A performance guide to Libby Larsen's Sifting Through the Ruins for mezzo-soprano, viola and piano

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A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO LIBBY LARSEN’S SIFTING THROUGH THE RUINS FOR MEZZO-SOPRANO, VIOLA AND PIANO

A Written Document

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

by
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ABSTRACT

The goal of this document is to offer a performance guide of Libby Larsen’s song cycle, *Sifting Through the Ruins*, for mezzo-soprano, viola, and piano. The letters and photos, which inspired the texts for this song cycle, were discovered in New York City by mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer while she was struggling to comprehend the events of the World Trade Center attack which took place on September 11, 2001.

Chapter 1 discusses the life and vocal works of Libby Larsen. Biographical information is presented, followed by a discussion of Dr. Larsen’s compositional process, her musical style, and the importance she places on rhythm and text setting.

Susanne Mentzer, the well regarded mezzo-soprano, is the focus of Chapter 2 because she discovered the letters and photos which inspired the texts and performed the premiere. Biographical information is included, along with details on Ms. Mentzer’s previous collaboration with the composer on another work, *Love After 1950*.

Chapter 3 presents information on the tragic events which took place in New York City on September 11, 2001. The personal reactions from this horrific event lead to the discovery of the texts by Ms. Mentzer, the request for such a cycle, the evolution of the composition by Libby Larsen, followed by the rehearsal process and premiere.

Prevailing performance issues of the cycle are presented in Chapter 4. Musical examples for each song are provided, as appropriate, while three separate sections detail elements of harmonic structure, rhythmic features, and performance suggestions to inform and influence the performance. The suggestions will include thoughts on interpretation and strategies for solving challenging issues.

Following the conclusion and bibliography, appendices are provided with transcripts of interviews with Libby Larsen, Susanne Mentzer, and James Dunham, altered tempo markings,
program notes by the composer, discography, a list of Larsen’s vocal works, and a letter of permission.
INTRODUCTION

Libby Larsen’s solo vocal music ranges from intimate song cycles for voice and piano, to chamber works for voice and other instruments, to larger works with orchestra. Her vocal compositions have been praised for their “clear textures, easily absorbed rhythms and appealing melodic contours that make singing seem the most natural expression imaginable.”¹ A review in USA Today finds that Larsen is “the only English-speaking composer since Benjamin Britten who matches great verse with fine music so intelligently and expressively.”²

The goal of this document is to offer a performance guide of Libby Larsen’s song cycle, Sifting Through the Ruins, for mezzo-soprano, viola, and piano. The letters and photos, which inspired the texts for this song cycle, were discovered in New York City by mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer while she was struggling to comprehend the events of the World Trade Center bombing which took place on September 11, 2001.³

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² Ibid.
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CHAPTER 1
LIBBY LARSEN

Biographical Information

Born on December 24, 1950, in Wilmington, Delaware, Libby Larsen was raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Her mother exposed her to the arts through various types of music, from boogie woogie to Broadway musicals, while also providing Larsen the opportunity to learn to play the piano and take dance lessons. While attending a Catholic elementary school, Larsen learned both to read and compose music. She participated in the choir which performed not only for daily masses, but also for weddings, funerals and high masses.

“We sang Gregorian chant. We could have been taught by ear, however, we learned solfege. We learned to write at the same time we were learning solfege, so by the time we were given the chant, we could already read it. We learned to read music by knowing how to read music…I was in a rather rare environment.”

After learning the fundamentals of music, Larsen felt the desire to take things further. She used her schoolmates to help her create songs. Some of her pieces were rather long. One composition that centered on the elements (earth, fire, water, air) was continually developed during recess for three years.

Larsen’s elementary school teachers were quietly supportive of her musical endeavors and while in the seventh grade, she was allowed to use the blackboard to write her pieces while her friends were off doing other things.


“I started composing out of a need, and that need was to communicate things that I was not able to express through any other venue. I had no idea of how deep the need was. I started composing in grade school, putting sound in order, attempting to communicate a sense of being. I didn’t recognize it as a valuable or even successful activity until college.”

Larsen’s elementary piano teacher, Sister Colette, introduced her to diverse composers from Mozart to Bartok and Stravinsky. She also performed Japanese music and American boogie woogie. Larsen has expressed, “That variety was very important in introducing many different musical sounds and colors to me.”

She began her undergraduate work at the University of Minnesota with the hopes of becoming a classical singer. Though her friends complained, she enjoyed her music theory classes and felt comfortable with analyzing chords and with ear training. This enjoyment led her to change her focus from performance to music theory and composition.

During her sophomore year, Larsen had the opportunity to compose some original music. Her voice teacher, Lois Wittich, was very supportive of her compositional dreams and after choosing five poems from the Tempest, Larsen set them and performed them for her jury. She received a grade of an A, and other singers and faculty members requested compositions. This was the experience which helped Larsen begin to feel like a real composer.

While pursuing her undergraduate degree, at the age of twenty, Larsen worked at the McDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, for one summer as a maid. The McDowell Colony strives to “nurture the arts by offering creative individuals of the highest talent an

7 Ibid., 143.


inspiring environment in which they can produce enduring works of the imagination."\textsuperscript{11} Larsen found herself surrounded by the likes of Aaron Copland, William Schumann, Lester Trimbull, Stephen Wolpe, and William Wood. She was able to converse with these professional musicians and she discovered a collective sadness among several of the composers who were not able to solely focus on a life of composition. Her experience at the Colony influenced her resolve to be either a full-time composer or to find a different career path.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1971, Larsen graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Theory and Composition and began to work as a secretary at an insurance company. During this time she composed her first chamber opera entitled \textit{Psyche and the Pskscraper} which was based on a short story by O. Henry. In her next chamber opera, \textit{Lovers} which was adapted from a story by Liam O’Flaherty, she was able to include her love for dance.\textsuperscript{13}

Larsen returned to the University of Minnesota where she studied for several years while earning her master’s degree in composition in 1975, eventually earning her doctorate in 1978. In 1973, Larsen co-founded with the noted American composer, Stephen Paulus, the Minnesota Composer’s Forum, later renamed the American Composers Forum.

“The American Composers Forum is committed to supporting composers and developing new markets for their music. Through granting, commissioning, and performance programs, the Forum provides composers at all stages of their careers with valuable resources for professional and artistic development. By linking communities with composers and performers, the Forum fosters a demand


\textsuperscript{12} Cynthia Green, “Interview with Composer Libby Larsen,” \textit{ILWC Journal} (June 1992), 25.

\textsuperscript{13} Cook, “The Evolving Style of Libby Larsen,” 2.
for new music, enriches communities, and helps develop the next generation of composers, musicians, and music patrons.”14

At the University of Minnesota Larsen was able to study composition and music theory with Paul Fetler, Eric Stokes, and Dominic Argento. Each professor left a lasting mark on her compositional style. Regarding Paul Fetler, Larsen has said, “He was able to give his students complete confidence that they could make pieces of music from beginning to end...”15 She credits Eric Stokes as “the instructor who brought out her sense of humor and unique sense of the absurd in her writing.”16 During her doctoral work, Dominic Argento was her major professor. The legacy he provided in her writing style was, “a real confidence in orchestration, a confidence in the longevity of lyricism, and the knowledge that lyricism is a concept and not an act.”17 Likewise, Larsen believes her compositional style has also been inspired by non-music teachers including poets, architects, painters, and philosophers.18

Larsen made history in 1983 when she was appointed resident composer with the Minnesota Orchestra, which lasted for four years. This appointment provided her with the necessary time she needed to embark on composing her very first symphony entitled, Symphony: Water Music. Consisting of four movements, the symphony premiered in 1985 with the Minnesota Orchestra under the baton of Neville Marriner. Written during a 300th celebration of Handel’s birth, Larsen describes the piece as a poetic symphony.


16 Ibid., 18.

17 Ibid., 18.

“A poetic symphony in four movements (fast-slow-presto-finale) which create a quartet of water studies. The tempo for each is indicated only by metronome marking, but the score bears many instructions to the performers suggesting how to enhance the expression and the mood (i.e., “fleetricily-like a shadow”). There is a deliberate homage to Handel in the first movement.”

Throughout her career she has held residencies with the California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Philadelphia School of the Arts, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony.

Among Larsen’s many awards and honors is a Grammy in 1994 for her work as a producer on the CD *The Art of Arlene Augér*, which featured Larsen’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Other awards include the George Peabody Medal in 2010 for outstanding contributions to Music in America, the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a National Endowment for the Arts Composer Fellowship, the American Council on the Arts Young Artist Award, and a Bush Artists Fellowship.

USA Today named Larsen’s opera *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus* as one of the best classical music events in 1990. With over fifty recordings on labels such as, Angel/EMI, Nonesuch, Decca and Koch International, she has shared collaborations with The King’s Singers, flutist Eugenia Zukerman, mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade, and soprano Benita Valente to name a few.

From 2003 to 2004 Larsen held the Harissios Papamarkou Chair at the John W. Kline Center of the Library of Congress. This position focuses on topics of education and technology

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21 Ibid.
which have a direct influence on the Library of Congress and the entire nation. Larsen’s work centered on providing a link between music education and arts organizations so they could successfully design innovative ways for arts educators and first-rate professional musicians to collaborate. In addition, Larsen organized “The Global Green Room” which brings together prominent practicing artists with a goal to isolate issues which concerned “the soul” of America’s culture and initiated ways in which artists could more regularly interact with each other through the assistance of technology.\textsuperscript{22}

With over 400 compositions in her catalogue, Larsen composes music in all genres, ranging from small chamber works to full symphonies. Her music has been performed at various festivals including, the Aldeburgh Festival, the Grand Teton Music Festival, the New Hampshire Music Festival, and the Aspen Festival.\textsuperscript{23}

**Compositional Style**

“Music exists in an infinity of sound. I think of all music as existing in the substance of the air itself. It is the composer’s task to order and make sense of sound, in time and space, to communicate something about being alive through music.”\textsuperscript{24}

When asked to describe her compositional style, Libby Larsen suggests her use of rhythm plays a more significant role in her music than her harmonic style. She feels we are constantly surrounded by the effects of a percussive world.


“My style can be recognized by its rhythm more than anything else. I believe that music springs from language of the people. I am intensely interested in how music can be derived from the rhythms and pitches of spoken American English.”

Larsen describes the American English language as having beautiful rhythms and it is this American dialect and the rhythm of everyday life which is the language of her music. She is fascinated by studying rhythmic patterns, pitch range, tempo, and phrase contour in American spoken English and has created a process she calls, “rhythmating” which helps her analyze all aspects of our spoken language. After selecting the texts, she begins by recording herself as she reads them. Larsen endeavors to vary each reading by emphasizing words differently and by taking longer or shorter breaks between thoughts. The second phase involves Larsen writing a rhythmic dictation of the various recitations. Occasionally, she has been known to bring other people into the “rhythmating” phase by recording them reading the texts. This method ensures she has a multitude of options which showcase the inherent flow of the text.

“Sometimes the text needs to be set as naturally as possible, almost as if you’re speaking, but there happen to be pitches. Sometimes the text demands the exact opposite in order to create the metaphor for the text.”

Regarding Larsen’s harmonic style, she prefers to think in terms of color and strongly believes this element is central in defining the piece for an audience.

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27 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

“My music is built around tonal areas that are vaguely modal and reinforced though pedal tones in the bass...My approach is NOT four-part voice-leading functional keyboard harmony; however I would describe tonality for me as pools of ‘comfort’ around a fundamental. The way I conceive tonality is horizontal, not vertical, meaning that the line comes first and the harmonies result.”

In building color, Larsen tends to center around tonal areas while making it possible for the audience, by way of acoustics, to hear pitches which are not actually being played. Larsen made this discovery in graduate school when she was given the opportunity to be a lab instructor for a course on the acoustics of music. These insights helped build a foundation in which she feels the voice is essentially a stringed instrument.

“Since it has no frets and no keys to depress, it must locate intervals kinesthetically and intelligently. There is a good reason for fourths, fifths, and diatonic scales in vocal music. I try to use them in my style. I work to compose vocal lines that fall naturally in the acoustics of the voice.”

