and has since been positive.

The work has won over critics and audiences alike. Reiter in his review writes:

The moment holding the sparsest orchestration was the most fascinating in the work. Danielpour’s setting of the cycle’s penultimate poem, ‘My Life Has Turned to Blue’, was predominantly scored for Brown, the orchestral chimes, vibraphone, and harp. The interlude quality of the movement, with ethereal rolls on the chimes and a bluesy melodic motive traded between the voice and vibraphone, created a pensive atmosphere that exquisitely prepared for the final song’s fully orchestrated ‘Many and More’, a lush movement signifying the peaceful acceptance of the end of a well-lived and loved life.47

The world premiere recording of A Woman’s Life took place in 2013 with the Nashville Symphony, Maestro Gaincarlo Guerrero, and Angela Brown. The album, which is 1:09:55 long, features three of Danielpour’s compositions, Darkness in the Ancient Valley, Lacrimae Beati, and A Woman’s Life. Reviews of the album have also been favorable. On March 27, 2011 the first public performance of the piano-reduced version of A Woman’s Life took place at the Copland House in Mount Kisco, New York. Pianist Michael Boriskin joined soprano Angela Brown for this presentation. Philip Lutz writes that despite the enthusiastic reception for the orchestrated version, a similar reception for the piano reduction may not guaranteed. Richard Danielpour however assuages his fears

46 Burkhardt Reiter, "A Woman's Life."

47 Ibid.
by explaining that symphonic compositions by pianists tend to translate relatively effectively into keyboard works. Angela Brown joins in the interview to dispel all fears as she explains that what may be lost in a scaled-down version is less important than what may be gained in dramatic impact in the 100-seat salon at Copland House. She explains that the work seems tailor-made for such a space that offers intimacy. It is here a singer, buoyed by the piece’s robust syntax, may feel a heightened urgency to reach out and tell the story.  

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CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION OF POETRY, MUSIC, AND PERFORMANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cycle

As stated earlier, A Woman’s Life is song cycle for the soprano voice. It was originally composed for soprano and orchestra and was later reduced for soprano and piano. The cycle tracks the life of a woman from childhood to old age. The poems have been taken from several volumes of Dr. Maya Angelou’s collections. They collectively create a vibrant, sensual, and lucid narrative. The work starts with the voice of a little girl. Themes associated with adolescent girls are then explored. Later, a woman who is exploring cultural and social identity is encountered. Finally, we see a mature woman who has lived, loved, and lost. The work flows seamlessly from one phase to another and may be considered as a portrayal of the life of a single individual. Soprano Angela Brown, for whom the work was created, has stated that this is not necessarily a portrait of a single character. She instead refers to the work as one that captures the different phases in the cycle of womanhood and may represent all women. She states that in her performances of the work she seeks to represent different female characters, each at a different stage of life.49

Angelou’s sinuous lyrics when combined with Danielpour’s use of a lush harmonic language and energetic rhythmic figures present this work that acts as a heightened form of expression. His frequent use of syncopated rhythmic patterns, reoccurring triplet figures, and contrasting sparse and complex textures, creates a cycle

49 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
that belongs within the standard vocal repertoire. The simplistic elegance of Angelou’s verses is matched equally with Danielpour’s compositional style, which possesses its own elegance. This cycle is well suited for a lyric or a dramatic soprano who is able to meet vocal and dramatic challenges that the narrative presents. Angela Brown warns that performers must approach the work with much imagination, as each movement of the cycle will present varying challenges.\(^{50}\) Throughout this chapter a comprehensive study of each song will follow. Performance suggestions will also be presented.

1. Little Girl Speakings

**Basic Characteristics**

- **Song Form:** Modified Strophic
- **Vocal Line:** The vocal line is supported by accompaniment. Motivic repetition occurs throughout all three verses of the song. Numerous leaps within the vocal line may be difficult to maneuver.
- **Range:** D\(_3\) to F\(_5\)
- **Metric Organization:** 3/4 and 3/2
- **Rhythm:** Syncopated patterns throughout accompaniment and vocal line will prove challenging.
- **Accompaniment:** Fairly sparse texture.

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\(^{50}\) Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
• Expression and Tempo Indications: ♩ =80, Grazioso (graceful), L’istesso tempo (same tempo), pochissimo ritardando (slightly getting slower), a tempo (back to original tempo).

• Length: 3 minutes 22 seconds.

Poetry

Ain’t nobody better’n my Daddy,
you keep yo’ quaer,
I ain’t yo’ daughter,
Ain’t nobody better’n my Daddy.

Ain’t nothing prettier’n my dollie,
heard what I said,
don’t pat her head,
Ain’t nothing prettier’n my dollie.

No lady cookinger than my Mommy,
smell that pie,
see I don’t lie,
No lady cookinger than my Mommy. 51

* quaer- a quarter of a dollar, 25 cents.
*cookinger- cooks well

Song Overview

“Little Girl Speakings” is found in Dr. Angelou’s second collection of poetry Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well. This collection was published in 1975. “Little Girl Speakings” presents the thoughts of a precocious child who believes that her father and her doll are the best in the world. She also considers her mother to be among the finest cooks. She expresses this with innocence but much authority. Danielpour presents a

12-bar introduction consisting of slowly ascending and descending chord progression, which creates a dream-like atmosphere. With slurs and specific dynamic markings, Danielpour prepares the audience for the ensuing journey that takes place over the first eight measures. I will refer to these first eight measures as ‘travel music’ as this is what brings the listener into the world of the little girl. In figure 3.1 we also see Danielpour’s introduction of quarter note rests in measures eight, eleven, and twelve. These mark the slow but stable arrival to this new world we are about to explore.

![Figure 3.1 mm.1-13. Ascending and descending chord pattern serves as ‘travel music’. Rests brings the motion of the journey to a halt.](image)

Danielpour instructs the performers to continue within the same tempo despite the meter change from 3/4 to 3/2 as indicated by the L’istesso tempo marking. For the first time we encounter a sense of tonal stability. The vocal line and accompaniment is centered predominantly around the key of G major. This tonal stability is fleeting however as Danielpour occasionally includes the use of mode mixture which supports the unpredictable nature of the child. The syncopated chord pattern seen in measure thirteen of Figure 3.1, continues throughout much of the song. This creates an almost singsong pattern, which is usually associated with many children games. It is this sense of play that
accompanies the little girl’s innocent banter. This playful rhythmic pattern also serves as a reminder that we are experiencing the text through the eyes of a little girl.

Danielpour sets the text brilliantly, adhering to the demands of the language. To achieve this he assigns longer note values to demark word stresses and assigns triplet figures to replicate the flow of natural speech. As mentioned earlier, Danielpour took his inspiration for setting the music primarily from the way Angelou recited the poems. Watching or listening to recordings of Angelou recite her own works will also serve as inspiration for performers of the cycle. The vernacular Angelou uses in “Little Girl Speakings” is one that can typically be associated with a child in a rural setting. She uses words like *quauter* and *cookinger* to emphasize the youth and innocence of this character.

Figure 3.2 shows how Danielpour uses the note values and tenuto marks to support the natural stresses of the language. These devices facilitate the spirit of the playful banter that Angelou intended. He uses this device of carefully accentuating pitches in order to articulate and accommodate the text in this song and throughout the cycle.

![Figure 3.2](image.png)

Figure 3.2 mm.14-16 Note value and tenuto marks aid in highlighting word stress.

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52 Richard Danielpour, Interview by Carline Waugh, January/March 2015. Appendix A.
Another set of devices Danielpour employs is the use of syncopation, triplet figures, and portamenti in the vocal line to communicate the innocent conviction of the speaker. All these elements are present in the second and third strophes of the song and are highlighted in Figure 3.3. These rhythmic motives can be associated with the natural flow of the text.

Suggestions

Danielpour presents a vocal melody that is in a modified strophic form. This melodic structure remains relatively the same with the exception of a few subtle changes. The singsong rhythmic figuration in the accompaniment mentioned earlier, continues throughout the piece and might be distracting for young singers as this is juxtaposed with syncopation within the vocal line. Danielpour allows an introduction of the vocal melody within the accompaniment between the second and third strophes. This technique of interaction between performers is especially present within the third strophe. Performers should embrace this moment as it is in keeping with the playfulness of the character. In measures 26-31 Danielpour allows the piano to imitate the singer’s voice. (See Figure 3.4) This may be interpreted as a reenactment of the mischievous mimicry of children at play.

Danielpour sets an eighteen-bar postlude, which is based on the chordal structure (‘travel music’) we encountered at the beginning of the piece. In this case, Danielpour
expounds on the idea of distance and time by juxtaposing Lydian augmented scales that ascend and descend with the stillness of the blocked chords.

Again Danielpour uses the contour of the chords to remind us that we are on a journey. The final chords within this movement do not provide the closure one would expect. Danielpour does not present us with chords that function within parameters of traditional tonal harmony. His progressions create a particular mood or atmosphere rather than establish harmonic function.

The singer should approach this song first by reading the poetry in isolation from the music. In a 1975 review of Angelou’s collection of poems Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well, Kathryn Gibbs Harris writes that “the poems work best when read
aloud.” Angela Brown also recommends this method of reading the poetry aloud as a way to solidify one's connection with the character. The elements such as syncopation and triplet figures may prove challenging but one will realize that Danielpour truly serves the text. Instead of viewing these rhythms as a hindrance, singers should instead strive to use them as elements that heighten the communication of the text.

Performers should be sure to acknowledge the subtle changes within the melody and the accompaniment. Performers should also seek to establish dramatic motivation to accommodate these changes. It is also highly advised that the singer interact with the accompaniment wherever possible. In cases where a theme is passed from the vocal line to the piano, this facilitates interaction. It may be interpreted as a reenactment of the mischievous mimicry of children at play. The singer may choose to respond dramatically to this second voice with childlike authority or defiance.

Throughout the piece Danielpour reminds the performers with his notations that they should maintain a childlike simplicity in delivery. The accompaniment, which may also be rhythmically challenging should remain as stable and precise as possible. The performers may interpret and view the postlude as a commentary on the singer’s previous statements. The final chords provide no resolution for the piece. Danielpour purposefully re-presents the opening theme as a postlude marking the continuation of the journey of life. One may also view this postlude as a connecting element to the second movement.


54 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
Angela Brown has stated that she draws on experience from her own childhood to capture the playfulness of this character. Brown recollects going to church during Easter celebrations as a child. She describes the pride she felt, as this was one of the times she would wear her most beautiful clothing. It is this innocent pride she channels into “Little Girl Speakings.”

2. Life Doesn’t Frighten Me

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: AABABB

- Vocal Line: The vocal line is a balanced mixture of leaps in combination with step-wise motion. There are several leaps throughout the piece which may prove challenging.

- Range: E₄ to B₅


- Rhythm: Rhythmically challenging as polyrhythmic figures that are vigorously accented, stand as the framework for much of this movement.

- Accompaniment: Fairly sparse texture, predominantly accented blocked chords.

- Expression and Tempo Indications: ♩ =144, quasi forte (a little loud), mezzoforte (moderately loud), forte (loud), fortissimo (very loud).

- Length: 3 minutes 20 seconds.

Poetry

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all
Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all
Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don't frighten me at all
Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won't cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Tough guys fight
All alone at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all.
Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys all pull my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)
They don't frighten me at all.

Don't show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream,
If I'm afraid at all
It's only in my dreams.

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn't frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all.
Life doesn't frighten me at all\(^{55}\)

Song Overview

“Life Doesn’t Frighten Me At All” comes from Dr. Angelou’s third collection of poetry published in 1978. The collection And Still I Rise consists of 32 poems and is divided into three sections. Angelou addresses many themes within this collection, the primary theme being one’s ability to overcoming obstacles. “Life Doesn’t Frighten Me At All” is the proud proclamation of a child who has conjured various strategies to overcome challenges.

One significant compositional technique used in this movement is contrast. Danielpour places opposing forces throughout this movement. The listener will experience the aural phenomenon of simultaneous rhythmic streams, which music theorists Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne define as *polyrhythm*. Though the piece is written in 4/4 time, Figure 3.5 highlights how each measure may be perceived as extended triplet figures.

![Aural Triplet Figures](image)

Figure 3.5 mm.6-10 Accents aurally create triplet figures.

This polyrhythmic motion provides a stable percussive element throughout the piece. Danielpour creates a drastic contrast by setting lyrical motion within the vocal line. Figure 3.6 highlights this energetic rhythmic motive within the piano along with the

fluid vocal line. This creates a sense of mystery and intrigue for the listener. It also serves the poetry well as the child is listing all the things she could possibly fear.

Angelou repeats the line “Life doesn’t frighten me at all” several times throughout the poem. Danielpour capitalizes on this by setting the line each time to music that has a similar melodic contour. As stated earlier, though Danielpour’s music is tonal his harmonies do not function in the traditional sense and this movement highlights that.

Danielpour uses two themes throughout the piece, which I will refer to as his ‘suspense motive’ and his ‘prowling motive.’ Figure 3.7a-b provides examples of these motives that function as transitional material. In some cases these piano motives also act as materials that comments on what the child has said or what she is about to say. He occasionally uses both figures simultaneously at the beginning of new strophes.
The form of this movement is a bit challenging to isolate at first glance. Danielpour’s musical organization for this follows the flow of the poetry. To aid in the overall preparation of this piece one may deem the form as AABABB with an added Coda as seen in Figure 3.8. While Danielpour does not reuse the same musical material in its original form, it is clear that some stanzas are derived from others and they function in a similar way. Danielpour presents ‘the suspense’ and ‘prowling’ motives seen in Figure 3.7a-b together during the piano introduction and before the singer enters at stanzas two and six. The ‘prowling theme’ (fig. 3.7b) is also presented directly after the line “Lions on the loose” and “Boys all pull my hair”. This theme pulls the ear away from the percussive accented chords that have been presented throughout. It creates a sense of motion, which serves as text painting.

Figure 3.8 Musical form in relation to the stanzas of the poem.
Suggestions

“Life Doesn’t Frighten Me At All” should be performed with the same childlike simplicity as “Little Girls Speakings.” Here we encounter a little girl listing many things that she ought to fear. She defiantly proclaims that life does not frighten her. Marked *energico*, the accompaniment should be articulated in as percussive manner. The pianist has to be mindful of maintaining a balance with the vocal line especially as pitches descend into the lower part of the singer’s vocal range.

Danielpour is very specific about his dynamic markings throughout this movement and performers will need to ensure they are being observed. Figure 3.9 provides an example of how he instructs the quiet (p) articulation of beat one in the right hand of the piano. He then instructs the pianist that beat two should be played loudly in the left hand. He juxtaposes this with a vocal line that should be articulated with strength as it is marked *forte*.

![Musical notation image]

Figure 3.9 mm.29-33 Danielpour indicates specific articulation.

Performers may choose to interact dramatically during interludes. Performers should anticipate when the meter changes from 5/4 to 4/4 in measures 43-44 and the change from 4/4 to 3/4 in measures 99-100. These shifts in meter occur quickly and may go unnoticed early in the preparation process.
Angela Brown warns singers to approach this piece with caution, as there are several passages with large leaps and accents within the middle to lower range. These passages should be articulated at great speed but should be sung in a healthy manner. Performers should strive for articulation that maintains a childlike confidence. There may be rhythmic challenges early in the preparation process.

There will also be instances of challenge with the chromatic subtleties of the vocal line. These too should be addressed early in the preparation process. The singer should try to gain independence from the accompaniment by solidifying knowledge of the vocal melody. Spending ample time reciting the poetry will also be helpful as the composer has placed many of the accents in accordance with the natural stresses of the words. The composers markings will affect the color and intensity and therefore should be observed with great detail.

3. They Went Home

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Modified Strophic
- Vocal Line: Vocal line crafted predominantly around the pitches of an E♭ minor pentatonic scale. Some melodic and text repetition throughout the movement.
- Range: E₄ to G♭₅
- Metric Organization: 4/4 and 3/4
- Rhythm: This movement presents less rhythmic challenges than many other movements. There are subtle changes that may go unnoticed.

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57 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
• Accompaniment: fairly sparse texture, predominantly accented blocked chords. Occasionally there are ascending or descending scale patterns.

• Expression and Tempo Indications: $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}}$ =84-88, $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}}$ =80, Moderato (Moderate tempo), dolce (sweetly), molto ritardando (Slowing down greatly), a tempo (back to original tempo).

• Length: 2 minutes 50 seconds.

**Poetry**

They went home and told their wives, 
that never once in all their lives, 
had they known a girl like me, 
But... They went home.

They said my house was licking clean, 
no word I spoke was ever mean, 
I had an air of mystery, 
But... They went home.

My praises were on all men's lips, 
they liked my smile, my wit, my hips, 
they'd spend one night, or two or three. 
But...\(^5^8\)

**Song Overview**

“They Went Home” is the first in Dr. Angelou’s collection of poems *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’fore I Diiie*. [sic] Part one of this collection deals with love in its many facets. Many of the poems throughout the collection were written during the period when Angelou was employed as a nightclub performer. The structure of many of the poems easily lends themselves to being set to music. This is chiefly because the poems

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are short with stanzas that have an equal number of lines. She also uses repetition, which aids in musical settings.\textsuperscript{59}

Danielpour’s setting of this movement is reflective of the rhyme scheme of the poetry. The three stanzas of the poem are based on the same rhyme scheme and Danielpour crafts the music to reflect this. The first two lines of each stanza end in a rhyme and Danielpour sets these lines to a similar musical motive. Lines three and four of the stanzas are set to different musical motives. This creates a form of AABC for the first and second stanzas, and AAB for the third stanza. Figure 3.10 shows the motivic breakdown of the first stanza.

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{motivic_scheme}
\caption{Figure 3.10 Motivic Scheme of the first stanza/strophe.}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

The poem stands as a presentation of unrequited love. The young woman expresses a sense of pride that she possess qualities that her lovers are unable to resist. Her lovers are married or otherwise unavailable to her and as a result she is always abandoned. Danielpour’s strophic setting is in keeping with the prosaic manner in which the lines are expressed. He uses three musical motives throughout. For each stanza the young lady expresses the high value she has in the lives of these men. This pride and value is presented in the reoccurring musical motive A seen in Figure 3.11A. As the men

\textsuperscript{59} Lyman B. Hagen, \textit{Heart of a Woman, Mind of a Writer, and Soul of a Poet: A Critical Analysis of the Writings of Maya Angelou} (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1997), 131.
make direct comments about the young lady’s abilities in line three, Danielpour uses motive $B$ as seen in Figure 3.11B. The young lady then faces the sad reality of abandonment in the the last line of each stanza and this is expressed with the musical motive $C$ in Figure 3.11C.

![Figure 3.11A mm.1-4 Motive A- representing the pride the young lady experiences.](image)

![Figure 3.11B mm.8-10 Motive B- representing the direct comments the men make.](image)

![Figure 3.11C mm.11-13 Motive C- representing the abandonment of the young lady.](image)

The piano accompaniment is mostly chordal with doubling of the vocal line in some phrases. Danielpour occasionally breaks this chordal doubling and presents motion in the accompaniment in the form of scalar passages. Danielpour has the ability to use a single musical gesture to represent the meaning of a complete line of poetry. Take for example the line ‘But... They went home,’ as seen in Figure 3.12. Danielpour uses the descending scale figures to represent the men’s departure in mm. 9-10. He uses the ascending scale pattern to mark the beginning of new verses and to perhaps represent the arrival of another lover as seen in mm.12-13. This use of scale patterns continues throughout the movement.
Figure 3.12 mm.6-15 Scalar motion representing the arrival and departure of lovers.

Angelou does not complete the last line of the poem. She instead gives us the word “but.” The ending is to be determined by the audience. Danielpour however implies an ending as he presents for the last time his recurring descending scale pattern. On this occasion he gives us a complete descending octatonic scale. This again marks the departure of the lovers. This therefore completes the line that Angelou left incomplete. Figures 3.13 highlights this.

Suggestions

This movement is of moderate difficulty. The vocal range in conjunction with the moderate tempo will make the phrases seem long and will challenge the singer. The singer will need to spend some time maneuvering the passages with large leaps to ensure that the tone is pleasant and intonation is accurate. The pianist should adhere to the slur markings as a guide to the shaping the phrases.
Figure 3.13 mm.50-60 Octatonic scale representing the final departure of the lovers.

Danielpour is specific about dynamics within the slur markings and these should also be observed. The motivic repetition within the piece will aid in memorization but the tonality may prove troublesome.

Angelou believed in an innate goodness within humanity and performers should keep this in mind as they prepare this movement. Though the subject matter is rather crude, the movement should be expressed with a sense of innocence or naivety that can be associated with youth. When asked about the title of the collection that “They Went Home” comes from, Angelou responded,
“I believe we are still so innocent. The species is still so innocent that a person who is apt to be murdered believes that the murderer, just before he puts the final wrench on his throat, would have enough compassion to give him one sweet cup of water.”

This idea should aid in presenting a bittersweet representation of the text. The young lady in her innocence is clinging to this hope of goodness. She is hoping that one day a lover will remain with her. When asked about her performance of this movement, Angela Brown empathizes with this character who makes bad choices of lovers and is forced to live with the consequences. Brown highlights all the beautiful things about the character but points out the postlude does not suggest a happy ending for this young lady. Brown points out “this song is about life, that is why the cycle is called A Woman’s Life.”

4. Come and Be My Baby

Basic Characteristics

- **Song Form:** Modified Strophic
- **Vocal Line:** The vocal line will be challenging as the contour of the vocal melody consists of large leaps that will span the entire vocal range.
- **Range:** E♭₄ to B♭₅
- **Metric Organization:** 4/4, 5/4, 2/4, and 3/4
- **Rhythm:** Triplets are a dominant figure used throughout the vocal line and accompaniment. Rhythmic syncopation is also present within vocal line and piano.

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61 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
• Accompaniment: Accented chordal accompaniment, which is heavily syncopated.
• Expression and Tempo Indications: \( \text{♩}=96 \) With Swing, subito piano (suddenly piano), subito forte (suddenly loud), staccatissimi (separated), dolce (sweetly), marcto (marked).
• Length: 2 minutes 41 seconds.

Poetry

The highway is full of big cars going nowhere fast
And folks is smoking anything that’ll burn
Some people wrap their lives around a cocktail glass
And you sit wondering
where you’re going to turn.
I got it. Come. And be my baby.