Larsen’s harmonic style relies on recurring intervals to help feature dramatic moments in the texts of her compositions. “Intervals generally have a particular significance in my music – I choose the interval...and develop the meaning of that interval musically throughout a piece.” Chapter four will detail Larsen’s use of intervals and their importance in Sifting Through the Ruins.

Because Larsen composes in a horizontal manner, her music also relies on the construction of musical motives which create feelings and emotions that might be inexpressible through words. “In music I want to give the listener not the sound of a bird as much as a feeling

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33 Ibid.
of flying; not the footsteps on a mountain so much as the sense of climbing.\textsuperscript{34} Larsen’s use of motives, specifically the motives created for \textit{Sifting Through the Ruins}, will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

Finally, in regards to color and movement, Larsen draws inspiration from her natural surroundings.

“The unusual thing about Minneapolis is that it is built around lakes and creeks; it has a concentrated urban energy, but it is also possible to take a canoe or sailboat out on the water, in the middle of the city. What has found its way into the music in a sense of movement from ground to water, and a movement from civilized energy to nature.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{Solo Vocal Works}

With over 160 vocal works, no one can argue Larsen does not have a special place in her heart for creating beautiful, lyrical, and haunting melodies for singers. “I am a singer, you know, and I am a great talker. I love the notion of vocalizing.”\textsuperscript{36}

“To me, the human voice is the ultimate instrument. It’s the most reflective, the most personal, the most infinite in its possibilities and the most difficult to write for if you are not willing to accept the fact that the human voice is a kinetic instrument.”\textsuperscript{37}

Choosing the right poetry is the essential first step in her compositional process. Larsen feels truly great poetry already has an innate feeling of music to it and that her job is to discover the music of the poetry.\textsuperscript{38} In choosing poetry, Larsen needs to be inspired by the work.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{34} Boyer, “Music Style and Gender in the Choral Music of Libby Larsen,” 22.


\textsuperscript{36} Boyer, “Music Style and Gender in the Choral Music of Libby Larsen,” 17.


\end{flushright}
She acknowledges the recognition of an extraordinary idea is one of the most difficult steps in her process. To find the extraordinary, in something which is ordinary, poses a struggle.\(^{39}\)

“That it bears looking at, may take, actually, a state of grace. A quiet moment of dwelling in comparison, in a non-egocentric way. Where the idea itself is the subject of contemplation, and the recognition of the idea, not my own ego’s involvement with the idea: that may be a state of grace. In my mind, a state of grace is a moment of quietness.”\(^{40}\)

Inspiration is frequently discovered in poetry and Larsen has acquired an enormous collection of poetry books. She is drawn to poetry which is written by or about strong women and she has used the works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, Calamity Jane, Gertrude Stein, Emily Dickinson, and Virginia Woolf as her muses. She revels in poetry which is filled with honesty as if the poet is candidly revealing herself to her reader. In this truthfulness, Larsen is able to delve into the emotional depth of meaning which can then be highlighted in her music.\(^{41}\) With regards to texts written by or about males, her opinion is that the emotions feel too distant, and thus need more time to discover the depth of their meaning.\(^{42}\) Because Larsen uses the female voice when setting the text of female poets, her preference in poetic style may be the reason a majority of her vocal works tend to be composed for female

\(^{39}\) Green, “Interview with Composer Libby Larsen,” 24.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) Christy L. Wisuthseriwong, “Libby Larsen’s De Toda La Eternidad: Creating Infinity Through the Words of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,” (D.M.A. diss., The University of North Carolina in Greensboro, 2011).

voices. Once she finds inspiring texts she is then able to focus on the tools she needs to fully articulate the extraordinary idea.

In Larsen’s opinion, she has two methods of text setting. The first is the idea that she already knows how the music will sound and she works to fit the text into the shape of her musical creation. The second method is letting the text direct the music, which she finds to be more fulfilling. This is why her technique of “rhythmating” proves to be such a vital step in her process. Though the text guides the music, the words and music of Larsen’s compositions are of equal importance and should not be looked at as unconnected entities.

“The fact is that words and music are not only inseparable; they are one and the same. Their combination holds the meaning of the music. A word has meaning and in the company of other words, it has complex meaning, suggested by context. Music deepens the context by providing an abstract order of sound in time and space, which allows the listener to dwell in emotion – private and unique as that emotion may be.”

Following the completion of a composition, Larsen prefers to give detailed articulation directions for the performers in English to ensure her ideas are understood. Some musicians may feel this leaves little room for personal interpretive ideas, but Larsen is quick to disagree and cites the accountability she feels as a composer as her reasoning for including such specific performance instructions. “I want the performer to be able to have a personality in the piece. I try to put as much on the page as I can, to take that responsibility, to let the buck stop here as much as it can.”

43 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.


45 Duffie, “Composer Libby Larsen: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie.”
Libby Larsen’s solo vocal music ranges from intimate song cycles for voice and piano, to chamber works for voice and other instruments, to larger works with orchestra. Her vocal compositions have been praised for their “clear textures, easily absorbed rhythms and appealing melodic contours that make singing seem the most natural expression imaginable.”

CHAPTER 2

SUSANNE MENTZER

Biographical Information

“Her amazing portrayal was on a level seldom encountered in opera these days. Before Mentzer even opened her mouth she dominated the stage; the way she moved and stood instantly conveyed a confident, aristocratic young man. Vocally, she was even more commanding. There seemed to be nothing she could not do. Her beautiful, seamless voice molded and polished phrases, conveying every bit of the emotion in Bellini’s score. Her embellishments (note perfect and thrilling in their delivery) were a lesson in how to define a character musically, and in the final scene Mentzer used silences as authoritatively as she used music and words.”

Opera News, February 2000

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on January 21, 1957 mezzo-soprano, Susanne Mentzer, began her musical career by singing in her church choir, but recalls “music wasn’t her thing.” Raised in Pennsylvania and Maryland, her family settled in Santa Fe, New Mexico for her last two years of high school. Mentzer studied voice privately with a supportive teacher who encouraged her to perform on programs for various women’s leagues. Mentzer felt she had a good voice, but also knew it was not a typical one. Her voice was comparatively larger than her peers and did not blend as easily when performing in choir.

Mentzer’s mother wanted her to experience more culture and as a result, she took a job ushering for two summers at the Santa Fe Opera. Though Mentzer was an opera novice, this job allowed her to spend more time with friends from school, and more importantly, afforded her a

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49 Susanne Mentzer, phone interview by author, July 19, 2011.
reason to stay out late at night, which was approved by her mother. What she did not realize was
the dramatic effect this summer job would have on the rest of her life.\textsuperscript{50}

The Santa Fe Opera experience inspired Mentzer’s fascination with opera. \textit{The Merry Widow} by Franz Lehár was her first encounter with operetta, which was quickly followed by a
performance of \textit{La Boheme} by Giacomo Puccini. She fell in love with both works and with the
ambience of the outdoor theater, a feature that is widely recognized as central to the Santa Fe
experience. Interactions with artists at the opera house helped her overcome previous
stereotypical views she had of opera singers. She found the singers to be young, fun, and
attractive people.\textsuperscript{51}

Following her summers with Santa Fe Opera, Mentzer made the decision to pursue music
as part of her undergraduate degree. She chose to merge her love of music with another interest,
nursing, and enrolled at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California as a music therapy
major. During her freshman year, Mentzer studied voice with Shirley Thompson. Thompson felt
strongly Mentzer should discontinue her music therapy studies to devote herself to vocal
performance, but Mentzer would not be swayed from her chosen career path and continued with
the program.\textsuperscript{52}

In 1976, the summer before her junior year of undergraduate work, Mentzer was accepted
into the Aspen Music Festival which featured both student and professional opera performances.
Remarkably, Mentzer was cast as Nicklausse in \textit{Les Contes d’Hoffmann} in the professional opera
series. This provided the opportunity for Mentzer to study her craft surrounded by working

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
professionals. After that summer, Mentzer transferred from the University of the Pacific and attend The Juilliard School as a vocal performance major.53

Mentzer received both her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Juilliard School. She describes her time at Juilliard as “hard and competitive.”54 At first she studied with a teacher who was known for his technical prowess. Though she refuses to divulge the name, she does admit this teacher told her she should stop singing because she would never make it. Not surprisingly, Mentzer made a decision to switch to the studio of Rose Bampton. Bampton was a dramatic soprano who performed for eighteen consecutive seasons at the Metropolitan Opera. Mentzer describes her as a wonderful teacher who taught her the art of style and phrasing.55

Following her time at Juilliard, Mentzer was engaged with the touring arm (Texas Opera Theater) of the Houston Grand Opera. It was at HGO she found the technician she needed in Norma Newton. After the TOT tour ended she had no further singing engagements and became a receptionist for HGO. Happily, in a case of being at the right place at the right time, Mentzer was given the opportunity to audition for the Houston Opera Studio after an artist withdrew. Mentzer was accepted into the prestigious training program. During her year as a studio artist, she was able to reconnect with Joel Bloch, a New York manager, who had seen her perform at Juilliard. After her audition, Mentzer was quickly signed to the Columbia Artists roster.56

Houston, Texas provided Mentzer with a home base until 1987. David Gockley, the general manager of HGO, utilized Mentzer’s presence and provided many of her big career breaks. He hired her for her first Komponist in Ariadne auf Naxos, Isolier in Le Comte Ory, and

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
as Jane Seymour in *Anna Bolena* with soprano, Joan Sutherland. Mentzer’s manager contacted her during her honeymoon in Europe, she was formally married to the technical director at HGO, saying Cologne Opera was interested in having her sing for them. She auditioned and they immediately offered her a *fest* contract.\(^{57}\) Realizing she did not want to be away from her new husband for a year she chose to turn the offer down. Unexpectedly, Cologne Opera phoned again and offered her a guest appearance in the role of Cherubino. This successful debut initiated a long association with Cologne Opera and opened doors to other European houses.\(^{58}\)

The role of Cherubino was also to be Mentzer’s debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 1988. After an audition, which took place on the set of *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, she did not get hired for quite a while. Eventually, she debuted in the second cast of *Le Nozze di Figaro* which she shared with Anne Sophie von Otter. Being in the second cast meant Mentzer did not benefit from rehearsing on the stage or having an orchestral run-through, but she made a successful debut despite being ill for two of the four performances.\(^{59}\) Mentzer has appeared with the company for nineteen seasons. Roles she has performed with the Met include: Cherubino, Nicklausse, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Idamante in *Idomeneo*, Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Dorabella in *Cosi fan tutte*, and Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. For the 2006-2007 Met Season, Mentzer created the role of the Mother in the world premiere of Tan Dun’s *The First Emperor* with Placido Domingo, which was part of the Metropolitan Opera’s Live in HD series.

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\(^{57}\) A *fest* contract is a contract with a German opera house that an artist signs for up to two seasons. The artist performs several roles throughout the year and they will pay the artist a monthly fee and health insurance. The artist will be a member of the Ensemble and lives in the city. “Frequently Asked Questions,” Auditioning in Europe, http://auditioningineurope.com/faq/index.html (accessed September 1, 2011).

\(^{58}\) Susanne Mentzer, phone interview by author, July 19, 2011.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
Known throughout the singing world for her vocal and interpretive talents, Mentzer is at ease in all forms of classical performance, including arts song, chamber music, and opera, but she specializes in the music of Rossini, Strauss, Mozart, Berlioz, and Mahler.\textsuperscript{60} Mentzer is Professor of Voice in the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University. Previously, she served six years as a faculty member at DePaul University in Chicago.

**The First Collaboration with Libby Larsen**

In 1993, Susanne Mentzer worked with the group Artistic Circles which created a CD entitled *Women at an Exhibition*. Based out of Chicago, Artistic Circles produce groundbreaking collaborative media programs to promote social change. *Woman at an Exhibition* celebrated music composed by women which was performed at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago. Mentzer’s appearance in Chicago led to her first chamber music recording.\textsuperscript{61}

Following that successful first project, Artistic Circles encouraged Mentzer to work with them on another endeavor. What developed was the highly successful CD, *The Eternal Feminine*, which featured songs written by women composers from the 19\textsuperscript{th}, 20\textsuperscript{th}, and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries and focused on the subject of love. Commissioned for the Ravinia Festival the song cycle *Love After 1950*, which is included on *The Eternal Feminine*, marks the first collaborative effort between Libby Larsen and Susanne Mentzer.