Some prophets say the world is gonna end tomorrow
But others say we’ve got a week or two
The paper is full of every kind of blooming horror
And you sit wondering
what you’re gonna do.
I got it. Come. And be my baby. \(^{62}\)

Song Overview

“Come and Be My Baby” comes from Dr. Angelou’s second volume of poetry, Oh Pray My Wings are Gonna Fit Me Well. The first movement of the cycle, “Little Girl Speakings” is also included in this volume. Angelou tackles themes associated with childhood and adolescence throughout this collection. Love and relationships are also themes that are prevalent throughout this collection and many of her other collections.

“Come and Be My Baby”, like the previous movement “They Went Home”, expresses the sentiments of a young lady. She is surrounded by uncertainties but seeks

love as a solution or escape from the daily struggles of life. As a result of this desire to escape reality, she urges a prospective lover to disregard the chaos of day-to-day life and embrace her affections. Danielpour presents a nine-measure introduction that fits neatly within a jazz swing style. Though this style is difficult to define, theorist J. Bradford Robinson refers to it as a rhythmic phenomenon, resulting from the conflict between a fixed pulse and the wide variety of accent and rubato that a jazz performer plays against it.\(^6\) This swing style envelopes the playful and coquettish nature of the poetry.

Danielpour crafted a vocal line centering predominantly on the Eb-Dorian mode. The vocal melody has large leaps sometimes greater than an octave. These leaps are nestled within repeated triplet figures creating rhythmic complexity, but also presents issues associated with vocal registration. The two stanzas of the poem are set in a modified strophic form. Danielpour uses musical gestures between the vocal line and the piano in an interactive way. The piano accompaniment consists predominantly of accented chords that provide a steady pulse throughout the movement. This pulsating rhythmic motive is occasional broken when the vocal line is imitated within the piano. Again, this is a compositional technique that Danielpour employs throughout the cycle. This technique captures the entire meaning of a line of poetry and represents it in a single musical gesture. Figure 3.13 mm. 16-22 shows how the piano repeats the vocal melody

twice at different pitch levels. This repetition creates the image of one who is in a contemplative state. After this static repetition, Danielpour propels the movement forward by way of an octatonic scale on G#. The prescribed crescendo also aids in creating a surge in energy within this measure. This can be seen in Figure 3.14. This scale represents the motivating force behind the singer’s exclamation and invitation “I got it. Come and be my baby.”

Figure 3.13 mm.16-22 shows how Danielpour imitates the contour of the vocal melody within the piano.

Figure 3.14 mm.23-24 Octatonic ascending scale marked with crescendo used to heighten intensity.
Danielpour occasionally inserts what I will refer to as the “dance motive” that comes in two parts. As seen in Figure 3.15, Danielpour uses these motives together and separately throughout. These motives consist of appoggiaturas and suspension figures that add melodic nuances to the static pulsations of the piano. They create excitement within the movement and boost the dance-like atmosphere of the piece.

![Figure 3.15](image)

Figure 3.15 mm.7-9 Highlighted sections are the two parts of the ‘dance motive’ which is repeated throughout.

**Suggestions**

“Come and Be My Baby” is a jazz inspired movement that is filled with syncopations throughout the vocal line and piano accompaniment. Performers with little experience in this style will find it challenging. The pianist and singer will both need to rehearse the movement in isolation from each other to ensure independence. The pianist should establish the strong rhythmic pulse by devoting attention to the carefully placed accent makings and the repeated triplet figures. Danielpour has also infused varying rhythmic motives within the vocal line. These rhythms are completely different from the rhythmic motives within the accompaniment. Performers will need to ensure that both parts are efficiently synchronized to capture the swing style.
When asked about character portrayal Angela Brown points out that this character is simply looking for excitement. The singer should portray this character as a young adult who takes a cynical view of day to day endeavors. She is eager however to find love. Brown cites this movement as the most difficult because much of the vocal line lies within the lower range of the voice. In these areas the text should be articulated with clarity and precision. The singer should articulate final consonants in a percussive manner to heighten the rhythmic content of the piece. Danielpour uses the abrupt leaps to also portray the excitement of the character. The singer will need to anticipate these passages to ensure beauty of tone and pitch accuracy. The performers should rehearse this movement at a slow tempo maintaining pitch and rhythmic integrity. They may increase the tempo gradually until the desired marking \( \text{♩} = 96 \) is attained. Isolation and speaking of the text will assist the singer to better articulate the rhythms. Performers will easily identify many differences between the two strophes but Danielpour incorporates subtle differences that may be overlooked. He also gives very specific markings that should be observed as each articulation enhances the overall style of the movement.

5. Let’s Majeste

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Modified Strophic with added coda.
- Vocal Line: Vocal melody is modal and chromatic. Wide range of vocal expression required. This includes full-voice singing and some cases of tentative, speech-like delivery.

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64 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
65 Ibid.
• Range: D₄ to G#₅


• Rhythm: Both vocal line and piano has repeated rhythmic motives that are used throughout the movement.

• Accompaniment: fairly sparse texture, predominantly chordal.

• Expression and Tempo Indications: \( \text{♩}=66-69 \text{ Maestoso (stately), don’t drag, hold back, } \text{poco meno mosso (a little less motion), come recitativo, (as a recitative) freely, segue (move without interruption).} \)

• Length: 3 minutes 49 seconds.

Poetry

I sit a throne upon the times
when Kings are rare and
Consorts
slide into the grease of scullery maids.

So gaily wave a crown of light
(astride the royal chair) that blinds
the commoners who genuflect and cross their fingers.

The years will lie beside me
on the queenly bed.
And coupled we'll await
the ages’ dust to cake my lids again.
And when the rousing kiss is given,
why must it always be a fairy, and only just a Prince?⁶⁶

Song Overview

“Let’s Majeste” comes from the collection Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water ’fore I Diie. [sic] Movement three of the cycle “They Went Home” is also found in this

collection. The collection is divided into two parts and both poems are presented in part one entitled *Where Love is a Scream of Anguish*. As previously discussed, these poems explore themes of love and loss. “Let’s Majeste” however presents a voice that is completely different from the one encountered earlier in “They Went Home.” Angelou depicts a character that has matured significantly and as a result of this maturity the language becomes more sophisticated. The manner in which the words are presented suggests that the speaker is now a woman within the middle of her life.

The speaker in “Let’s Majeste” is expressing herself and her emotions using language that may be viewed as archaic in comparison to the modern language encountered throughout the cycle so far. The woman’s mood is reflective and she describes her situation using images associated with ancient royalty and court life. She describes her life through images of kings, thrones, crowns, and the common people. This highlights Angelou’s use of irony. The speaker clearly has no personal affiliation with life in a kingdom. Her images however highlight the isolation that royalty may experience as a result of their social positions. As the speaker expresses her loneliness, the choice of elegant language demonstrates her high regard for companionship.

The speaker presents a melancholy view as she anticipates her loneliness to continue into old age and eventually until her death. At the end of the poem the speaker again calls on imagery from another time. In closing she uses the fairytale imagery of the prince or fairy rousing his sleeping love with a kiss. Her final questioning of this awakening presents images of isolation and themes of social and personal identity.

Danielpour instructs the pianist to play the opening two measures in the manner of a procession, which is appropriate for the stateliness of the poetry. The contour of this
two-measure opening theme is presented throughout the piece. This melodic contour is presented within the vocal line and the accompaniment. This musical gesture creates a sigh-like figure that captures the sense of melancholy expressed in the poetry. Figure 3.16 demonstrates this sigh-like figure marked by slurs. This gesture reoccurs at varying pitch levels. Danielpour sets many of the words that connote crude images to beautiful and elegant melody. This compositional technique matches Angelou’s use of irony.

![Figure 3.16 mm.1-2 Representing the sighing of the speaker.](image)

![Figure 3.17mm.7-8 Musical irony highlighted.](image)

![Figure 3.18 mm.17-18 repeated pitches used to represent the ‘commoners’.](image)

Danielpour continues his use of irony and imagery throughout the piece with the sudden leap upward to the word ‘scullery maid.’ (Figure 3.17) This is ironic as the scullery maid would hierarchically be among the lowest level of servants within a court.
He reserves one of the highest pitches for this depiction. Another example of Danielpour’s use of imagery is the setting of the repeated pitch E natural to represent ‘the commoners’ described in the poetry. This repeated common tone represents a number of “common” people bowing to the throne. (Figure 3.18)

Danielpour brings the listener’s memory back to the earlier movement “They Went Home” by again presenting ascending passages within the piano. As seen earlier in “They Went Home,” these scalar motives represent a journey and the passage of time. There is a time-lapse that is suggested between stanzas two and three of the poetry. This is where Danielpour first presents his ascending scale figure. Figure 3.19 shows this motive as it goes from bass to treble clefs within the piano. As we experience the passage of time Danielpour then reintroduces the sigh-like theme that we have encountered throughout the movement. This motive acts as a musical foreshadowing of old age as the singer states, ‘The years will lie beside me.’ Danielpour sets a similar musical gesture within the piano, which brings the movement to an end. Again, this scalar motive suggests that the journey of this woman’s life is one that continues to the next movement.

Figure 3.19 mm. 17-21 Scale signifies the passage of time. Sigh-like chordal figure brings the listener to the current reality of the singer.
Suggestions

Performers should strive to maintain the majestic nature of this movement. Triplet figures should be approached with ease and executed with legato. The singer should ensure that the notes within the vocal line which lie above the staff are not accented unless the composer has suggested it. Measures 17 and 18, which should be sung in the style of a recitative, should be articulated emphasizing clarity of text. The lower pitches within this phrase will naturally lend itself to capturing that speech-like quality. The pianist should adhere to the suggested dynamic levels to avoid obscuring the voice.

Danielpour instructs the singer to “hold back” throughout much of the third strophe. This suggestion will capture the delicacy of the subject of growing old and eventual death. The last two lines of poetry end in a question and the performers will need to express this as such. The disjunct nature of the vocal line in this closing question will be difficult. The singer will need to spend ample time rehearsing this modal and chromatic passage. Articulating the words ‘why’ and ‘Prince’ at the stated dynamic level will aid in establishing the quizzical tone. The pianist should express the rising quarter notes in measures 43-48 with great care, being mindful of the meter changes. Danielpour suggest that this piece flows right into the next song without pausing.

Angela Brown points out that “Let’s Majeste” presents challenges in comprehending the speaker’s psychological motives. The sudden shift from the use of colloquial language to one that is sophisticated is unexpected. The theme of loneliness and isolation permeates much of Dr. Angelou’s poetic output.

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67 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
The theme is ever present throughout this cycle. “Let’s Majeste” only serves as a more sophisticated presentation of a universal issue.

6. My Life Has Turned to Blue

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Modified Strophic
- Vocal Line: Motivic repetition occurs throughout all three strophes. Melody built around the Dorian and whole tone scales. Modal and chromatic contour will present intonation problems.
- Range: D₄ to G₅
- Metric Organization: 4/4 and 3/4
- Rhythm: Syncopation and a series of triplet figures within the vocal line and the accompaniment. These occur in both voices at different times. This will required much attention.
- Accompaniment: Sparse texture predominantly comprised of tremolo in the piano. This tremolo will present intonation issues for the singer.
- Expression and Tempo Indications: ♩ =66, Freely, Sempre (simply), keep pedal depressed throughout, with swing, portamento (carrying), molto espressivo, (with much expression).
- Length: 3 minutes 21 seconds

Poetry

Our summer's gone, the golden days are through.
The rosy dawns I used to wake with you
have turned to gray, 
my life has turned to blue.