As a composer, Larsen is particularly sensitive to an artist’s vocal abilities, thus she listened to all of Mentzer’s recording prior to beginning composition. Following this research Larsen and Mentzer began discussing subject possibilities.\textsuperscript{62} Early subject ideas which were


\textsuperscript{62} Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.
ultimately tabled included a comparison of Martha Stewart and the Beecher sisters and a cycle about Mae West. Finally centering on love songs, Larsen knew she wanted to set poems about empowered women which were written by female poets after the invention of electronic media.

In the program notes for the cycle Larsen wrote,

“Susanne asked me to look into the writings of Ann LaMott as a possible source for texts. I found an extraordinary writer whose words captured the pathos and humor of just plain living the life of an artist and mother in our complicated world.”

At the time, LaMott was dealing with a family crisis and was not able to devote time to the project. Her poems had a lasting effect, however, and inspired Larsen and Mentzer to concentrate more intently on discovering modern female poetry which reflected the normal lives of current women. Searching through her vast collection of poetry, Larsen re-discovered a book entitled *Boomer Girls: Poems by Women from the Baby Boom Generation*. In this book she came across texts by Rita Dove, Julie Kane, Kathryn Daniels, and Liz Lochhead. In addition, she added a poem by Muriel Rukeyser, whom she describes as “a real model for how women can

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63 The Beecher Sisters lived and worked in nineteenth century America. Their father was the well-known evangelist, Lyman Beecher. Catherine Beecher (1800-1878) became a pioneer educator. She founded the Hartford Female Seminary in the 1820s and devoted her life to improving women’s schooling. She also wrote books on the subjects of education, religion and health. Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) became famous in 1852 for writing the explosive anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin. She went on to write a series of novels about New England, initiating the women’s tradition of local-color realism in the United States. Isabella Beecher Hooker (1822-1907), the youngest sister, began to speak out on women’s rights and became a leader in the movement after the Civil War. Barbara Anne White, “The Beecher Sisters,” New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003: ix.

64 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.


66 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.
speak about sex and love.”  

Mentzer agreed and Larsen dedicated the next six months to writing *Love After 1950*. Larsen explains,

“One of the things that attracted me to this grouping of poems was that it felt as a group like a dance set. First of all, the English chosen by the poets is voraciously contemporary. It has in each poem a sense of rhythm about it which to me is inextricably linked to the ways contemporary bodies move while dancing.”

Each song title reflects the particular dance rhythm that serves as a basis for the song.

I. Boy’s Lips (a blues)  
II. Blond Men (a torch song)  
III. Big Sister Says, 1967 (a honky-tonk)  
IV. The Empty Song (a tango)  
V. I Make My Magic (Isadora’s dance)

During the course of composition, Larsen travelled to Chicago to work with Mentzer, where they discussed the meaning of the poetry, made adjustments to dynamics, and captured the overall feeling of each song. The set is described by Larsen as,

“... a deliberate progression in the poetry, from the adolescent mystery of a first kiss through an affair, break-up, and reconciliation of sorts. This work, virtuosic in its performance and understanding of life, is no Frauenliebe und –leben, rather *Love After 1950* is the new woman’s *Frau, Love ‘em and Leave ‘em.*”

Susanne Mentzer premiered *Love After 1950* on August 7, 2000 at the Ravinia Festival along with pianist, Craig Rutenberg. The set was well-received with Wynne Delacoma from the Chicago Sun-Times writing,

“Any composer, man or woman, who can transform a lament about the agony of eyelash curlers and bristly hair rollers into classical art song is gifted indeed. The five songs in Larsen's "Love after 1950" were full of telling moments. The first song, "Boy's Lips (A Blues)," set to a poem of Rita Dove, was as worldly wise and languorously knowing as a Billie Holiday song. The fact that the subject was probably skinny little girls mooning over lovers many years away added to its

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67 Ibid.


69 Ibid.
punch. Mentzer's growling resignation over eyelash curlers and lank hair in "Big Sister Says, 1967 (A Honky-Tonk)" drew knowing chuckles from the women in the audience.⁷⁰

The collaboration of Love After 1950 paved the way for a powerful working relationship between Libby Larsen and Susanne Mentzer. With mutual respect and admiration for one another, Larsen and Mentzer had no idea at the time how important this new friendship would prove to be.

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CHAPTER 3

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

The Terror Attacks

“The longest night the firefighters had said
we had no idea what they meant
or how many they’d lost
until the first ruins of the towers rose before us
like bombed churches in mist
little red fires at its heart
the cathedral windows
and we could hear the cries for surgeons among the rubble
someone needed an amputation

Eyewashes! Eyewashes! the medics cried out, fanning in teams of two
the firemen lay on curbs, in make-shift forward triage units
set up in the halls of the Dow Jones Company and American Express
old strange names now
The firemen thanked them; the saline ran down like tears
and everywhere there were men alone
not knowing the time or the place at all
their throats hurting and their skin hot

Then, into a wall of smoke and out, we entered the very bottom of Ground Zero
and the medics did not cry Eyewashes!
for their hearts fell away seeing it
the rubble and the girders and the twisted metal stretching into haze and dust
the gray drifts of millions of sheaves of paper
the ambulances, cars, fire trucks
smoking in the mud in paddies where the tangled hoses had burst
or the water had streamed from the ruins
delicate charred lattice walls six and ten stories high
Roman, white-pale steaming in arc-lights
or disappearing in purple plumes
the firemen trawling, stumbling, falling, digging, blasting water
thousands of men in the twisted sharpened warped metal
that flipped up underfoot like bear-traps, tore at legs, popped into chests
It had a name, they called it the Pit and the Pile, it went, you thought, for miles”

71 Christopher Ketcham, “Notes from September 11th: Poems and Stories,” (Petaluma, California: Wordrunner Chapbooks, 2004), 4-5.
On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, nineteen hijackers boarded four planes departing from Boston, Newark and Dulles airports with a goal of causing unimaginable destruction and loss of life to the people of the United States. The first plane hit the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City at 8:46 a.m. between the 93rd and 99th floors. Seventeen minutes later, the South Tower of the World Trade Center was struck by a second plane between the 77th and 85th floors. Near Washington D.C., a third plane crashed into the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. The fourth and final flight crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, located 150 miles from Washington D.C., at 10:03 a.m. which was brought down as passengers attempted to overcome the hijackers.\textsuperscript{72}

The streets of New York City near the World Trade Center were a warzone and reactions from people on the ground varied. Some onlookers were running in the streets away from the destruction while others were stunned and could only stare in shock at the burning buildings. Many were struck by the showering pieces of steel and concrete from the towers and planes as people gasped for breath in the dust, smoke, and ash. The streets were covered in debris for blocks. In person and on television, the world watched in horror and disbelief as people desperately attempted to escape the buildings, some jumping from windows.

In New York City, the South Tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m. after burning for fifty-six minutes. In less than sixty seconds, the tower’s steel and concrete crashed to the ground. After 102 minutes of being ablaze, the North Tower collapsed and fell onto another building, 7 World Trade Center, which burned for hours until finally, it succumbed and fell at 5:21 p.m.\textsuperscript{73}


\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
The number of deaths in the worst attack in the history of the United States is staggering. The 256 passengers on the four planes perished, along with 2,753 people in New York City. Included in those numbers are 343 New York City firefighters together with sixty New York City police officers. Another 184 people were killed in the attack on the Pentagon. As of May 2011, 1,630 victims have been identified leaving 1,123 still unidentified.\footnote{Ibid.}

**The Inspiration and Collection of Texts**

Most United States citizens remember where they were and what they were doing on September 11, 2001 and Susanne Mentzer is no exception. Mentzer was teaching at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois when she learned of the dreadful events in New York City. Shocked, like everyone else, she worked to ensure the safety of her students because of the school’s close proximity to another architectural landmark, the Sears Tower. After the students were sent home, her next impulse was to telephone her voice teacher in New York City to make certain she was safe.\footnote{Susanne Mentzer, phone interview by author, July 19, 2011.}

Several days after September 11\textsuperscript{th}, Mentzer received a phone call from the New York Philharmonic. Mezzo-soprano Angela Kirchschlager had canceled an appearance at the last minute and they inquired if Mentzer would be willing to replace Kirchschlager and perform Mahler’s *Rückert lieder*. Knowing this was the opening concert in the Philharmonic’s season subscription series and wanting to support this historic New York arts organization, Mentzer agreed and flew to New York City a little more than a week following the terror attacks. She
recalls being on a plane with only three other people and hearing the pilot thank them for putting their trust in him.76

When Mentzer arrived at her hotel, the Essex House near on Central Park South, she saw it was filled with out of town firemen, police officers and rescue workers who were staying at the hotel while they assisted with the rescue and recovery. Mentzer was amazed by their hopeful spirit as they were still attempting to locate survivors. Though she did not visit Ground Zero on this trip, Mentzer was moved as she realized she was surrounded by tributes, memorials, pictures, and candles lining the streets in remembrance, and in search, of loved ones.77

Mentzer’s return trip to New York City in November 2001 brought up distinctly different emotions. This time she was able to bring herself to visit Ground Zero and she was shocked by how ravaged the area remained.

“(I) went down there and they had barely made a dent. It looked as you imagined it would look. It was just a stunning experience and to see, again, these tributes everywhere. To have been there when they had so much hope and then to have been there when they realized people were dead. It was two different, drastic times.”78

Stunned, yet again, by the mass of letters and photos of victims which ran for blocks around Ground Zero, Mentzer left knowing her life was changed forever.

The following year brought another visit to New York City and Mentzer found herself drawn to a 9/11 exhibit at the New York Historical Society. She was deeply moved while watching a powerful silent film which detailed the tragic events of that fateful day. As she walked through the exhibit, she was amazed to find corridors of tributes, letters, memorials, and photographs, by amateurs and professionals, which had been recreated to look as they did when

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.
they lined the streets. The exhibit also included letters of thanks written to firefighters, emergency workers, and police.\textsuperscript{79}

Moved by the intensity of the images, Mentzer wondered if someone could set these images, words, and feelings to music. She started to write down everything that touched her emotionally. Remembering the wonderful collaborative experience on \textit{Love After 1950}, Mentzer sent all of her findings to Larsen with a note imploring her to read the texts.\textsuperscript{80}

\textbf{The Evolution and Composition of Sifting Through the Ruins}

On September 11, 2001, Libby Larsen was having a typical morning as she made her bed, with The Today Show playing in the background. She remembers listening to an interview with Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric. Finding his comments to be arrogant in nature, Larsen turned toward the television just as NBC cut from the interview to reveal footage of the first plane hitting the North Tower. Confused, she thought they were making some sort of comment on the interview, but she quickly realized what she was seeing was actually happening and felt as if her feet were glued to the floor. Larsen phoned her husband and during their conversation they watched, with the rest of the world, as the second plane hit. Thinking of all her friends in the New York area, she watched the news all day. Larsen now feels the repetition of the footage by the media was a form of terrorism.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{81} Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.
Several weeks later, her publisher contacted her to ask if she would compose a piece in honor of September 11th, saying they knew “they would be able to sell it.” Horrified, she turned them down, saying this was not a time for a commercial endeavor.\footnote{Ibid.}

“I think it was the first time in my life the muse inside of me just said I’m going away. I’ve got to go into hiding. I knew I would eventually want to bring art out of the collective grief, it surely was not going to be an SSAA piece or an immediately commodifiable item, shall we say.”\footnote{Ibid.}

On the day she received the package from Susanne Mentzer, Larsen found herself dealing with mixed emotions. Because they were first person accounts, she wondered if she should use them.\footnote{Ibid.}

“I thought to myself, do I have the right to bring these texts into another art form? That was a question I asked myself. I answered it with only if I can truly get my ego out of the way and express the texts cleanly and clearly...I wanted to handle the texts with the utmost care...perhaps I can express a collective grief through music which does offer us the opportunity to express essential human emotion that is not expressible in another way.”\footnote{Ibid.}

After agreeing to the project, Larsen launched into the compositional process by pouring over the texts. While she read, she felt the grief and pain which drowned the pages. As she read and re-read the letters she found it was almost like a form of therapy. As they have during previous compositions, the texts began to sing off the page. Larsen focused on words which made her feel emotionally connected to the feelings of the respective authors.

Larsen desired to find expressions which would be universal. In a way, the texts follow the five stages of grief. The order of the songs in \textit{Sifting Through the Ruins} follows a specific timeline. The cycle opens with a feeling of initial shock, followed by the urge to blame, the
sorrow of the dead themselves, the grieving for and honoring of the heroes, and finally, the personal impact.\textsuperscript{86} With the texts chosen, the process of composition began.

As detailed in Chapter 1, Larsen followed her traditional “rhythmating” process of speaking the texts aloud, recording others speaking the texts, and notating the rhythm. She then started composing the piece and immediately centered on the viola line. All of the cycle’s most important musical motives occur in the viola which she feels is able to express the deep emotion that words are unable to articulate.\textsuperscript{87} The use of motives, rhythm, the roles of the viola, voice, and piano and other musical features will be discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

**The Rehearsal Process and Premiere**

The rehearsals for the *Sifting Through the Ruins* premiere was a highly collaborative experience. Mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer and composer Libby Larsen were joined by violist James Dunham and pianist Craig Rutenberg as the performers studied the cycle together. They worked diligently, tirelessly examining every moment and phrase of each song. The effect Larsen strived for was a wedding of all three instruments. Each line was an aspect of the other two lines, so they worked to “knit” themselves together through the music.\textsuperscript{88} During this process, everyone felt as if something was missing. What resulted was the viola interlude which joins the fourth and fifth songs.

“As we worked to getting closer and closer to the piece, we all felt like something was missing. All of us. That became the solo viola interlude. We all knew the viola had to cry out on its own. I said I’ll write it tonight and have it for you tomorrow. This is the compositional process if you really know the piece you’re working on. You just go down into another kind of time. I call it going deep. You just get out of clock time and go to where the piece is and bring it out. I didn’t

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
stay up all night ringing my hands, tearing my hair out or getting crazy on coffee. I took a long walk, found it inside of me and then came back and wrote it down.”

*Sifting Through the Ruins* premiered in Harris Hall at the Aspen Music Festival on July 20, 2005. Mentzer, along with violist James Dunham and pianist Craig Rutenberg, performed the piece with Larsen in the audience. Larsen recalls feeling as if her heart was “floating” on stage with the performers. It had been decided among the various performers that the cycle should end the performance. All involved felt strongly that no other piece of music could successfully follow it. When asked about the premiere, Dunham vividly remembers the effect the cycle had on both him and the audience.

“We didn’t know what to expect, of course, since the subject and material were heavily emotional and still fresh in everyone’s minds. (To this day I can't read the text without tearing up completely - I'm sure I would be unable to read them out loud...) What happened was quite incredible. The audience was absolutely absorbed in the performance, yet when we finished, the applause was soft and muted. Then to our amazement, as one, they rose to their feet - the quietest and most sincere standing ovation I have ever witnessed. It was truly a moment of great beauty and solemnity. Once again, I have tears in my eyes as I recall this deeply moving event.”

Larsen found herself deeply affected by the reaction from the audience.

“It felt to me during the performance of the premiere that we were all enveloped in the kind of emotions which are best felt in profound silence...There was that quality of silence which carried over for quite some time after the music left the air...I don’t know about Susanne, James, and Craig, but I felt like this was what we needed to do.”

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89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

91 Susanne Mentzer, phone interview by author, July 19, 2011.

92 James Dunham, email interview by author, August 2, 2011.

93 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.
The work has been performed several times with name changes, as requested by surviving family members. Larsen changed the names to fictitious ones, but stayed with similar sounding names. A name which was important to everyone involved in the piece was Jeff Hardy, the son of Gordon and Lillian Hardy, who were fixtures at the Aspen Festival for decades and friends of Susanne Mentzer. The Hardy’s lost their son on September 11th and after Mentzer asked them for permission Jeff Hardy’s name was added as a tribute in the first song, *A Listing*. A detailed listing of text changes is included in Chapter Four.

Though *Sifting Through the Ruins* has been professionally recorded by the original performers, it has not yet been distributed, though Larsen has begun the process. A CD of Libby Larsen’s chamber music, which includes a new recording of the cycle with Susanne Mentzer, James Dunham, and pianist, Jeanne Kiernan Fischer, will be released by an independent label in the future.

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94 Susanne Mentzer, phone interview by author, July 19, 2011.

95 James Dunham, email interview by author, August 2, 2011.

96 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.

97 James Dunham, email interview by author, August 2, 2011.
CHAPTER 4
PERFORMANCE GUIDE

An Overview: Harmonic Structure, Rhythm, Performance Suggestions

“Sifting Through the Ruins is a set of five songs composed in memory of the human lives changed forever by the bombing of the World Trade Center in September 2001. Susanne Mentzer, James Dunham, Craig Rutenberg and I give these songs to you with a wish to honor the profound love of life, so gentle, but at present ferociously and blindingly evident in every second of our lives...These are the hardest words with which I have ever partnered as a composer. But we four artists trust that our work together can in some small way articulate their weight by letting the words speak for themselves, born up by the music we make.”98

Setting these powerful texts to music was a challenging process for Libby Larsen. While she chose words which had universal appeal, Larsen wanted to set them in a way that made poetic sense. In choosing the order of the songs she began with a text which deals with the initial shock of the events of September 11th. She recalled how she thought of each of her friends in New York and wondered if they were all right.99 The anonymous text of “A Listing” describes this search process experienced by many people that day in 2001. While the singer lists names and outcomes, the viola, echoed by the piano, cries out with intense emotions ranging from a quiet cathartic lullaby to a cry of fear.

The second song of the cycle is “To the Towers Themselves” which depicts through anonymous words the urge to place blame. The World Trade Center (WTC) buildings were viewed by many as commanding and monumental and helped distinguish the New York City skyline in an imposing way. The architect, Minoru Yamasaki, hoped they would, “...become a living representation of man’s belief in humanity, his need for individual dignity, his belief in the


99 Libby Larsen, phone interview with author, August 10, 2011.
cooperation of men, and through this cooperation his ability to find greatness.”\textsuperscript{100} The text for this song takes the opposite view by proclaiming them to be less in stature as compared with the Chrysler Building, Rockefeller Center and the Empire State Building. The comparison paints the WTC as “not too bright, beer drinking MBA’s.” Musically, this song is the most distinctive of the five songs for two reasons. First, it does not utilize principal motives and recurring intervals, but instead emphasizes text by way of word painting. Second, this song uses a Celia Cruz\textsuperscript{101} salsa style piano accompaniment as a counterpoint to the viola which portrays the movement of the towers as they were hit. Larsen describes it as having a “Carmen Miranda feeling”\textsuperscript{102} and the choice was deliberate.

“I chose the approach as the image of Hollywood. Hollywood brought us the whole Chiquita Banana thing, which is basically a total misunderstanding of a culture...It’s very American to re-create something in our image. Disneyland, with the international villages, where everybody has perfect teeth and are smiling. I wanted to see if I could create that metaphor just around the big brass towers. I guess I’m angry about it. It is part of the American culture which astounds me time after time after time.”\textsuperscript{103}

“Don’t look for me anymore,” the third song of the cycle, is written to a text by Alicia Vasquez, which implores the survivors to let go of their grief, and move forward with their lives.\textsuperscript{104} Here, the victim is pleading for the emergency workers to stop searching so they can take care of themselves. The victim’s appeal changes course unexpectedly with an anguished cry


\textsuperscript{101} Named the “Queen of Salsa,” Celia Cruz won multiple platinum and gold records, three Grammy Awards, and four Latin Grammy Awards. She was known as the music industry’s most notable ambassador of Hispanic culture. “Celia Cruz,” http://www.celiacruez.com (accessed September 4, 2011).

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{104} It must be mentioned that Libby Larsen has had no contact with the authors of the letters.
as she considers the pain and suffering the rescue workers experiencing. Emotionally emptied, the simple appeal returns, “Don’t look for me anymore” and adds, “It’s my turn.”

The texts for the fourth song, “Untitled,” were taken from impromptu shrines and messages on the streets of New York City which were photographed by Martha Cooper. The words provide both thanks and honor to the unknown heroes who risked their lives in the aftermath of September 11. Larsen’s strong feelings led to the non-title of this song.

“I did this specifically because death itself is an unanswered question specific, anonymous, in groups, or unfathomable number. Death is death and cares not for specificity. It’s the human being who searches for meaning in it.”

“Someone Passes” concludes the cycle with a combination of additional texts taken from photos by Martha Cooper, which are interspersed with a letter written by Ted Berrigan that was posted near City Hall. In this final tribute, the telling personal impact on those left behind is portrayed. Larsen ends the cycle with the line, “Slowly the heart adjusts to its new weight.” Rather than ending with a message of hope, Larsen chooses the final message to be one of acceptance.

**Harmonic Structure**

As previously discussed, Larsen does not compose, nor does she want anyone to analyze, her music with four-part voice leading in mind. This document will concentrate on the harmonic structure of recurring motives and intervals which are seen throughout *Sifting Through the Ruins*.

Principal motives, which will be named for identification purposes, will be discussed for each song. The opening measure of the first song, “A Listing,” features the ‘lullaby’ motive which originates in the viola (Example 4.1).
“Because the viola is really the internal light of grief, I wanted to create a lullaby to the self. When I grieve...there are moments where I just rock myself. I hold myself in my own arms and rock myself. This is the lullaby to the self.”

Larsen’s use of the diminution of rhythmic length, from a dotted half note to descending triplet, illustrates the anxious feeling and the attempt to soothe the self. This motive is a unifying force within the cycle and appears in all of the songs except “To the Towers Themselves.”

Example 4.1 The “lullaby” motive in “A Listing” mm. 1-2

In “Don’t look for me anymore” the ‘lullaby’ motive is used in an effort to calm the singer after performing the text, “Your feet ache standing atop the ruins of our twins day after day” and is heard in both the piano and viola (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2 ‘Lullaby’ motive in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 9-12

An emotional transformation of the ‘lullaby’ motive occurs in the fourth song, “Untitled.” The song opens with a fragment of the motive and its former soothing quality has been replaced by the sense of an anguished cry in the viola (Example 4.3).

107 Ibid.

35
Example 4.3 ‘Lullaby’ motive in “Untitled” mm. 1-2

In “Someone Passes” the ‘lullaby’ motive is heard for the first time in the vocal line during the final measures (Example 4.4). Larsen explains that the emotion, “...finally becomes human. Finally, the grief has come to a point where very quietly she becomes it.”

Example 4.4 ‘Lullaby’ motive in the vocal line of “Someone Passes” mm. 72-75

There are seven principal motives found in Sifting Through the Ruins. Each will be discussed within the respective performance guides.

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108 Ibid.
Another aspect of Larsen’s harmonic style is her use of recurring intervals. The intervals emphasize significant emotions and events in the texts.

“The way I conceive tonality is horizontal, not vertical, meaning that the line comes first and the harmonies result. Intervals generally have a particular significance in my music – I choose the interval... – and develop the meaning of that interval musically throughout the piece.”

While Larsen includes major thirds, minor sevenths, and octaves throughout the cycle, the most important interval is the tri-tone.

A tri-tone is made of three whole tones or six semitones. This interval is viewed as one which is dissonant and suggests instability. Throughout the cycle Larsen uses the tri-tone to highlight the names of victims, specific events regarding the WTC attacks, and finally, the overwhelming emotions felt by the narrator.

The tri-tone first appears in “A Listing” as the singer acknowledges the name of a friend who has lost her life in the attacks. The singer comments that “John, Susan are missing,” and after a measure of music featuring the viola and piano, Larsen uses an ascending tri-tone to highlight the loss of Susan (Example 4.5).

![Example 4.5 Ascending tri-tone in “A Listing” mm. 16-17](image)

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In the first song the anxious feelings of the singer are enabled by an ascending tri-tone while recalling explicit events of September 11th (Example 4.6).

![Example 4.6 Tri-tone highlighting specific event in “A Listing” mm. 24-25]

Tri-tone use is also applied to illustrate overwhelming emotions described by the singer. In the final song, a descending tri-tone is used to emphasize the deep sense of loss, “At first you were missing. Now I just miss you” (Example 4.7).