The once-green lawns
glisten now with dew.
Red robin's gone,
down to the South he flew.
Left here alone,
my life has turned to blue.

I've heard the new
that winter too will pass,
that spring's a sign
that summer's due at last.
But until I see you
lying in green grass,
my life has turned to blue.  

Song Overview

“My Life Has Turned to Blue” is the last poem in Dr. Angelou’s collection
*Shaker, Why Don't You Sing?* This collection published in 1983 is Angelou’s fourth
volume of poetry. The collection explores various themes such as love, loss, sacrifice,
and defeat. “My Life Has Turned to Blue” is a culmination of all the themes mentioned
and is a fitting end to the poetry collection. The poem presents a woman who has loved
deeply and is experiencing pain as a result of this love. Colors are of great importance
throughout this poem. Angelou uses the colors to represent the different psychological
states as well as the different phases of her relationship with the lover. The love
experienced was initially promising. She describes it as being fresh and green. As time
has passed the love has now become grim and gray. The scorned woman is blue as a
result of her sorrow. As is typical of Angelou’s style, the speaker’s voice is not angry or

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desperate but instead presents her perspective with much resolve. This poem like others, lends itself well to being set to music as the rhyme scheme is clear, stanzas are short, and the last line is repeated in all three stanzas.

The poem presents a lover who is always experiencing a state of alteration as her love slowly dies. Danielpour captures this musically by employing mixed modality throughout the piece. As the singer reflects on what her love was and what it has become we experience pitches from the F-Dorian mode. The scale is built on the pitches F, G, A♭, B♭, C, D, E♭. Danielpour first introduces the mode in the form of a tetrachord using the first four pitches of the scale as seen in Figure 3.20.

![Figure 3.20 mm.1-2. Broken tetrachord built on F-Dorian “the reality mode.”](image)

Danielpour uses the Dorian mode to craft a wistful melody within the vocal line. (Fig. 3.21) I will refer to this as ‘the reality mode’. Danielpour restates this pitch ordering in different forms throughout the piece. It is predominantly used when the woman elaborates on the current state of her loss. The mode reminds the listener of the real and current loss despite the speaker’s fond recollection of what was. The use of this Dorian mode is especially poignant when the speaker repeats the line “my life has turned to blue.”
Danielpour introduces what I will refer to as the ‘what was’ motive which is built on a whole tone scale using the pitches F, (G), A, B, C♯, D♯. We see this in some cases when the singer reflects on the way her love was in the past. Figure 3.22 shows how Danielpour crafts the vocal melody using this whole tone pitch class.

Figure 3.21 mm.3-5 vocal line crafted on Dorian ‘reality mode.’ It presents the current state of the failed love.

Figure 3.22 mm.7-9 Vocal melody based on the whole tone scale representing ‘what was’ in the eyes of the scorned lover.

Suggestions

Danielpour alternates between both the ‘what was mode’ and ‘the reality mode’ and these shifts are motivated purely by the poetry. The piano consists predominantly of octave tremolo. This creates an eerie atmosphere and further highlights the psychological disorientation of the woman. Danielpour breaks the ghostly ambiance created by the piano when he employs a strategy that we have encountered throughout the cycle. To achieve this aural break he presents ascending and descending scalar passages. As seen previously, this technique marks the passage of time. One difference we see in this
movement however is that the passage of time directly affects the psyche of the woman. Once again this scalar motive takes us to the end of the movement.

Danielpour instructs the performers to present this piece with freedom and simplicity. The mixed modality of the piece will be challenging for the singer. The singer should approach learning the vocal line initially in isolation from the accompaniment. This method will optimize accuracy. The pianist will need to approach this piece almost in a similar manner as one would approach a standard recitative. He/she will have to listen carefully to the manner in which the singer shapes the phrases in order to anticipate and accommodate the subtle pitch changes in the accompaniment. The singer should strive to present the text in a conversational tone and should not overindulge in languishing.

Many the poems within this collection present strong emotional content. Dr. Angelou however never overstates or overindulges in any one emotional state. In many of the poems though some language may appear crude, her tone is very often one of resolve. Performers should keep this in mind. As with most songs in this cycle, the singer should spend time speaking the text. The singer should use the natural speech pattern along with the contours of the melody to determine the shape of the phrases. Again, listening to recordings of Angelou reciting her works will also prove beneficial. Danielpour desires that the movement be expressed with much freedom and he leaves much of the interpretive decisions to the discretion of the performers. As a result of this desire for freedom, his markings for dynamics and articulation are significantly sparse in comparison to the rest of the cycle.
Angela Brown points out that one’s understanding of the cycle will be dependent on one’s own experiences. She states that she could not connected personally with “My Life Has Turned Blue” until she experienced a physical separation from her husband. This is challenging for her as they both temporarily reside in different countries. Though they reunite whenever possible, parting is difficult and it is in those moments she experiences the meaning of this poem.\textsuperscript{69} While all performers will come to this work with varying experiences, it is our duty to channel our lives and the experiences of others to produce a meaningful portrayal.

7. Many and More

Basic Characteristics

- Song Form: Modified strophic with added coda.
- Vocal Line: Motivic repetition throughout the strophes. Modal and chromatic contour will present challenges.
- Range: C\textsuperscript{4} to G\textsuperscript{b5}
- Rhythm: Syncopation and a series of tied notes within the vocal line and the accompaniment. These occur in both voice and piano at varying times. This will required much attention.
- Accompaniment: Sparse texture predominantly chordal with slurs creating a seamless legato throughout.
- Expression and Tempo Indications: \large \textbf{♩} =60, \textit{Molto Moderato} (very moderately), with deep feeling, \textit{piu cantabile} (a little singing style), \textit{meno forte} (a little loud),

\textsuperscript{69} Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
full voice, \textit{quasi piano} (almost soft), quasi forte (almost loud), \textit{dolce cantando}
(sweet singing), \textit{lunga} (long).

- Length: 3 minutes 27 seconds

\textbf{Poetry}

There are many and more
who would kiss my hand,
taste my lips,
to my loneliness lend
their bodies’ warmth.
I have want of a friend.

There are few, some few,
who would give their names
and fortunes rich
or send their first sons
to my ailing bed.

I have need of a friend.

There is one and only one
who will give the air
from his failing lungs
for my body’s mend.

And that one is my love.\textsuperscript{70}

\textbf{Song Overview}

“Many and More,” the last song of the cycle comes from Dr. Angelou’s fifth
volume of poetry, \textit{I Shall Not Be Moved}. Like many of Angelou’s collections, this
addresses issues of love and suffering. She also tackles themes associated with the
working class. “Many and More” is a fitting end to the cycle as the voice here is one of
seasoned maturity. The woman expresses her longing for intimacy and companionship.

\textsuperscript{70} Maya Angelou, \textit{The complete collected poems of Maya Angelou}, (New York: Random
House, 1994), 205.
Angelou uses elegant language broken down into three stanzas. Like many of the other poems, this setting lends itself well to being set to music as a single line expressing the speaker’s need or want of a friend connects each stanza. Throughout the poem the woman acknowledges that while many can offer intimacy, few will offer a lasting companionship and only one can offer a deep and sacrificial love she desires.

Danielpour meets this elegant setting with many of the techniques we have seen him employ earlier throughout the cycle. Again we see his use of ascending and descending scale patterns. This motion has been predominantly used within the piano accompaniment and is usually a key transitional element at the end of all the slow movements. Here, Danielpour establishes this scalar motion independently within the vocal line. The voice enters unaccompanied highlighting a mixolydian scale. This scale is built on the pitches A♭, B♭, C, D♭, E♭, F, G♭. Figure 3.23 highlight how he uses the scale to craft a melody using the first two lines of the poem. He continues to use varying mode mixtures in a similar fashion throughout the piece.

![Figure 3.23 mm.1-5 Melody built on mixolydian scale.](image)

The Line ‘I have need for a friend’ may be considered a refrain of sorts as it is repeated. Danielpour also uses this same mixolydian pitch class however he uses a different ordering to create a more interesting melody, which can be seen in Figure 3.24. Here, Danielpour also allows the piano to repeat this melodic motive stated in the vocal line. This acts as an echoing of the sentiments of the woman and further emphasizes her longing.
Danielpour repeats the same motive but the second time we see the words ‘I have need of a friend.’ For this restatement he sets the music a half step lower. This motive is again presented when the woman states that there is only one person who would give his life in order to save her own. Danielpour brilliantly superimposes the same vocal melody seen in Figure 3.24, which is associated with the words ‘I have need/want for a friend.’ This is done despite the fact that the words have now changed to ‘for my body’s mend’. This brings the listeners memory to the words previously associated with the melody. The same theme continues in the piano, echoing the woman’s sentiments in a similar manner as we have heard before.

Figure 3.24 mm.13-16 Piano echoes the vocal line.

Figure 3.25 mm.50-53 Triplet figure highlighting eagerness.
Danielpour fully establishes an A diminished chord on the last line of the song. He sets the pitches C₄ and E♭₄ within a repeated triplet pattern in the piano accompaniment. This motion suggests an eagerness in the woman as she mentions her true love.

Danielpour again uses the technique of presenting a descending scale pattern within the piano. In this case he presents a progression of descending fourths outlining an F# minor seventh chord. This again represents the passage of time. The singer however soars above the descending piano line.

The static F# within the vocal line contrasts greatly with the descending figures in the piano and further establishes a drifting distance between the speaker and her lover.

Figure 3.26 mm. 54-55 highlights this technique.

Figure 3.26 mm.54-55 The word ‘love’ sustained in soprano while descending fourths create distance.
Suggestions

“Many and More” should be sung with much expression and feeling. The piece begins unaccompanied so the singer will need to memorize the opening pitches. She will need to practice this transition from the final chord of the previous movement to ensure accuracy. The composer has given specific markings that will affect the vocal color used and the singer will need to be mindful of this.

The accompaniment is predominantly chordal and should be expressed in complete legato to match the flow of the vocal line. Performers should take note of the sections where the vocal line is doubled. These should be contrasted greatly with the sections where the same melody overlaps within the voice and piano. The first two strophes of this song should possess a reflective quality. The final strophe of the song should be the presented with great sentiment leading to the coda which begins in mm. 49. The performers should present this coda in a manner that exudes elation, as these are the words of a woman who has lived a full life and has experienced true love.

Angela Brown describes “Many and More” as the most beautiful song of the cycle. She highlights that all women desire companionship but the woman presented in this poem has experienced true love. Like Dr. Maya Angelou, this woman has lived a full life. This character should be presented with much grace and dignity. Brown agrees that there is nothing sad or pathetic about this woman. Her life has left her with only fond memories of her love. Brown suggests that the performers celebrate this character. Like

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71 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
the woman seen at the end of the cycle, “at the end life we are left only with our memories.”

72 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
CONCLUSION

A study of Richard Danielpour’s cycle for soprano, *A Woman’s Life* will strengthen one’s appreciation for the works of the composer. His musical language encompasses multiple styles and techniques particularly those of jazz and classical idioms. This lends itself well to the diverse nature of the themes within Dr. Maya Angelou’s poems. Angelou’s poems possess a natural rhythm of their own and Danielpour’s setting does not detract from this. As a woman I can rely on my own experiences and those of others to aid in my portrayal of these characters throughout the cycle. Angela Brown the soprano for whom the cycle was written admits that she still struggles with the interpretation of some of the movements. This is partly due to the fact that she has not yet experienced all the stages of the narrative. She also adds that her interpretation of the cycle has changed over the years and this too is as a result of her experiences.\(^3\) Our point of reference for understanding and interpreting the cycle will be affected by our life experiences. My Caribbean heritage allows me to easily identify with the child in “Little Girl Speaking.” The language and mannerism of the child is reminiscent of my own childhood. Performers will only need to look within or around to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of this work.

The work was composed first for orchestra so performers are urged to assess the orchestrated version to gain greater understanding of the piano reduction. While the reduced version offers great intimacy in performance, it may lack the abundance of color and texture available within the orchestra. An awareness of the composer’s specific choices of instrumentation will greatly inform the performance of this work.

\(^3\) Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.
The music is difficult due to chromatic and rhythmic complexity of this work. It explores the entire vocal rage of a soprano and will present issues with vocal registration. The songs will therefore require a strong vocal technique and keen musical preparation. Angela Brown was unhesitant to point out that the work was composed for a technically mature singer. It was written for a singer who has years of experience and much vocal stamina. It is therefore imperative that the performers be mature enough to meet the technical and psychological demands of the work.

According to Danielpour, the most important thing for a composer to understand as an artist is as he states below:

“That he or she is not a creator, but actually a conduit, a vessel, and in some cases perhaps even a messenger.... The older I get the more convinced I am that artists are like the old Jewish prophets - we wait, we listen and we write down what we hear.... Arnold Schoenberg said "God Creates and man Assembles ".... I'm beginning to understand what he meant.... I have sometimes said, "I am a gardener but I am not the garden." I feel that now more than ever." An understanding of this compositional philosophy is pertinent to approaching Danielpour’s works. The cycle has capture a moment in time in the lives of many women and *A Woman’s Life* is simply homage to women everywhere.

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74 Angela Brown, Telephone interview by Carline Waugh, April 15, 2015. Appendix B.

75 Richard Danielpour, Interview by Carline Waugh, January/March 2015. Appendix A.
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APPENDIX A. PARTIAL TRANSCRIPTS OF EMAIL CONVERSATIONS WITH RICHARD DANIELPOUR

5/11/2014

CW wrote:

Hello Mr. Danielpour, I am Carline Waugh, a doctoral student at Louisiana State University and I am pursuing a DMA in Vocal Performance. I am originally from Jamaica and I have been studying here in the US since 2005. I have been exploring your output and I am so inspired by your works. I am currently researching topics for a written document and lecture recital and your cycle A Woman’s Life is of particular interest to me. I would love to write about and present this. Due to the nature of my presentation I am also interested in a reduced version for voice and piano. Do you have one available? I would be equally delighted and honored if you would be willing to allow me to pursue this. Thanks so much for the consideration.

Carline

5/12/14

RD wrote:

Dear Miss Waugh,

Thank you so much for your kind note... I would suggest to you that you contact G Schirmer in New York and try to speak with my representative there ... she might be able to arrange for you to purchase a piano vocal score of A Woman’s Life.... I wish you Godspeed in your endeavors. Please contact me if you need anything else.

All best, RD

CW wrote:
Mr. Danielpour this is so exciting!! I just spoke with Schirmer about acquiring a score and the guidelines for reprinting any of the music in my document. I am thinking of presenting a "performers guide" to interpreting the cycle. Later this year I would like to conduct an interview and maybe schedule a coaching session to ensure I am truly presenting this wonderful music as you intended it. This will of course be at your convenience. I just acquired Jin Kuh's dissertation on your Quintet for Piano and Strings and I am looking forward to seeing the approach taken. I hope to present my document and lecture in May 2015.

Carline W.

RD wrote:

Thanks for your enthusiasm! Let's try to be in touch in the month of August when I will have more time....

Wishing you all the best, RD

11/29/14

CW wrote:

Dear Mr. Danielpour,

I hope this finds you well. My semester has been quite busy with me touring and doing recitals but now as things are settling I would like to delve more into my research of your work. I just finished preparing Previn's Honey and Rue which deals with similar issues as your wonderful work and I am so excited to have A Woman's Life as a part of my repertoire and to present a performers guide to the music and the poetry. The last time
we spoke I had contacted your publisher and they sent me a piano score.

I believe I have now found much of what has been written about you and your works. I would like to schedule two interviews with you at your convenience. This can be an online or phone interview. I would also like to consider the possibility of coaching the cycle with you (also at your convenience). I hope to present my project between May 11-17th but this timeline has some flexibility and I will work solely around your schedule.

My vision is that this will be a manual that gives performers deeper insight into the work and it will be a source for performers who often shy away from new music.

Thanks you in advance for your consideration and time.

Carline W

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RD wrote:

Hi Carline,

I would be happy to speak with you sometime after the New Year I'm fairly solidly booked until then with deadlines..... After January 1 I would be glad to help you in any way I can.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me then.

All my best, RD

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1/11/15

CW wrote:

Hello Mr. Danielpour,

Happy New Year and I hope this finds you well. Would it be possible for us to arrange an
interview and/or coaching for two consecutive days between February 19-28th? An interview can be done online or via telephone but I would really love to sing through the pieces with you. If that time frame does not work please let me know when and if you would be available. Thanks again for your consideration and your willingness to help.

Best,

Carline W

1/20/15

CW wrote:

Hello Mr. Danielpour,

I hope you are well. I can imagine that you are incredibly busy at this time. I am guessing the time period I sent you might not be agreeable to you. Would a time between March 3-13 be more agreeable? Anytime you could spare to speak with me and/or listen to me sing the work would be appreciated...No Pressure😊

Best,

Carline

RD wrote:

Hi Carline,

So sorry to not have gotten back to you ... Things are just on OVERLOAD(!)

March 3-13 I'm actually traveling I would guess that I might have some time when I'm back from Los Angeles (we leave tomorrow until 2/1) to speak with you on the phone and possibly even listen to an MP3 of a run-through if you can send one to me... that may
be overall the best solution... Friday, February 6 might be a good day or that evening on
February 6 possibly also in the evening on February 5 depending on whether I have a
commitment or not...

Sorry this is so difficult... Thank you again for taking the time with a work that I hold
very dear to my heart...

Wishing you all the best for 2015, RD

CW wrote:

Yikes! You are swamped! I want this to be as painless as possible for you.

Unfortunately I'm also booked solid until mid February and those days you gave are right
in the middle of my general exams. I like the idea of using MP3 so I will start recording
right after the exams so you can guide me at your leisure. Regarding an interview... a
phone/skype/viber call will suffice. I can send you a transcript ahead of time and I will
try to keep it under 30 mins. We could also do it via email and I wouldn't use direct
quotes without your permission. Whatever makes it easiest. Thanks so much for getting
back to me. We will make it work:)

RD wrote:

Okay I think when I can probably best to do is listen and respond in some way by
email... Thanks for your understanding, RD

CW wrote:

No problem! :)
03/10/15

CW wrote:

Hello Mr. Danielpour,

I hope this finds you well. Attached are the promised interview questions. I know your schedule is very busy so please don't feel like you have to complete all the questions before getting back to me. It might speed my writing process if you answered a few at a time or whatever is convenient for you. Thanks again for your willingness. If you have any questions or if something is not clear please let me know.

Carline Waugh

03/10/2015

CW wrote:

1. How does the natural or urban world affect your compositions and *A Woman’s Life* in particular?

2. I know you have had many influences from Mozart to the Beatles but at this point in your career which master/s do you think was most influential on your style?

3. What are currently your main compositional challenges? What were some of the challenges in composing the cycle?

4. Do you sketch? What was the order in which you composed the songs of the cycle? What were some factors for this ordering?

5. Do you consider the audience when you’re working on a composition? If so, what considerations did you have for this piece in particular?
6. I fell in love with the cycle on first hearing Little Girl Speakings. I was immediately brought back to my childhood. I don’t think I was quite as rambunctious as the speaker but I certainly could see myself having similar thoughts. How important is it that music be accessible on first hearing?

7. Why do you think that writing for the orchestra is still a very attractive proposition for composers? (Especially with the financial limitations of our art)

8. I know the very first performance of the cycle was with piano. (Right?) The reduction obviously doesn’t capture all the colors and nuances that the orchestrated version does but it does offer an intimacy that I enjoy. Do you have any views about this?

9. I had to contact Schirmer for the piano reduction. Do you foresee or hope to see this version becoming more accessible? Barber’s Knoxville Summer of 1915 for example is very popular in both the orchestrated and reduced versions. Is this the direction you hope for or do you have a preference.

10. I read how flexible you are as a composer when Yo-Yo Ma suggested changes in the Cello Concerto no.2. Did Angela Brown make any such suggestion in the process? Did you have to make any changes to accommodate her performance?

11. What was it about Brown that inspired you to set a work of this nature?

12. I’ve noticed that you have taken care to put many specific markings in the music. This definitely helps with interpreting and presenting the piece. This helps the performer to hear a phrase and present it in a specific way. How important is this to you?

13. Why was Maya Angelou an immediate choice for this project?

14. Why didn’t you set the 8th poem Maya Angelou gave?

15. I have read that Dr. Angelou had written the poems prior to you asking. Did her
involvement in the commission go beyond that? Did you consult her in your writing process?

16. As I spend more time with this piece I am especially drawn to movement I, II, VI and VII. I think this because of where I am in my life. I can retrospectively look at childhood and look towards old age. Would you group the movements into 3 main periods in a woman’s life? Feel free to discuss the individual movements if you would like to.

17 Do you have any major plans for this work that you are able to discuss?

18. Do you have any favorite young composers?

** Many and More measure 28 is marked ‘piano’ and ‘full voice’. How do you want this articulated?

RD wrote:

Hi Carline, here are a few answers:

1) The natural and/or urban and world does not affect the composition of A Woman's Life in anyway whatsoever... the only thing that really affected it was the text itself and the way Maya Angelou read the text to me, she first introduced me to the poems in July 2006...

2) When you have written as much music as I have there are so many things that actually gets stirred into the melting pot which is my brain that to single anyone of them out is almost silly... At the age of 59 my greatest influence is probably my own past work.

3) My current compositional challenges are very similar to the challenges that existed in A Woman's Life- to have mainly the notes that are necessary- nothing more and nothing less.... For me in this decade composing has been more about what to remove and take away then about what to add... A Woman's Life is relatively sparse compared to a piece
like *Toward the Splendid City* which was written in 1992.... Compare the density of each orchestral score and you will see what I'm talking about.

4) With everything I write I always make a short score first, which is not really a piano score but something that exists between two and six Staves.... The "Sketching" that you are probably referring to is really done in my mind... At first I spend an enormous amount of time thinking about a piece before I actually sit down to write it but when I do sit down to write it, the actual writing comes relatively quickly, then after I have it all down on paper I spend even more time ferreting out anything that is unnecessary...