![Example 4.7 Use of tri-tone to emphasize emotion in “Someone Passes” mm. 26-29]

The tri-tone is also heard outside the vocal line. Larsen uses the interval in “To the Towers Themselves” as a means to illustrate the instability of the towers after they were hit by the planes (Example 4.8).
Example 4.8 Tri-tone use in viola in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 46-48

Rhythm

The treatment of rhythm in Larsen’s compositions has proven to be one striking aspect of her compositional style. As detailed in Chapter One, her process of “rhythmating” helps to determine the rhythms needed to craft the speech-like quality she strives for in her music. Larsen employs triplets to convey a variety of emotions and situations, augments note values in motives to create a sense of expansion, and invents her own time signature, N/4, to offer the performers means to express emotions beyond words and vocal tone.

The use of triplets throughout the cycle exerts the greatest effect within the principal motives. The previously mentioned ‘lullaby’ motive uses a triplet to help illustrate the gentle rocking feeling. In “Untitled” the triplets are again featured. It is in the alternation between triplets and sixteenth notes that Larsen is able to create a sense of crying (Example 4.9). This principal motive, which will be referred to as the ‘weeping’ motive, is important not for the melody, but for its rhythmic expression.

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111 Libby Larsen, phone interview with author, August 10, 2011.
The expansion of motives as a means of emotional expression is a vital part of Larsen’s rhythmic compositional style. As the motive is expanded, whether by augmentation of note values or by repetition, a feeling of timelessness is created.

In the opening measures of “A Listing” the viola plays the four-note ‘lullaby’ motive and Larsen develops it rhythmically for the next three measures by varying the length of pitches (Example 4.10). By changing the original triplets to sixteenth notes and adding additional repetitions of the motive, the feeling of time is emphasized.
Larsen also augments the note values of motives to ensure a feeling of freedom for the performers. The singer is given an opportunity in “Untitled” to sing the previously mentioned triplet ‘weeping’ motive, but it is now built around eighth, quarter, and half notes (Example 4.11). To guarantee the lengthening of time, Larsen employs her third rhythmic device which is the creation of a unique time signature, N/4. This marking means the quarter note still gets the beat, but the number of beats in the measure is arbitrary. With the musical directions stating “slowly, freely, recitative,” the singer is allowed the time to emphasize the description of the clothes worn by the missing person.

Example 4.11 Augmentation of rhythm with unique time signature in “Untitled” m. 34

Performance Suggestions

After the texts were selected for Sifting Through the Ruins, Larsen chose the viola to portray the feelings of shock, anger, hysteria, terror, and finally, acceptance.

“My feeling was by knowing the text...no matter what people think about the grieving process there are no words to express it. It happens inside a jumble and takes you over. It takes a hold of you. I thought to myself and I knew it was the viola’s role to express that essential abstract human emotion. It then supports the very meager words we have to express our feelings. The words are terribly meager even in the hands of the best like Shakespeare. You listen to a great
soliloquy and then you become quiet and you go inside. It takes you where the abstract emotions lie."\textsuperscript{112}

Larsen describes the viola as the "operatic role"\textsuperscript{113} of the cycle and many of the principal motives are first heard in the viola part. James Dunham, the violist at the premiere, agrees and suggests a performer must reach beyond the technique and become a part of the music.

"Our tendency to approach music, even though we know about line, is to approach it as an instrumentalist. I can find this note by this kind of shift and I can vibrate here because my teacher told me to. It’s not to forget that, but to go beyond it."\textsuperscript{114}

In the cycle the viola is used in two distinctive ways. First it communicates the inexpressible emotions of the various stages of grief. It represents the desire to soothe oneself, the anguished cries of grief and, in time, acceptance and understanding. Second, the viola paints imagery, as in the case of the second song, "To the Towers Themselves," in which I believe it represents the movement of the towers before they fall. The role of the viola, including performance suggestions, will be detailed for each song.

Larsen envisions the role of the singer as the narrator. At moments the narrator is unattached and without emotion while reporting facts and observations. At other times, her role is to express feelings of anger, grief, and sadness.

"Many of the texts...the words were just written. There wasn’t somebody struggling, biting their pencil, and staying up all night, they just came. These words just came out of grief. So I need them to be simple...the singer is more of the narrator."\textsuperscript{115}

The shifting of these roles will be discussed in further detail with respect to each song.

\textsuperscript{112} Libby Larsen, phone interview with author, August 10, 2011.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} James Dunham, phone interview with author, August 22, 2011.

\textsuperscript{115} Libby Larsen, phone interview with author, August 10, 2011.
This cycle, with a range of C₄ to A♭₅, may be performed by either a mezzo-soprano or a soprano. It may be more effectively sung by a mezzo-soprano because the tessitura lies from low to mid-range, and the voice must project above the viola and piano in moments of high emotion.

Larsen views the piano as an “aspect of the viola.” It is often used to echo and support the thoughts of the viola throughout the cycle. For example, in “A Listing” the piano is used to calm the emotions of the viola after it introduces the ‘keening’ motive (Example 4.12). The piano brings a return of the ‘lullaby’ motive which is then repeated by the viola.

Example 4.12 Piano used to support the viola in “A Listing” mm. 9-12

The piano’s role does change during “To the Towers Themselves” where it presents the salsa rhythms in a disconnected manner, unaware of the thoughts being presented by the voice (Example 4.13).

116 Ibid.
Example 4.13 Salsa rhythm in piano in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 13-18

The music of *Sifting Through the Ruins* is demanding and calls for three skillful and detail-oriented musicians. A generous rehearsal period is advisable to attain Larsen’s desired “wedded emotion”\(^{117}\) among the three performers. Suggestions and approaches to ensemble will be outlined in the performance guide.

What follows is a detailed performance guide for each song in *Sifting Through the Ruins*. Three separate sections detail elements of harmonic structure, rhythmic features, and performance suggestions which will help to inform the performance. The suggestions will include thoughts on interpretation and strategies for solving challenging issues. During the rehearsal process for the premiere and the recording, tempo alterations were made to the printed score. To indicate the composer’s adapted wishes, Appendix A has been created to provide this information for each song. With a complete understanding of the texts, compositional style, and interpretative suggestions the collaborative experience required by *Sifting Through the Ruins* will be achieved.

\(^{117}\) Ibid.
I. A Listing

Cath’rine is OK,
Michael is OK,
John, Susan are missing.
Cross out Susan,
Jenna Wilson, Thomas, Margaret, Allen,
Tim Lewis, Betty Ward, William D. Teigh are OK.
Cross out William D. Teigh.
Jane saved somebody,
Joe saw the first plane hit,
Ellen McCarthy was below seventy-eighth when the second plane hit,
Was in Tribeca when collapse occurred.
Brother used to work for Cantor Fitz.

Sara was late,
John Yelland, he is OK, was at WTC 7.
Kids got out of daycare center in time.
Operator 214-271-3000
Red Cross 800-435-7669
Ask about Tina Dellagano,
Len Aliano, Jeff Hardy,
Jennifer Daniels, Jack Palatino,
Tina Dellagano—not found.
Len Aliano—not found.
Jeff Hardy, Jennifer Daniels, Len Aliano...

-Anonymous\textsuperscript{118}

Harmonic Structure

Working in conjunction with the ‘lullaby’ motive, two other principal motives appear in
this first song of the cycle. Measure eight introduces the second principal motive which Larsen
titles the ‘keening’\textsuperscript{119} motive. After the gentle and quiet movement of the ‘lullaby,’ the viola
proceeds to cry out forcefully with grief (Example 4.14).

\textsuperscript{118} Texts reprinted with permission of Libby Larsen and Libby Larsen Publications.

\textsuperscript{119} Larsen, phone interview with author, August 10, 2011.
The Webster dictionary defines keening as “to make a loud and long cry of sorrow,” which is effectively captured in this motive by the accented, repeated octave leap. Larsen uses this motive to express the pain of unbearable loss. The ‘keening’ motive features multiple dynamic markings throughout “A Listing.” The introduction of the ‘keening’ motive is immediately repeated and, though still accented, is now marked to be played at a piano dynamic marking (Example 4.15). This seems to illustrate a depletion of emotional energy, but the continued desire to cry.

The third principal motive, ‘understanding,’ is originated this time by the piano instead of the viola (Example 4.16). In my opinion, the piano illustrates the capability to understand what has happened, but, because of the enormity of the event, is too stunned to feel anything. The ‘understanding’ motive is the first principal motive to include a descending tri-tone.

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121 Libby Larsen, phone interview with author, August 10, 2011.
Example 4.16 The ‘understanding’ motive in the piano in “A Listing” mm. 13-14

In another instance, there is an ascending tri-tone in the vocal line which accentuates the hysteria and terror the singer is feeling while naming friend after friend (Example 4.17). Larsen opts for a different rhythm for each name and accelerates the tempo which adds to the singer’s growing anxiety.

Example 4.17 Tri-tone use to illustrate fear in vocal line in “A Listing” mm. 38-40

Rhythm

In keeping with Larsen’s speech-like style, meter changes are abundant as are the markings “loosely” and “freely,” which are used for all of the performers. During the opening five measures, with the introduction of the expanding ‘lullaby’ motive, Larsen emphasizes that the motive should be played “loosely,” in its first two occurrences, thus reminding the violist to take time. In the final four measures of “A Listing” she requests the same style be applied (Example 4.18).
Example 4.18 Musical markings to ensure a free quality to the viola in “A Listing” mm. 48-51

Larsen’s unique time signature, N/4, is found three times in “A Listing.” Its first use is in measure 30 to provide the singer true independence for the words “Brother used to work for Cantor Fitz” (Example 4.19). The firm Cantor Fitzgerald lost 658 employees on September 11th, the largest number of employees from any one company at WTC. It seems fitting that Larsen makes their name more prominent by allowing a freer recitation.

Example 4.19 N/4 time signature to allow vocal freedom in “A Listing” m. 30

As the singer recreates a phone call with a telephone operator, the N/4 time signature is used to support the heightened desperation as she tries to connect with various emergency organizations (Example 4.20).
Example 4.20 N/4 used in “A Listing” mm. 36-37

A final example of Larsen’s N/4 use occurs as the singer learns the deadly fate of three of her friends (Example 4.21). Acknowledging their loss, the ‘understanding’ motive is heard in the piano punctuating each of the names.
Text and Melody Changes

After the premiere of Sifting Through the Ruins, Larsen heard a general interview with family members of victims from 9/11. They were requesting that the names of their loved ones not be used without their direct consent. Thus, Larsen changed a number of the names out of respect. Other text changes were made for purposes of intelligibility. The current printed score does not include all of these changes. I am providing a list of text modifications below to ensure future performances match the approved changes to the original recording.

Measure 13: The name “Patty” should be changed to “Catherine”
Measure 20: The name “Anna Ward” should be changed to “Betty Ward”
Measure 24: The name “Ted” should be changed to “Jane”
Measure 26: The street “fifty-eighth” should be changed to “seventy-eighth”
Measure 30: “CNN” should be changed to “Cantor Fitz”
Measure 31: The name “Linda” should be changed to “Sara”
Measure 40: The name “Kip Warner” should be changed to “Jeff Hardy”
Measure 41: The name “Jennifer Daniel” should be changed to “Jennifer Daniels”
Measure 47: The name “Kip Warner” should be changed to “Jeff Hardy”
Measure 47: The name “Jennifer Daniel” should be changed to “Jennifer Daniels”

122 James Dunham, phone interview with author, August 22, 2011.
Minor adjustments to the melodic line were made to accommodate text changes. The current published music does not reflect these melodic changes so I have recreated the measures to reflect the changes on the recorded version.

Example 4.22 Melodic line change in “A Listing” mm. 19-21

Example 4.23 Melodic change in “A Listing” m. 28

Performance Suggestions

Because of the metric and rhythmic freedom of the notation, the ensemble must perform as a coordinated, cohesive unit. This can be seen in the interplay between the viola and the piano. For example, in measures 21 and 42 while the pianist silently depresses the keys, the violist must direct his sound toward the piano so as to activate the silent pedal tone as he abruptly plays the ‘keening’ motive (Example 4.24).

Example 4.24 Silent pedal tone with viola playing ‘keening’ motive m. 21
The viola assumes its “operatic” role from the very first measure with many opportunities for the violist to cry out with emotion. This expression of grief is essential and Larsen utilizes a *jeté* throughout the piece, which mimics the sound of sobbing (Example 4.25). The *jeté* is found in measures 22-23 and carries the *glissando* from a loud sob to a quiet moaning. The inclusion of this *jeté* helps to illustrate the turmoil the narrator is experiencing as she makes the discovery that William D. Teigh has been killed.

Example 4.25 *Jeté* example in “A Listing” mm. 21-23

The vocal range in this piece is limited, from $D_4$ to $E_b^5$. Successful interpretation may be enhanced in the following ways. Clearly inflected and intelligible diction is a necessity. The singer should focus on fully supporting consonants so that all names will be easily understood. The deepest meaning of the text will be lost if the audience is unable to understand the narration. Larsen crafts the rhythms to achieve the speech-like quality of the texts. As with all of the songs of the cycle, preliminary rhythmic recitation of the text is vitally important as the song is

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123 A *jeté* (otherwise known as a *ricochet*) occurs when “the upper third of the bow is “thrown” on the string so that it bounces a series of rapid notes on the down-bow. Usually from two to six notes are taken in one stroke, but up to ten or eleven can be played.” Don Michael Randel, ed, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 105.
prepared. For each member of the ensemble, the precision of triplet patterns facilitates the unsettled feeling of the piece.

There are two instances in which Larsen repeats the text. During these moments the role of the narrator shifts and the emotions of the singer are displayed. The first example is found in measures 26-27 on the words “when the second plane” (Example 4.26). The weight of emotion is imbedded in the text as the singer works to deliver the news of the second attack.

![Example 4.26 Text repetition in “A Listing” mm. 26-27](image1)

Measures 34 and 35 focus on the introduction of children into the story (Example 4.27). Though the children escaped safely, Larsen incorporates text repetition and an ascending tri-tone to stress the emotion.

![Example 4.27 Second instance of text repetition in “A Listing” mm. 34-35](image2)
As previously mentioned, the returning tri-tone is used to emphasize grief. Performing an in-tune tri-tone is vital to recreating the meaning of the text. The singer should make certain these interval leaps are accurate, ensure the vibrato does not obscure the center of the pitch, and the intervals are properly registered, thus achieving a seamless and legato line.

In measure 35, the tri-tone may be elusive for the singer. It is suggested the pianist add a B♭ in the right hand to help guide the singer. Once the tri-tone is mastered it can then be removed for performance.

II. To the Towers Themselves

They were never my favorites,  
Not the Carmen Miranda Chrysler,  
Nor the Rockefeller’s magic boxes,  
Nor the Empire, which I think would have killed us all if she fell.

They were two young dumb guys,  
Swaggering across the skyline.  
Beer drinking MBA’s  
Not too bright.

Now that they are gone,  
They are like young men  
Lost at war,  
Not having had their life yet.

They are lost like cannon fodder,  
Like farm boys throughout time,  
Stunned to death,  
Not knowing what hit them  
And beloved  
By the weeping mothers left behind.

Anonymous  
Collected by the Parks Department, probably from Union Square

Harmonic Structure

The use of motives is limited in this second song of the cycle. None of the previous motives found in “A Listing” make an appearance and only one new four-note motive plays a
significant role. The sole principal motive which appears is the ‘swaggering’ motive (Example 4.28). This motive illustrates the movement of the towers after they were hit, while also representing the buildings comparison to two “young, dumb guys.” First discovered in the viola, the motive is then echoed by the singer.

\[\text{Example 4.28} \text{ The introduction of the ‘swaggering’ motive in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 14-18}\]

Larsen instead focuses on text painting in the viola, while the piano takes on a detached role and energetically performs a seemingly unrelated salsa. Rather than relying on the creation of new motives she adds emphasis to the swaying movement of the towers by utilizing the tritone. In its only appearance in the song, the tri-tone is marked with a glissando which represents the towers in a profound moment of instability. The swaying is represented in measures 47-48 after the singer proclaims, “not knowing what hit them” (Example 4.29).
Example 4.29 Text painting by the viola in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 46-48

In the last three measures, the viola illustrates final disintegration of the WTC. To more effectively represent the collapse, a significant alteration to the score commenced during the rehearsal period before the premiere. That change directs the viola part to be marked with a *decrescendo* which ultimately falls off to replicate the destruction. During the *decrescendo* the viola should play the final B♭ without vibrato and hesitate on the note before making the slow descent. Example 4.30 illustrates both original and altered scores.

1. Original Ending

   ![Original Ending](image1)

2. Altered Ending

   ![Altered Ending](image2)

Example 4.30 The original and altered viola endings in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 54-55

In similar fashion to her motivic use in “To the Towers Themselves,” Larsen utilizes intervals atypically when compared with the rest of the songs in the cycle. As previously discussed, she regularly employs tri-tones, octaves, major thirds, and minor sevenths to
emphasize the meaning of the text, but rather in this song, she focuses on ascending, often chromatic, scales to illustrate the size of the towers (Example 4.31). These new devices assist in highlighting the distinctive mood of this song when compared to the rest of the cycle.

Example 4.31 Ascending scale in viola in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 42-49

Rhythm

Likewise with other compositional elements, the rhythm is unique in this song. The strict rhythmic salsa occurs throughout the song, but Larsen does offer a moment to reflect on the magnitude of the words, “Now that they are gone, they are like young men lost at war, not having had their life yet” (Example 4.32). This shift in emotion is illustrated as the piano plays a slow descending scale and moves into the background, thus allowing the singer freedom to express these devastating words. After this seven measure respite, the salsa rhythm returns with the marking of pianissimo.
Example 4.32 Rhythmic Freedom and the return of the salsa in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 30-37

Performance Suggestions

Within the salsa style, each ensemble player must know and execute the individual lines. The vocal and viola lines work together to create a picture of the damage to the towers while the piano, playing with a “detached” feeling and acts as semi-distracting background music which serves to reflect the surrealness of the moment. Particular attention should be paid to the ensemble during the salsa sections to ensure there are no balance issues in hearing the vocal line.

An important ensemble moment occurs in measure 29 (Example 4.33). Following the words, “...across the skyline,” the viola should wait to enter until the sound of the final vocal note has stopped. A pause should be taken to emphasize that the anger in the vocal line has
subsided before she sings, “Not too bright.” This pattern is mirrored by the piano on its subsequent entrance.

**Example 4.33** Dramatic beat for all three performers in “To the Towers Themselves” mm. 25-29

As previously mentioned the role of the viola in this song is to represent the towers and should be played with intensity. In measure 11, the score says the viola should play the notes *pizzicato*. These notes should stand out, as they help to illustrate a sense of falling, and therefore the strings should be plucked closer to the bridge which will enhance the clarity of the notes and ensure a louder dynamic.\(^{124}\)

At the beginning of the song which ranges from B\(_3\) to G\(_b\)\(_5\), the singer must make a transition from the role of narrator and capture the anger of the text. The deep sadness which underlies the anger arrives on the text “not too bright” in measure 29. As the salsa rhythm returns in measure 36, the anger of the singer is replaced by feelings of sympathy. The intonation of the chromatic vocal line requires careful attention when learning the melody.

This text provides the singer with opportunities to color the voice in a variety of ways. For example, measure 29 refers to the towers as, “beer-drinking M.B.A.’s.” To illustrate the harshness of these words, a *portamento* should be added between the words “beer” and

\(^{124}\) Morgan Bartholick, interview by author, September 20, 2011.
“drinking.” Performing the word “beer” in middle voice and then transitioning to chest voice on “drinking” emphasizes this important text moment. In measure 43 a tri-tone highlights the significant words “stunned to death” and they should be performed without vibrato. The objective is to convey the words and not to make a beautiful tone.

III. Don’t look for me anymore

Don’t look for me anymore,
It’s late and you’re tired,
Your feet ache standing atop the ruins of our twins
Day after day searching for a trace of me,
Your eyes burning red,
Your hands cut, bleeding
Your hands sifting through the ruins
And your back crooked from endless hours of labor.
Don’t look for me anymore.
It’s my turn.

Alicia Vasquez from the “wailing wall” at Grand Central Terminal
September 14, 2001

Harmonic Structure

This third song of the cycle begins with a pulse-like rhythm in the viola. A new principal motive, which will be referred to as the ‘pleading’ motive, is a seven note descending scale which incorporates major and minor thirds within the singer’s first line, “Don’t look for me anymore” (Example 4.34). The voice enters on C₄ in dissonance with the viola until they end the phrase in unison.

Example 4.34 Pulse-like rhythm in viola with first entrance of the ‘pleading’ motive in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 1-4

60
In the vocal line a major third is found in combination with ascending minor seventh leaps which represent the height of the towers in measures 7-10 (Example 4.35). Illustrating the collapse of the towers, the final interval is a minor seventh leap descending on the words “day after day.”

Example 4.35 Major thirds in combination with minor seventh leaps in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 5-10

The ‘lullaby’ motive returns in the piano in mm. 10-11 and is immediately echoed by the viola in measure 12. The return of this principal motive, which has not been heard since its introduction in the first song, is used to calm the narrator’s heightened emotions after singing the line, “Your feet ache standing atop the ruins of our twins day after day.”

An additional principal motive is introduced in this third song, the ‘rocking’ motive, which makes its first appearance in the piano (Example 4.36). The motive begins with a pedal tone in the left hand while the right hand responds to the down beat creating a sense of
movement. In partnership with an elaborated viola line this motive generates an increase in energy which leads the singer to cry out in anguish.

Example 4.36 ‘Rocking’ motive in piano in “Don’t look for my anymore” mm. 14-17

Octave leaps are employed in the vocal line to stress disturbing words and thoughts (Examples 4.37 and 4.38).

Example 4.37 First instance of octave leap in vocal line to add emotional intensity mm. 18-20
Example 4.38 Second moment with octave leap in vocal line to add emotional intensity mm. 21-24

Following the singer’s cry an atmosphere of emptiness returns as each of the ‘lullaby,’ ‘rocking,’ and ‘pleading’ motives reappear with the viola and piano parts echoing each other. The viola then repeats the vocal line in concert with all three principal motives (Example 4.39).

Example 4.39 All three motives intertwining near conclusion of song in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 25-29
The song quietly ends with the ‘rocking’ motive in the piano as the voice ascends a five note scale with the words, “It’s my turn.”

**Rhythm**

While “Don’t look for me anymore” utilizes a consistent 4/4 time signature throughout, a sense of expansion exists. As previously mentioned, the pulse-like rhythm in the viola provides a backdrop for the voice to present its message freely. Larsen employs triplets in the vocal line to create a sense of instability as the workers standing on the fallen towers are described (Example 4.40).

![Example 4.40 Pulse-like rhythm in the viola in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 5-10](image)

Measures 15-23 require a more precise tempo, but there is an innate energy in the piano and viola which propels the music forward and sustains the cries of the singer. The emotion is drained from the music in measure 23 and a sense of rhythmic expansion is restored in measure 27 as triplets are added to the ‘pleading’ motive (Example 4.41).
Example 4.41 Expanded ‘pleading’ motive and final scale for the vocal line in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 29-34

Performance Suggestions

The challenge for the ensemble lies in performing the phrases with simplicity. A crucial moment for the ensemble is the dramatic shift from the momentum in measures 15-23 to a sense of emptiness in measure 24. This change occurs in the course of one measure to *diminuendo* from a *forte* to *piano* and should be realized with a seamless quality. Helping to create this feeling of emptiness is a tempo modification which evolved during the rehearsal process. Measure 24 should immediately return to $\text{♩}=58$ and continue at this tempo for the rest of the song.

The pulse-like rhythm in the viola’s opening measures should be played without *vibrato*. This sound represents the workers who are laboring as the search efforts continue. The viola’s
“operatic” character also returns in this song in measures 15-17, marked as *cantabile*. A luscious, rich sound is required for the unexpected descending and ascending scales. The cry from the singer will not be fulfilled without this expression of emotion from the violist.

In measure 20, the viola’s embellished scale is altered in a final appearance as the singer cries out, “Your hands cut, bleeding.” On the word “cut,” half-voice is indicated by the composer which has the effect of halting the forward motion of the line. Forward motion resumes at the entrance of the viola which re-energizes the momentum as the singer realizes the hands are “bleeding” (Example 4.42).