5) I'm concerned about the listener mostly in the sense of how time passes in a given work - there has to be something in the piece that pushes everything forward so that each moment beckons to the next one... My goal is to have the listeners mind never wandering and in order to make sure that that happens you have to have a piece in which each moment that follows the previous moment makes sense, is never predictable, but always inevitable... This is the real tough challenge of writing any piece... but in the end you have to begin and end with trusting yourself....

Best, RD

RD wrote:

Number 6, 7, 8:

6) My favorite music is the kind of music which is simple on the surface but complex underneath (like Mozart!) the surface, ...if it's complex on the surface it becomes not accessible on the first hearing and I found that the music that is very complex on the surface is usually quite simple underneath it all... I’ve never "tried" to make music accessible to the listener - that's just part of having a natural inclination to know what
works in music - that's called talent... (Fortunately I have a little of it....)

7) Writing for the orchestra is attractive today to so many composers for several reasons: number one most of the orchestral music that people here today is in movies, secondly orchestral music pays better in royalties, thirdly most composers are resonance junkies - that is we are addicted to the fullness of sound and a vibrancy of sound and color played back to us... What person wouldn't prefer to hear Beethoven's ninth and the actual orchestration rather than in the two piano reduction?

8) The piano reduction was really for rehearsal only originally but it has been used for performance. The first PUBLIC performances of A Woman's Life were with orchestra - October 2009, Slatkin / Brown / Pittsburgh Symph.
First private performance was with piano for Dr. Angelou

CW wrote:

Thank you so much for getting back to me so quickly!!!!!!
You are awesome! Thank you so much for taking the time.

O3/17/2015
CW wrote:

Hello Mr. Danielpour,

I hope you are well. Here are some more interview questions. Thanks for you speedy response the last time. Again please take all the time you need and feel free to answer only as many as you are able to in any one sitting. The order in which you answer also doesn't matter. I appreciate your time greatly and I can send you as many reminders as
you can tolerate:) Thanks so much.

Carline Waugh

9. Barber’s Knoxville Summer of 1915 for example is a favorite especially in academia in both the orchestrated and reduced versions. Do you have any objections to the use of the reduction? (I know it doesn't nearly do any justice to your orchestration).

10. I read how flexible you are as a composer when Yo-Yo Ma suggested changes in the Cello Concerto no.2. Did Angela Brown make any such suggestion in the process? Did you have to make any changes to accommodate her performance?

11. What was it about Ms. Brown that inspired you to set a work of this nature?

12. I’ve noticed that you have taken care to put many specific markings in the music. This definitely helps with interpreting and presenting the piece. This helps the performer to hear a phrase and present it in a specific way. How important is this to you?

13. Why didn’t you set one of the poems in the collection Dr. Maya Angelou gave?

14. Do you recall Dr. Angelou's reaction or response to that first private performance?

15. I have read that Dr. Angelou had written the poems prior to you asking. Did her involvement in the commission go beyond that? Did you consult her in your writing process?

16. Do you care to discuss the recording process with Ms. Brown and the Nashville Symphony with Maestro Guerrero?

17. Do you have any major future plans for this work that you are able to discuss?

18. After your 'mental sketching’. How much time would you say it took you to complete the work?

As I spend more time with this piece I am especially drawn to movement I, II, VI and
VII. I think this because of where I am in my life. I can retrospectively look at childhood and look towards old age. What I deem the "adulthood" phase of the cycle is a bit more complicated emotionally and musically which makes it even more effective. It follows the natural arc of life in general. Feel free to discuss your general feelings towards this wonderful work.

** Many and More measure 28 is marked ‘piano’ and ‘full voice’. How do you want this articulated?

03/18/2015

RD wrote:

Here are a few more answers:

#9) Some reductions work actually quite well for performance but many of them don’t because the piano reduction should also, if it is going to be used in performance sound idiomatically like piano music rather than a bunch of chords and notes that are an approximation of other instruments....

Usually when there is a piano vocal score 1st composed for an orchestral piece it has a better chance of also sounding well for the piano in performance...

#10) in my first year as a professional out of school I relied heavily on the suggestions of performers - they in effect became my teachers... In later years and even last week in Nashville when Thomas Hamson performed and recorded two major song cycles of mine I responded to a few of his suggestions and actually made a few of my own, to facilitate a more natural performance and delivery of his part. I think it's most important to be
flexible in making changes with singers because each of them are such individuals in each instrument is different from the other...

#11) Angela Brown in many ways stole the show at the premiere of Margaret Garner on May 7, 2005 in Detroit... It was because of her extraordinary voice and her ability to deliver what was a secondary role in such an extraordinary way that I wanted to give her something of her own to sing.

#12) I am very specific about my own markings - articulations are very important to me but as I've gotten older dynamic markings particularly in vocal writing seem to be less and less critical... the issue is WHICH dynamic markings you need truly and WHERE do they need to be. If you know where a singer's voice will project in their respective registers, dynamic markings particularly those mezzo forte's and mezzo piano's are not as necessary as one might think. I think economy is very important because you don't want a singer to be spending all this time with their head buried in the score.

That's all for now- I will deal with more of these later thank you... RD

CW wrote:

Thank you again so much for your speedy response. I’ve started really working through the pieces and it is such a great sing! I will say though that the singer has to be in command of the instrument for one to experience the true effects. It is so moving and I hope I will able to serve this music with some of the finest that Ms. Brown has. I can send you a friendly reminder next week about the remaining questions if you would like. Again, thank you so much for you time and thank you for this gift.

RD wrote:
Carline, You are very kind to send me this email...

I want to answer a question that you have not yet asked: what is the most important thing for a composer to understand as an artist?

Answer: that he or she is not a creator, but actually a conduit, a vessel, and in some cases perhaps even a messenger.... The older I get the more convinced I am that artists are like the old Jewish prophets - we wait, we listen and we write down what we hear.... Arnold Schoenberg said "God Creates and man Assembles “.... I'm beginning to understand what he meant.... I have sometimes said, "I am a gardener but I am not the garden." I feel that now more than ever.

Wishing you all the best, RD
APPENDIX B. PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH ANGELA BROWN

CW: Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me. I am writing a paper on “A Woman’s Life.” I know it was written for you, and I know that you’ve sung it a number of times. I just want to know what are some of your views on the piece in general, and what’s some advice that you could give a young singer considering doing this work.

AB: Well, I’m honored that I’ve been selected to sing this song cycle that was written for me by Richard Danielpour with Maya Angelou’s poetry. It is a piece that at first, I couldn’t relate to all seven pieces, I still have problems with the last three songs. The First four are the ones that I perform the most if I’m going to do a part of the song cycle, because it starts out with a little girl, then it goes to an adolescent girl, then it goes to a woman who is trying to figure out who she is in life; who she should be with in life, and then there is the one that, you know, I wouldn’t say that she is a good-time girl, but I see her as one who has just gotten off from work, and she’s sitting around and talking to her friends. She’s learned some things about life and she says, “don’t let all of that get you down, just come on and be my baby. For this moment, just come be my baby.” Of the last three, the fifth one is very poetic to me, and I’m still trying to figure out what that means to me. They’re about love, and the ease and comfort of it, and the last being about an older woman. It’s about companionship, maybe having lost someone to death, or a relationship that has just ended, but being happy to know that they’re okay. It’s just looking back at the life that this woman had. I enjoy performing it, like I said, the last
three are not as comfortable, I can more or less borrow from the experiences of other people, but the first four I can sing, more or less, in different shades, and different hues.

(5:02)

CW: So would you definitely say that this cycle is easier to interpret based on where you are in your life?

AB: I think so, that’s the way I approached it.

CW: Do you think that it’s one character throughout?

AB: You don’t have to play her as one character throughout, but you could, but the thing is, it’s not a character, its stages of life. It’s stages of life because it’s called “A Woman’s Life”, so you could. At first when Dr. Angelou and I sat down and talked about it, after Richard Danielpour had approached her- because they were friends, because he had asked her to write something, she said, “it’s already been written. It’s in my collected poems.” So she pulled them out and arranged them, and actually it started out as eight, and he only set seven. Then when I had a chance to meet with her, she wanted to know about my life and at first, I thought it was going to be a thing where she was going to pen something about my life, but it worked out better that…because these are experiences that any woman, at one point in their life or another, could have gone through. So it made more sense to go with her collected poems. So, it doesn’t have to be one character, but it could be. It all depends on you. I had to go into character mode in order to relate to these pieces, because each has a personality, every last one of these pieces have a big personality, especially the first four. Because when you think about it……

(7:27)
CW: I was just about to ask, for example “Little Girls Speakings”, how did you think about capturing that innocent character?

AB: I thought about little girls that I see with their dolls, and their little white dresses with blue satin sashes, and they’re twisting and turning, and little bobby socks. I think about… I went all the way back to church. When I was a little girl dressed up for Easter, and we always had those little white ponchos, I don’t know why we had to have that darn white poncho, and those white shoes with the little buckles across. I thought about things like that. I had to transport myself back to that time. So yeah, I portray her as being very shy, and smiling a lot, and looking down and peeping up, and you know, I go into the whole thing in order for me to get the message across….

8:34

CW: For “Life doesn’t frighten me,” it’s very rhythmically challenging and in some places it’s hard to maintain the intonation, what would you say to a young singer about that, and how did you approach getting through it?

AB: Well, to be totally honest with you, this was written for me, and I’m not a young singer. I am an experienced singer, and it’s hard. It is hard. You have to know how to access your middle to lower range, because there is a lot of leaping, and all that, and it’s fast. Trying to really spit out the consonants is very important. I would approach it with caution, as far as not throwing your voice… but it depends on where you are vocally, because I had to kind of live with it, and actually it’s different now than when I recorded it, because Richard has always wanted this piece to be one that was not necessarily sung operatically, but you can’t help but have some operatic shading, so like I said, I have worked with it. I have been able to mold it, so that it’s not as operatic-sounding. Also, it
is… The cycle is, so heavily orchestrated, two, and four, wooo! You need a mic. You need a mic. When you’re doing it with an orchestra, you need to be mic’ed. I do it with a mic, I don’t try to over sing that, I don’t, because you can over sing it, You have to be very conscience, especially with the second piece, that is the hardest piece vocally, if you ask me.

11:52:

CW: I have a question about They Went Home. This piece… it has a bittersweet quality to me because the text, in some places, is a little crude. How do you think of portraying this character, because on one hand, she’s saying, “they’ve told me that they’ve never met a girl like me”, but on the other hand, “they went home.” How do you think of playing this duality?

AB: When you first read it, what did you think?

CW: Well, I think it, I don’t think Dr. Angelou is one who goes out and wallows in sorrow, and stuff like that. I don’t get a sense of desperation in the character, but it’s just that she’s stating a fact. They said this, but at the end of the day this is what happens. So that’s how I think of it. I was just wondering if you have any other views on it.

AB: Well, Yeah, I’ve got another view, girl, and it’s life! It’s life! Dr. Angelou lived life. And whether you think it was good or bad, or if, as you said, some of the poetry seems crude, everyone doesn’t always make the best choices in life. And this is a poem about a young lady who has been keeping company with married men. “They say my house is licking clean, no words I spoke were ever mean, I have an air of mystery” … I mean… she has all these beautiful things about her, and she’s throwing her pearls to swine, because you know what, they went home to their wives. They say “you’re wonderful,
you’re beautiful, you’re this, you’re that, oh and your hips, and your lips. I can’t miss one day, two days, three days,” but they went home. That’s exactly what this song is about.

The thing about it, its life. And there are a lot of people, who have come into this world because momma went out and had an affair, and oops, there’s a baby here, its life. That’s why it’s called “A Woman’s Life”…and with that said, I’m not saying that it’s my life.

When you approach this song cycle, you have to, find the truth in it, and she told a truth. I don’t know if it was her truth, but she told a truth.

15:27

CW: Psychologically, like you said, I personally have a hard time with some numbers. I love the last two pieces *Many and More* and *My Life Has Turned Blue*. I love those pieces. I think the writing is just absolutely gorgeous, but psychologically I’m just not in a place where I can connect with that character.

AB: You have not lived any life, girl, you ain’t lived enough life. That’s why I said it was hard for me. It was hard for me. Not that I won’t take someone else’s memory and try make it something, but it may come off sometimes as disingenuous. So, it’s a song cycle that grows with you.

16:28

CW: For example, the last line of *Let’s Majeste* when she says “and when the rousing kiss is given, why must it always be a fairy, but only just a Prince?” I noticed Prince is capitalized. Do you play that in any particular way, do you think of that in any significant way?

AB: Like I said, this is the one that is the hardest for me, but, you could look at it like life could be so many different things, but sometimes we’re put in a box, and why must it
always be a fairy, and only just a Prince? Meaning, the Prince is just like you said is capitalized, a Princely person. That Princely person is the one who is going to save the little girl, or whoever. Like I said, it is a hard one for me.

**CW:** I have another hard question; you probably can’t answer this, but I have to ask you. How old do you think the person is, or an age range for *My Life is Turned Blue*?

**AB:** Now let me tell you, *My Life Turned Blue* didn’t become real for me until I spent, I’m married, and I’ll be married for four years on April 22. My Husband, I met in Paris, France. He still lives in France, I live in Indianapolis, Indiana, and we visit, because my career is such that it didn’t make sense at the time for us to try to move house and home when I’m never even going to be here. There was a time that I had the most wonderful summer with my husband, and that’s when I understood *My Life Has Turned to Blue*. (Singing) “Summer’s gone, the golden days are through, the rosy dawns I used to wait with you have turned to grey My Life Has Turned to Blue.” That for me, I was able to have that make sense to me, because I did feel blue when he had to go back to his life in Paris, and I had to return to my life. I’m trying to think of what the last line is of that…Do you have that for me, what’s the last line of that?

**CW:** “But until I see you, my life has turned blue. I’ve heard the news that the winter too will pass, that spring a sign the summer’s due, at last but until I see you lying in the green grass my life has turned blue.”

**AB:** So, meaning we’re separated, I’m blue, I’m sad, but I know that we’ll see each other again. With that said, it’s and experience. It’s not an age, I don’t see it as an age. I see it as an experience, and that was my experience with my husband, that’s why it’s real to me now.
CW: Right, and I honestly never thought of it in a way like that.

CW: One last question. Do you have and sympathy for the character in *Many and More*?

AB: Oh yeah, great sympathy. That’s the most beautiful song. There are many and more because this is a woman who has lived. She’s had many loves, many experiences. She may have been married, and then widowed, or it just didn’t work. I was engaged three and a half times; don’t judge me, before I got married. There are many and more who would kiss my lips, take my hand, (singing) duh duh duh duh duh, or send first son, to my ailing bed… What’s the next, the other part?

CW: I have need of a friend.

AB: I have need of a friend, and then I have… because that’s someone who is a friend, that has become a friend. You know there are a lot of relationships that start of hot and heavy, and then you find out y’all are just not meant to be that way and it turns into something else. The whole time you are performing this song cycle, it has to become personal to you. Because it’s nothing, there’s nothing really scholarly about life, and what you have gone through, and if you can take it from that standpoint, then you’ll have some passion for every stage of that woman’s life, because that’s where they are at that time. That’s what happening with them, with every young lady, at that time. And when you’re old with no one… I mean you’ve got your grandkids, you’ve got people around you who love you, but every woman, I don’t care what stage of life, wants to feel pretty, to feel wanted, to be loved. It does not matter. You can be wrinkled, or you can be smooth as silk. Every woman, at any stage of her life, wants to feel special. Yes, I have lots of compassion for her because I’m marching closer to her. You see what I’m saying? So, as
you get older, as you start through your journey in life, and start peeling away the layers of your life, you’ll have compassion for all those women.

CW: From my standpoint I feel very encouraged by her because despite all of these things, you know, she’s lived a full life. She has experienced love, true love. You know?…

AB: Exactly!

CW: So I don’t feel sorry for her in anyway, I’m actually very happy for her.

AB: Yeah, because you know at the end of life, all we have are memories…

CW: Yes!

AB: ….and if you can say…. (Singing): and that was my love... That was my love. I have experienced it…

CW: Yeah!

AB: It’s a beautiful thing, you can close your eyes, and feel like you have done everything you could do.

CW: That’s wonderful. Do you think there is room in the standard repertoire for this cycle?

AB: Oh yeah, oh yeah… It’s a wonderful piece to be performed, and I’ve done it with orchestras, and I’ve done it as piano/vocal.

CW: How is singing it with piano, the experience different for you? Of course I mean you…

AB: I like it with piano because it’s more intimate….

CW: That’s what I was thinking…
AB: It’s lends itself to a very intimate audience. Now with orchestra, some people just want it with orchestra, it works, it has to be mic’ed, because it’s very heavily orchestrated in those two movements that I was talking about. But with, *My Life is Turned to Blue*, it is so sparse. It is just a xylophone and the bells or something, or a harp, yeah there is a harp in there. Then at the end… (Singing): *But when I see you ...* Then the strings come in very light. Very light!

CW: The two movements you are talking about is *Come and Be My Baby*, and *Life Doesn’t Frighten Me*?

AB: MmmHmm

CW: Those two movements, you’re saying that it’s very hard to sing over the orchestra, and sing well?

AB: Yeah, you wouldn’t want to sing over the orchestra. You need…. Just know… you need a microphone.

CW: Okay

AB: I would suggest staying mic’ed. No need to scream because it doesn’t lend itself to that. Richard never thought of this as operatic. He never thought of it, but because of where he placed the vocal line you’re going to have those notes, and yes you can still soar and all that, but there are spots that come down in your middle to low voice, and the orchestration is lush. You’re not going to be heard. And I’m an experienced big mouth singer, and uh-uh… you’re not going to be heard.

AB: So are you going to do this with orchestra?

27:43
CW: I’m doing it with piano actually, and I love what you said because I was drawn to this piece based on numbers one and two…the really young child. I grew up in Jamaica, and I can imagine myself being this little girl saying…. My Mom’s better than everybody else’s. You know?.. and as I spend more time with this piece I realize that it grows with you, and that’s the wonderful thing about it. You know? I can honestly say as a student I can see myself singing this pretty much for the rest of my career and it’s going to evolve into something different at each point.

AB: It does, and you’ll put in your own unique experiences with the different layers of the ladies that are before you. And as I said, you’ll find respect for each one of them. Even the one who is screwing everybody’s husband… She’s trying to find herself.

CW: Yeah

AB: You know they went home? Because there’s actually a way I play her towards the end, because at first she sounds very braggadocios. You know, and I….. Have you ever seen the movie, The Help?

CW: No, I have not.

AB: Okay, well have you seen movies with southern ladies back in the fifties with their little dresses…. In the afternoon?

CW: Yes

AB: or they’re sitting out on the veranda and they have their mint julep? Well I imagine her sitting around talking with her girlfriends…. “they went home and told their wives that never …” And she’s just having conversation and she says “my house is clean” at first it’s positive, and then she says… “but they went home.” It’s like she’s having a conversation with herself after a while. And then you hear the music, because you have to
listen to the music that Richard wrote at the end. She doesn’t say the rest, she’s thinking now, “yeah, they say these things about me, but maybe I need to check myself, before I wreck myself.” So, I see it as a point, you know I kind of get a little inquisitive look at the end, like hmmm… Let me think about that, because maybe I haven’t been doing what I need to do.

CW: Right!

AB: …. They’re not leaving their wives for me. They’re coming over here, and they’re getting my honey, and probably some money, and they’re like, “you’re fantastic but I gotta go.”

CW: Right!

AB: So yeah, I mean… you have to find, as a woman growing up, that self-respect for yourself.

CW: Yes!

AB: What you’re going to deal with, and what you’re not, and some of us don’t always… some people can learn from other people’s mistakes. Some folks have to jump head-first in it, you know, make their own mistakes, and that’s who this chick is….

CW: Okay

AB: She has all the social graces, she’s wonderful, she’s beautiful, but she forgot somewhere along the line that she has to have self-respect.

CW: Right.

AB: and at the end of it you can hear the little (Singing) duh duh… you know….

CW: yes, yes!

AB: the little question sound.
CW: I just think this is a wonderful work, and I’m honored to be able to sing it, and I’m honored that it’s been written for you, and you are able to provide some insight on it. In academia typically for new music, where there isn’t a rich performance history, students need to hear the words of people who have actually performed the work. You know, just guidelines for, how you should approach this. I just wanted to hear your views from a performer’s standpoint.

AB: From a performer’s standpoint, stay on that breath. Just to give it the color and the weight that it needs. High chest is very appropriate. This is not… like I said he never meant it to be too classical in nature. It’s more, I don’t even know how to explain it, because Richard’s music has the American…

CW: Yes!

AB: ….. hints of Jazz, Blues, and Gospel, and musical theater. I hear especially Bernstein’s and Gershwin’s influences in his music.

CW: Definitely

AB: So you have to find where those things work. I like using the prop or the vision, not necessarily a prop, but the vision… All of it is telling a story, telling her story. I’ve used a stool on the stage, and I’ve sat on the stool at the beginning… you know Little Girl Speakings, and I swing my legs, and I smile at the audience and all that, and then when life fights me, I’m getting up, I’m rolling up my sleeves, I’m putting my hands on my hips. You know, and I’m sticking my tongue out and I’m making crazy faces… I get very physical. I’m very theatrical, I have to through myself into it. And I imagine with, what’s the third one?

CW: They Went Home
AB: *They Went Home*… and she’s sitting there having a cup of coffee, talking to some girlfriends with her legs crossed, maybe smoking a cigarette, or whatever. You know, and because I actually pick up the water bottle at one point, and begin, very seductively, to drink… You know, I get into it. And then humming into some of those sounds...

CW: And that is perfectly stylistic?

AB: MmmHmm

CW: Yeah

AB: And then with the… *Come and Be My Baby*, he meets her at the bar after work, and they are sitting around, and everybody’s talking about what’s in the newspaper, and talking about this, that and the other, and she’s had a couple of drinks. Okay… And she says, “forget all of that, Come Be My Baby.” And I have her dancing at the end, and everything. Yeah, I throw myself into it. And then with the last three, you know… with *Let’s Majeste*, I do it very stately, and you don’t have to do a lot with the last three. The last three are ethereal, and kind of come out of themselves. You know?.. because that’s a woman that has calmed down. It’s kind of like, “I’ve been there, done that! Now I’m speaking from my heart.” That’s kind of how I see the last three, and I’m getting to that stage in my life to where I’m saying, okay, yeah, been there done that…I wish you much success with this! I would love to have a copy of it, or whatever.