![Example 4.42 Viola propels forward motion “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 18-20](image)

The vocal range is limited in this piece, from D₄ to E₅, thus a dramatically successful performance is reliant on the application of a variety of vocal colors. It is especially important to sing the beginning and ending of the song simply with a clear tone, while a lush resonance is desirable in measures 15-23. It must be remembered that the singer portrays a victim who is witnessing the devastation and its effect on the survivors.

One instance of text repetition occurs in this song on the line “day after day” (Example 4.43). The second time the singer is directed to perform it with “weary patience.”

66
Example 4.43 Text repetition in “Don’t look for me anymore” mm. 9-13

Because of the demands of the long phrases, it is important to utilize an effective, expansive breath. Ideally the final three words, “It’s my turn,” would be performed as one complete phrase. A catch breath may be added after the word “my,” but the dramatic intent must be sustained and the breath should be inaudible. As the final E5 is held, a *diminuendo* is an effective tool which may be achieved by the singer adopting a smaller mouth space to achieve this final tone which represents the victim ascending to heaven.

IV. *Untitled*

We keep them in our hearts and prayers,  
Battalion 7 Ladder 12 Engine 3.  
500 illegal immigrants un-named.  
Nick Brandemasti  
5’10”  
190 lbs,  
Dark brown hair  
Hazel eyes  
21 years old,  
Employed by Keefe, Broyette and Woods  
Two World Trade Center  
89th floor,  
Wearing: dark blue dress shirt, gray slacks, black shoes,  
and a silver Omega watch with a blue face.  
Characteristics: collection of freckles in horse-shoe shape over right clavicle, cleft chin.

Anonymous - Text taken from photos by Martha Cooper of shrines and messages around NYC
Harmonic Structure

Two principal motives permeate the fourth song of the cycle, though one motive is in fragmented form. The song opens with a fragment of the ‘lullaby’ motive in the viola, but the once soothing ‘lullaby’ is now performed at fortissimo with a ‘keening’ feeling. A new principal motive, the ‘weeping’ motive, immediately follows it (Example 4.44). The piano supports the viola with chords which are to be played “ferociously.” With the combination of motives and the chords in the piano a shift of emotion from the previous song is unmistakable.

Example 4.44 Fragment of ‘lullaby’ motive and introduction of ‘weeping’ motive in “Untitled” mm. 1-4

The ‘lullaby’ motive returns in measure 13 and its transformation is illustrated by the addition of fortissimo octaves in the viola. The ‘weeping’ motive follows, but after an initial violent outburst ultimately gives way to a soft weeping by way of a glissando and jeté which falls to A4 and is to be played without vibrato (Example 4.45).
Example 4.45 ‘Lullaby’ motive in octave form transitions to ‘weeping’ motive in “Untitled” mm. 13-17

The ‘weeping’ motive is heard for the first time in the vocal line in measure 17 and its intervals are varied from its original introduction in measures 2-3 (Example 4.46). This motive utilizes a shifting of intervals which gives the song a sense of unpredictability.

Example 4.46 Variance of ‘weeping’ motive intervals in vocal line in “Untitled” mm. 17-19

The ‘weeping’ motive is the only principal motive echoed by the piano. As it subsequently recurs it should be played with a translucent diminuendo, “as a shadow” (Example 4.47).
Example 4.47 ‘Weeping’ motive in piano and vocal line in “Untitled” m. 34

The return of the tri-tone in the vocal line in measure 36 emphasizes a detailed description of a timepiece the victim was wearing (Example 4.48).

Example 4.48 Return of the tri-tone in vocal line in “Untitled” m. 36

A descending tri-tone establishes a sense of importance as the singer gives a physical description of the victim (Example 4.49).

Example 4.49 Final tri-tone use in “Untitled” m. 38
The octave, major third, and perfect fifth intervals are rarely used in this song, but Larsen does include them in the piano line as counterpoint to the ‘weeping’ motive’s unpredictable rhythmic intervals. This combination works to oppose a sense of consonance normally associated with the octave, major third, and perfect fifth (Example 4.50).

Example 4.50 ‘Weeping’ motive avoidance of octaves in “Untitled” mm. 3-4

Rhythm

Rhythmic instability is a key factor in “Don’t look for me anymore.” As previously detailed, this is most evident in the ‘weeping’ motive as seen in the alternation between the triplet and sixteenth note descending figures. The return of Larsen’s N/4 time signature sustains an expansive rhythmic feeling. As discussed in the “Overview” section, the N/4 makes its first appearance in this song in measure 34, but the time signature returns at end the piece (Example 4.51). After fortissimo chords in the piano, in combination with the viola’s imitation of an air siren, the time signature frees the singer to detail the physical description of “Nick Brandemasti.”
Example 4.51 Return of N/4 in “Untitled” mm. 37-39

Though marked “slowly, freely,” it is inevitably measured and “hymn-like.” The marked contrast between the “hymn-like” phrase and the ‘weeping’ motive sustains the uneasy feeling of the song. The simple atmosphere continues for three measures until an accelerando initiates a phrase of increased emotion, and the singer lists the first group of firefighters who lost their lives.

Performance Suggestions

With shifts in meter and rhythmic freedoms in articulation the ensemble must become a single unit to perform this effectively. The performers may learn all of the correct notes, rhythmic changes and meter shifts, but true wedded emotion is discovered during the rehearsal process. This wedded emotion is most clearly seen in measures 21-27 as the accelerando
increases the energy and culminates in a *subito piano* marking as the age of the missing man is revealed. The viola and piano quietly hold notes which help to stress his young age (Example 4.52).

![Musical notation of Example 4.52]

**Example 4.52** Important ensemble moment in “Untitled” mm 21-27

The viola portrays its “operatic role” by expressing the unspoken anguish as it dynamically alters the ‘lullaby’ motive so that it is no longer comforting. The change in motivic use also applies to the ‘weeping’ motive, which is first heard in the viola with a dynamic and accented marking of *fortissimo*. In the second appearance of the ‘weeping’ motive it follows the “hymn-like” opening of the text, but now is marked as *dolce piano*.

The precision of the octave scoring is vital to the success of this song. Though octaves appear several times, particular attention should be paid to measures 37-38 when the viola is
used as an air siren. Initially, the octaves must be played cleanly and forcefully, and as the 
*diminuendo* and *glissando* begin there should be no break in sound (Example 4.53).

**Example 4.53** Air raid siren in viola in “Untitled” mm. 37-38

The singer assumes the role of narrator in this song. Though there are moments in which
emotions begin to emerge, the song ends in the simple manner in which it began, and the forward
motion of these phrases must be sustained. The range, C₄ to E♭₅, is limited, thus the focus lies on
the importance of text. The *tessitura* of the middle voice demands a fully supported and resonant
sound. Special attention needs to be paid to the ‘weeping’ motive in the vocal line. The
combination of intervals requires strict intonation and increases the level of difficulty. The
‘weeping’ motive in measure 38 includes a tri-tone for which accuracy may be gained through
repetition (Example 4.54).

**Example 4.54** Inclusion of tri-tone in ‘weeping’ motive for the vocal line in “Untitled”
m. 38
V. Someone Passes

Missing—
At first you were missing. Now I just miss you.*

The heart stops briefly, when
Someone dies
A quick pain
As you hear the news, and
Someone passes
From your outside life to inside
Slowly the heart adjusts
To its new weight.**

*Texts taken from photos by Martha Cooper of the shrines and messages around NYC
**Ted Berrigan – posted near City Hall

Viola Interlude

The ending of “Untitled” flows into the viola interlude which connects it to the fifth song, “Someone Passes.” Originally, the beginning of the fifth song began in what is now measure six.

As previously discussed, before the premiere Larsen composed this solo interlude for the viola with the intention for it to cry out in sorrow at the events of 9/11, while seamlessly intertwining the principal motives and recalling melodies from previous songs. The viola interlude begins with the ‘lullaby’ motive which can be heard several times during the interlude. The musical material in this interlude is motivically drawn from each of the previous songs is represented as the viola recalls emotions from the ‘weeping’ motive in “Untitled,” the anguished cry from “Don’t look for me anymore,” to another violent siren which softly diminishes into the ‘lullaby.’ The interlude quietly concludes with a descending scale culminating into four half notes which help to illustrate a sense of emptiness.
Harmonic Structure

The final principal motive is introduced in this song in measure 10 which Larsen refers to as the ‘heartbeat’ motive (Example 4.55). Heard in both the viola and the piano this motive represents the inner heartbeat of the narrator as she describes the physical loss when death takes someone close to you. The ‘heartbeat’ motive provides a similar feeling of the intervallic instability found in “To the Towers Themselves” and “Untitled” by purposefully avoiding octaves. As it begins the ‘heartbeat’ motive utilizes seventh intervals in both the viola and piano.

Example 4.55 Introduction of the ‘heartbeat’ motive in the viola with an echo from the piano in “Someone Passes” mm. 10-13

In measure 27 the tri-tone returns as it descends in the vocal line “Now I just miss you.” The ‘heartbeat’ motive then appears in the viola to support the vocal line, but this time centers on a tri-tone, thus ensuring an emphasis on the importance of these words (Example 4.56).

125 Libby Larsen, phone interview by author, August 10, 2011.

126 Ibid.
Example 4.56 Tri-tone use in ‘heartbeat’ motive and final vocal use in “Someone Passes” mm. 26-29

The ‘lullaby’ motive is heard frequently in “Someone Passes.” In measures 30-33 it is interwoven with the ‘heartbeat’ motive in the piano as if the two emotions are quietly combining after the singer has acknowledged, “Now I just miss you” (Example 4.57).

Example 4.57 ‘Lullaby’ and ‘heartbeat’ motives in “Someone Passes” mm. 30-33

Rhythm

Similar to the pulse-like feeling of “Don’t look for me anymore” the rhythmic freedom indicated in the music of “Someone Passes” is directed more to the singer than the other performers with one exception. As previously discussed, Larsen intertwines the ‘lullaby’ and ‘heartbeat’ motives in measures 30-33. With a marking of “sadly” the music concludes as if the
narrator’s own heartbeat is slowing and finally, stopping. A moment of silence is observed before the singer performs the next line of text, “The heart stops briefly when someone dies.”

In a final example of rhythmic expansion, the ‘heartbeat’ motive is lengthened to quarter and half notes as the singer laments the last line of text, “Slowly the heart adjusts to its new weight,” (Example 4.58).

Example 4.58 Augmentation of the ‘heartbeat’ motive in “Someone Passes” mm. 62-67

Performance Suggestions

As with each of the songs in the cycle, “Someone Passes,” relies on the unity of the ensemble. In the returning ‘lullaby’ motive, it is vital the performers breathe together as the rhythmic pulse of the ‘heartbeat’ works alongside the elongated triplets (Example 4.59).
Example 4.59 Rhythmic device in “Someone Passes” mm. 30-33

Following the viola interlude a metamorphosis occurs in which the role of the viola diminishes as it quietly passes the ‘lullaby’ motive to the singer. It is in this moment the singer is able to express her feelings and begin to deal with the repercussions of September 11th.

For the singer, the metamorphosis gives her the opportunity to loudly cry out in sadness. This song, with a more extensive range of D4 to A♭5, allows the voice to rail out in anguished cries, while admitting the effects of death on those left behind (Example 4.60).

Example 4.60 Emotional outburst in the vocal line in “Someone Passes” mm. 34-37

Rhythmically this piece is challenging for the singer. Proper attention needs to be paid on measures 38-49 to ensure correct entrances. The tempos should be performed strictly to guarantee success.
CONCLUSION

_Sifting Through the Ruins_ is a noteworthy song cycle not only for its compositional style, but also in its handling of the raw emotions regarding the events on September 11, 2001. Larsen’s use of “rhythmating” helps to create a speech-like quality which emphasizes the simple truth of the text. Choosing the viola to introduce musical motives to help express feelings which cannot be articulated adds to the atmosphere of truthfulness.

After interviewing Libby Larsen, Susanne Mentzer, and James Dunham I realized their participation in the creation and performance of _Sifting Through the Ruins_ had affected them personally, and that they will carry this experience with them for the rest of their musical careers. What I did not anticipate was that I would have a similar experience and am thankful for the opportunity to study and perform this cycle. It is my hope the analysis of the score and performance suggestions provided will enable many performances of this remarkable work.
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APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTS OF PHONE AND EMAIL INTERVIEWS WITH LIBBY LARSEN

Phone Interview with Libby Larsen, August 10, 2011

Do you mind if I record our conversation?