CW: Absolutely, thank you so much for talking to me. Is there anything…. I have read every interview that I can possibly get my hand on. Is there anything that you would like to say to the world, that you’d like to say to me?

AB: About this piece?
CW: No, just in general. You know to a young singer approaching any piece, or this piece in particular?

AB: Well, as I stated before with this piece…. Well, let me just say in general… With every piece I go to pick up, I try to bring me, where I am at this moment, because everybody’s interpretation is going to be different, and it just is. I think about when I sing Aida, yeah, I know that she’s an Ethiopian princess, but I give her a back-story. An Ethiopian Princess that was captured by the Egyptians. Why was she captured? Why was she even out? Maybe, she was evidently out beyond the castle walls in order to get captured. I give them all back-stories. So, imagination has to be key to performing any piece. You’ve got to come with imagination to the story that’s presented, and then you can add yourself into it. How would you handle it? How would you deliver this? Cause I think about (singing) “I’ve got a magic charm that I keep up my sleeve, I can walk the ocean floor… never have to breathe.” I mean it’s very…. She’s painting pictures, and she’s being playful. So you have to be in your child-like playful area. So, in general, be creative, have vision, and most of all, have fun! Because if it looks like it’s work, baby, it’s sounding like it’s work!

CW: Question, did you have to spend anytime just speaking the text….

AB: I read the text a lot, but that’s a good idea, that’s a good idea to speak it, and to act it out. You know Dr. Angelou has a book based on the second poem. Its a children’s book out……

CW: Right.

AB:….. and I think it’s just the poem, but it’s probably, I’m sure it’s illustrated. So that might give you some ideas.
CW: Wonderful

AB: Yeah.. I hope that all helped

CW: Yes, Definitely…. I am so honored to talk you. You are amazing! You are my inspiration! Thank you so much!
APPENDIX C. LIST OF WORKS BY RICHARD DANIELPOUR

**Orchestra**
Serenade (2013)

The Song of the Wandering Darveesh (2012)

Vox Humana (2012)

Come Up From the Fields Father (2008/2012)

Across the Span of Time (2011)

Vox Terrae (2008)

Rocking the Cradle (2007)

The Night Rainbow (1999)

Vox Populi (1998)

Celestial Night (1997)

Concerto for Orchestra "Zoroastrian Riddles" (1996)

Toward the Splendid City (1992)

Song of Remembrance (1991)

The Awakened Heart (1990)

First Light (1988)


**Soloist(s) & Orchestra**
Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra "From the Mountaintop" (2013)
For Solo Clarinet and Orchestra

War Songs (2013)
For Solo Baritone and Orchestra

A Prayer for Our Time (2013)
For Solo Cello and Chamber Orchestra

Kaddish (2012)
For Violin and String Orchestra

Toward a Season of Peace (2012)
For Solo Soprano, Chorus and Orchestra

Darkness in the Ancient Valley (Symphony in Five Movements) (2011)
For Solo Soprano and Orchestra

Piano Concerto No.4, “A Hero’s Journey” (2011)
For Piano and Orchestra

Mirrors (Suite in Five Movements for Piano and Orchestra) (2009)

A Woman's Life (2008)
For Soprano Solo and Orchestra

Three Prayers (2007)
For Soprano & Orchestra

Pastime (2006)
Song-cycle for Baritone & Orchestra

Triptych (2006)
For Soprano & Orchestra

Three arias from Danielpour’s opera Margaret Garner (2005)

Washington Speaks (2005)
For Narrator & Orchestra

Songs of Solitude (2004)
Song-cycle for Baritone & Orchestra

Piano Concerto No. 3, "Zodiac Variations" (2002)
For Piano Left-Hand & Orchestra

An American Requiem (2001)
For Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone soli, S.A.T.B. Choir & Orchestra (1 hour)

Cello Concerto No. 2, "Through the Ancient Valley" (2001)
For Cello Solo, Kamancheh Soloists & Orchestra

In the Arms of the Beloved (2001)
Double Concerto for Violin, Cello & Orchestra

Double Concerto for Violin, Cello & Orchestra

A Fool’s Paradise (1999)
Concerto for Violin & Orchestra

Voices of Remembrance (1998)
Concerto for String Quartet & Orchestra

Elegies (1997)
Song-cycle for Mezzo-Soprano, Baritone & Orchestra

Piano Concerto No. 2 (1993)
For Piano & Orchestra

Symphony No. 3, "Journey Without Distance" (1990)
For Solo Soprano, S.A.T.B. Choir & Orchestra

Cello Concerto No. 1 (1990)
For Cello & Orchestra

Piano Concerto No. 1, "Metamorphosis" (1990)
For Cello & Orchestra

Symphony No. 2, "Visions" (1986)
For Soprano, Tenor and Orchestra

Oratio Pauli (1982)
For S.A.T.B. Choir and String Orchestra

**Band / Wind / Brass Ensemble**

Icarus (2009)
For Large Brass Ensemble, Seven Percussion & Two Pianos

Benediction (2007)
For 2 Horns, 2 Trumpets, 3 Trombones & Chimes

Voice of the City (2005)
For Concert Band

Vox Populi - for Concert Band (1998)
For Concert Band

Urban Dances, Book 2 (1993)
For Brass Quintet

Urban Dances (Book 1) (1988)
For Brass Quintet

**Opera**
Margaret Garner (2005)

**Ballet**
Urban Dances: Dance Suite in Five Movements (1996)
For Orchestra

Anima Mundi (1995)
APPENDIX D. PARTIAL LIST OF WRITTEN WORKS OF MAYA ANGELOU

Autobiographies
All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986). New York: Random House
A Song Flung Up to Heaven (2002). New York: Random House

Poetry
From a Black Woman to a Black Man, 1995


We Had Him, 2009

His Day is Done, 2013

**Personal essays**


**Cookbooks**


**Children's books**


Izak of Lapland

Angelina of Italy

Renée Marie of France

Mikale of Hawaii
APPENDIX E. DISCOGRAPHY OF RICHARD DANIELPOUR

   Ensemble Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio
   Soloist(s) Sharon Robinson, Jaime Laredo
   Conductor Michael Stern

A Woman's Life (2007)
   Ensemble Nashville Symphony
   Soloist(s) Angela Brown,
   Conductor Giancarlo Guerrero

An American Requiem (2001)
   Ensemble Pacific Symphony Orchestra / Pacific Chorale
   Soloist(s) Stephanie Blythe, mezzo-soprano / Hugh Smith, tenor / Mark Oswald, bar.
   Conductor Carl St. Clair

Anima Mundi (1995)
   Ensemble Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
   Conductor David Zinman

Celestial Night (1997)
   Ensemble The Philharmonia Orchestra
   Conductor Zdenek Macal

Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1994)
   Ensemble Philadelphia Orchestra
   Soloist(s) Yo-Yo Ma, cello
   Conductor David Zinman

Concerto for Orchestra “Zoroastrian Riddles” (1996)
   Ensemble Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra
   Conductor David Zinman

Elegies (1997)
   Ensemble London Symphony Orchestra, Perspectives Ensemble
   Soloist(s) Frederica Von Stade, Thomas Hampson, Huang Ying
   Conductor Roger Nierenberg

Fantasy Variations (1997)
   Soloist(s) Tanya Prochazka (Cello), Jacques Després (Piano)

First Light (1988)
   Ensemble Seattle Symphony and Chorale
   Conductor Gerard Schwarz
In the Arms of the Beloved (Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra) (2001)
  Ensemble The Iris Chamber Orchestra
  Soloist(s) Jaime Laredo, violin, Sharon Robinson, cello
  Conductor Michael Stern

Lacrimae Beati (2009)
  Ensemble Nashville Symphony
  Soloist(s) Angela Brown
  Conductor Giancarlo Guerrero

River of Light (In Memory of Isaac Stern) (2007)

Sonnets to Orpheus, Book 1 (1992)
  Ensemble London Symphony Orchestra, Perspectives Ensemble
  Soloist(s) Frederica Von Stade (Mezzo Soprano), Thomas Hampson Bar.
  Conductor Roger Nierenberg

  Ensemble American String Quartet

String Quartet No. 3, “Psalms of Sorrow” (1994)
  Ensemble American String Quartet

String Quartet No. 4 (Apparitions) (2000)
  Ensemble American String Quartet

The Awakened Heart (1990)
  Ensemble Seattle Symphony and Chorale
  Soloist(s) Faith Esham, soprano
  Conductor Gerard Schwarz

  The Enchanted Garden (Preludes for Piano, Book I) (1992)
  Soloist(s) Christopher O’Riley, piano

Toward the Splendid City (1992)
  Ensemble The Philharmonia Orchestra
  Conductor Zdenek Macal

Urban Dances (1988)

Urban Dances: Dance Suite In Five Movements (1996)
  Ensemble Philharmonia Orchestra
  Conductor Zdenek Macal

Vox Populi (1998)
Ensemble    Indiana University of Pennsylvania Wind Ensemble
Conductor    Jack Stamp
Vox Populi (for concert band) (1998)
Ensemble    University of North Texas Symphonic Band
Conductor    Dennis Fischer
APPENDIX F. DISCOGRAPHY OF ANGELA BROWN

2014 This Christmas-Angela Brown, Aftertouch Music.


1997 Recording and performances with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra - Erich Kunzel, conductor (Serena selections from Porgy and Bess and world-premier recording of "Lonely Boy" from the original score) TelArc, May 1998.

1997 Guest Artist on The Joy of Music Television Series - on location in Heidelberg, Germany

1997 Guest Artist on the Hour of Power International Television Program (Crystal Cathedral, California)

1995 Solo compact disc recording with Charles Webb pianist and dean emeritus of Indiana University School of Music
May 26, 2015

Carline Waugh
8912 Fox Run Ave
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

RE: A WOMAN'S LIFE, by Richard Danielpour

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VITA

Jamaican born soprano Carline Waugh earned a Bachelor of Music Performance from Atlantic Union College in Lancaster, MA. She received a Master of Music Performance from the University of Mississippi in 2012 where she also served as a graduate assistant. She will receive her Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Louisiana State University in August 2015.

Ms. Waugh has sung operatic roles throughout the United States and Europe. She recently performed the role of Arlene Fox in the premier of the opera Buffalo Soldiers. Her other recent roles include Liù from Turandot, Zerlina from Don Giovanni, Valencienne from The Merry Widow, Polly from Die Dreigroschenoper, and Gianetta from The Gondoliers. Her recent concert repertoire includes Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess, Dubois’ Seven Last Words of Christ, Handel’s Messiah, Mozart’s Requiem in D Minor, Brahms Ein Deutsches Requiem, and J.S. Bach’s Magnificat in D Major.

During her tenure at Louisiana State University, Ms. Waugh excelled as a teaching assistant and performer under the tutelage of Dr. Loraine Sims. She has taught courses in Studio Voice and Lyric Diction for Singers. Upon graduating, Ms. Waugh will actively pursue a career in performance and teaching.