Not at all.

There have been many dissertations, articles and books written about you and your life that I’ve been able to find a lot of biographical information. What I’d like to do is to start with your first collaboration with Susanne Mentzer, Love After 1950. I know the Ravinia Festival commissioned the work, how were you contacted with this idea?

There is a woman by the name of Ann Feldman who is really an impresario and lives in Chicago. She and Susanne hooked up, not quite sure how, but Ann called me and asked if I would be interested in working with her and with Susanne to make a new piece that was for a concert that Susanne was presenting at Ravinia. It was a concert of all music by women composers. Of course, I knew Susanne’s voice and her reputation and I was immediately attracted to it because I love to work with very fine singers. It’s about the most fun you can have actually.

When you started the process of writing for Susanne what did your research involve? Did you listen to various recordings or did you have a conversation about what she liked?

Yes, I listened to all the recordings I could lay my ears on to understand how her voice works, what is comfortable in her voice and what might be more challenging. Then Susanne and I were put in touch and we began to talk about subject matter for the piece. I always have at least a hundred things I’d like to write about. She expressed an interest in having a piece on the concert that had some, not humor, but wit about it and would express a strong female point of view. We bantered ideas back and forth. At first, I had a couple of ideas I suggested to her. One was a song cycle comparing Martha Stewart with Harriet Beecher Stowe. Harriet Beech Stowe and her sister were, of course, the Martha Stewarts of their day, but in a very different way. They wrote books and articles for women which were educational pieces about the physiology of the body and basic knowledge for women that women couldn’t attain in college. I thought that would be a very interesting comparison. But Susanne thought that was a little far out. I still think it’s a good idea, it’s probably an opera. A one-act!

Then I’ve always been a big fan of Mae West. She was just an amazing woman. So then I suggested Mae West and that was a no. That didn’t work either. So it struck me that love songs would be a good idea. Probably poetry, strong female poetry, written by female poets and after the invention of media meaning electronic media. Radio and television. I went into my rather vast library of poetry and I remembered a book that I’ve always loved called “Boomer Girls.” It’s a
collection of poetry that has amazing poems by women and out of that I selected all the texts for the cycle except for Muriel Rukeyser that I added to the group. She is a real model for how women can speak about sex and love. So I made this group of poems and proposed those to Susanne and she liked them. So off we went. I started working on the pieces and would go to Chicago and go through the pieces with her so we could workshop the pieces. That’s how the process went.

*How long did it take you to write the cycle?*

You know, I can’t be sure, but I think it was about six months. Once we started and said yes, these texts are really going to work, about six months.

*I’ve already spoken with Susanne, and now I’d like to ask you how you enjoyed working with her.*

(Laughter) Well, I don’t know what she said...

*I promise, she had nothing but positive things to say about you!*

Me too! I remember the first time I was actually in her studio listening to her sing and I felt like she had chocolate, brown satin coming from her voice. Her voice is just glorious. It was just a wonderful working relationship and we would pick away at words, the pronunciation of a word like pecan. It was just deep and just a lovely relationship. I would work with her anytime anywhere.

*I did “Love After 1950” on my master’s recital and they were definitely the audience favorite!*  
Wonderful!  

*They are so beautifully set and really fit my voice. I’m feeling the same way about “Sifting.”*

Oh, thank you! I love to write for the voice, I do. It’s where I get the most joy because it’s such a direct relationship. The process of finding the music in the text and then writing the voice.

*Let’s shift now to Sifting. Could you tell me where you were when you found out about 9/11?*

I was watching it on television. I had the Today Show on in the background, which I usually do, and they were interviewing the CEO for General Electric. I think it was Jack Welch. I was listening to it because he was so arrogant and so I was making the bed and I turned around to look at the interview and there he was talking and they just cut in with the first image of the plane hitting the first tower. I literally thought, oh they’re making a comment on this interview. Somehow this has to do with this interview and then it became very clear that it was not. I was literally glued to the ground, I could not move. Until it struck me that this was real, so then I picked up my phone, without leaving the television and I called my husband at work and said, something really serious is going on. As I was on the
phone, the second plane hit. I guess you could say I was an eye witness. I just stayed glued to the set as did my associate at the time. We could not take our eyes off the screen, all day. I realized that I have lots of friends in New York and was just thinking what’s going on. Then the plane hit the Pentagon. But I do think the media replaying it over, and over, and over again was itself a form of terrorism. I was like everybody else, my breath was taken away.

My publisher, though they waited until a couple of weeks after, called and asked me if I’d write a piece for 9/11 because they knew they could sell it. I was horrified, I was struck dumb. I just thought this is not a commercial venture. What? And by the way we’re all human here. I think it was the first time in my life the muse inside of me just said I’m going away. I’ve got to go into hiding. I knew I would eventually want to bring art out of the collective grief, but it surely was not going to be a SSAA piece or an immediately commodifiable item, shall we say. So that’s where I was...spiritually and physically.

"Susanne told me her story of the collection of the texts. What was your reaction when you received this package of letters?"

It was deeply personal because they’re first person accounts. I felt deeply respectful. I thought to myself do I have the right to bring these texts into another form? That was a question I asked myself. Then I answered it along with Susanne, James Dunham and Craig Rutenberg. I answered it with only if I can truly get my ego out of the way and express the texts cleanly and clearly. I don’t want to use the word humble, but I can’t think of a better word right now. I wanted to handle each text with utmost care. I guess the way that I answered it was that perhaps I can express a collective grief through music which does offer us the opportunity to express essential human emotion that is not expressible in another way. Does that make sense?

"Perfect sense. I understand she sent you many texts, how did you go about picking the texts and knowing that these would be the best to set?"

Oh, I must have read them at least a hundred times. Each time was really painful so maybe it was therapy. Always with me they begin to just sing off the page. As I was looking, reading and thinking, I thought the listing of names, the checking off of all the people you know in New York and are they ok, I bet every person in America did that. It’s such a human and futile effort. So I chose texts that I felt through feeling the texts. Would each one of them bring a universal? The adjustment to the heart, the heart adjusts to its new weight. That is an extraordinary line. It’s extraordinary. So I think subconsciously I wanted to frame the kind of emotion we were all sharing. From searching for our friends, to blaming the World Trade Center, the big brawny ones. Just really the adolescent America that we are now dealing with the consequences of. That is our adolescent hubris and inexperience as a culture to place ourselves in context of the world. Even though they also express hope and desire and vision, on the other hand, they’re Western. Then “Don’t look for me anymore” is from the point of view of
those who are gone. I just tried to capture the universal idea that you’re in all our hearts and also found in these texts.

I think I already know the answer to this question, but I do have to ask I read on your frequently asked questions section of your website, that on setting texts you have two choices. The first choice is will the composer govern the words or will the words govern the composer? I’m assuming the words governed the composer?

Yes, absolutely. I would never govern these texts and I actually rarely ever govern the texts. I try to let the texts govern me.

You also wrote you work as diligently as possible to discover the music of the poem which is the first part of your process. Could you go into more detail as to what your process is? Is there more to reading the texts many times?

It is reading it over and over, but it’s also trying to discover what the investigation of the poet was. Rhythmically, in terms of rhythm syntax, what kind of rhyme, is it in rhyme or vowel rhyme. Then the vowel play of the text. I do the same with prose. Then I actually record myself speaking the texts and then I take my own rhythmic dictation to see how I approach it. Then I listen to other people read the text and I rhytmate them. Just to see what the possibilities for rhythm are and rests in the texts. After that I start making compositional decisions. So there’s a real process. Sometimes the text needs to be as naturally set as possible, almost as if you’re speaking, but there happen to be pitches. Sometimes the text demands the exact opposite in order to create the metaphor for the text.

How did you decide the order of the songs?

Hmmmm...

Did you decide before you started writing them?

In looking at the texts, I think it was shock, the urge to blame, the death themselves, the...I don’t know how to talk about “We keep them in our hearts,” but I think the grieving for the heroes. We’re looking for heroes and then grieving and honoring the heroes. The final song deals with the personal impact of 9/11.

What was your compositional process with this cycle? How long did it take? Did you start with the melody? And your decision to use the viola, which is incredible in this piece.

I started with the viola. James Dunham and I are longtime collaborators and friends. James had expressed earlier on how much he would like to work with Susanne Mentzer. I can’t remember how the three of us came together. Does James remember?
So far we have only been in contact via email, but he wrote that you and Susanne were at the concert in Aspen where he premiered your viola sonata. He came up to your after and met Susanne and they both expressed how much they wanted to work together.

Yes, it was in Aspen. So I did start the composition with the viola.

As a listener that makes so much sense. The main motives all appearing first in the viola. I never would have thought you would start with the viola.

Yes, absolutely. My feeling was by knowing the text, having worked with the text, having read through the text and I just thought to myself, no matter what people think about the grieving process there are no words to express it. It happens inside in a jumble and takes you over. I don’t know if you’ve been through a grieving process in your life, but you can be standing in the grocery line and suddenly you’re in tears. It just takes a hold of you. I thought to myself and I knew it was the viola’s role to express that essential abstract human emotion. It then supports the very meager words we have to express our feelings. The words are terribly meager even in the hands of the best like Shakespeare. You listen to a great soliloquy and then you become quiet and you go inside. It takes you where the abstract emotions lie so for me the viola definitely plays that role. In fact, the most important musical motives are all in the viola.

I found it interesting that the singer only sings the opening viola motive in the final song.

Yes, and at the end because it finally becomes human. Finally the grief has come to a point where very quietly she becomes it.

Another question I have relates to the second song “To the towers.” It feels the most different of all five songs. Not having the motives that are used in the rest of the songs.

Yes, it has that Carmen Miranda thing going. Yes, it does and deliberately so.

To show the adolescence?

Yes. You know, sort of the Hollywood style. I put in parenthesis Celia Cruz. I chose the approach as the image of Hollywood. Hollywood brought us the whole Chiquita Banana thing, which is basically a total misunderstanding of a culture. The same thing happened with John Wayne. The total misunderstanding of the setting of the West and the actual people. And yet, it’s very American to re-create something in our image. Disneyland, with the international villages, where everybody has perfect teeth and are smiling. I wanted to see if I could create that metaphor just around the big brass towers. I guess I’m angry about it. It’s part of the American culture which astounds me time after time after time. I live in a house that is a Tudor home. (Laughter) And the walls are painted Tudor brown. It’s everywhere.
What are the roles you intended for the performers? As the composer what would be the perfect performance of this cycle as a whole. What would you like us to bring to it?

I think wedded emotion. The problem with the viola and the piano is they are aspects of each other. The three should never be separate, if that makes sense.

It makes perfect sense.

They really are aspects of each other. I don’t know how else to put it. What James, Susanne and Craig did with the music, is the way it should be. The four of us just sat in the studio in Aspen just rehearsing, working, and knitting ourselves together through the music. The performance was knit together.

You’ve know led me to the next sections of questions I have. Could you take me through the rehearsal process? I understand there were some changes made during that time. I’m talking specifically about the addition of the interlude between the fourth and fifth songs.

We were working on the piece as you do in a really fine studio rehearsal. Bit by bit, morsel by morsel, phrase by phrase, song by song. We were all trying to understand what the piece is out in the hall. As we were working we would lengthen a note here, hold a note over a little bit longer, change the dynamics, we were like a team of neurosurgeons. Feeling no real time at all, just feeling the time of the piece. How to move in time and space. As we worked to getting closer and closer and closer to the piece, we all felt like something was missing. All of us. That became the solo viola interlude. We all knew the viola had to cry out on its own. I said I’ll write it tonight and have it for you tomorrow. And I did. I just stayed up and wrote it.

This is the compositional process if you really know the piece you’re working on. You just go down into another kind of time. I call it going deep. You just get out of clock time and go to where the piece is and bring it out. I didn’t stay up all night ringing my hands, tearing my hair or getting crazy on coffee. I took a long walk, found it inside of me and then came back and wrote it down. Then I showed it to James and asked if it was playable. Could we do this, could we do that? Then we work-shopped the solo, I think that was about an hour’s worth of work together and then we knew the interlude was the one.

How long was the rehearsal process before the premiere?

We met only at Aspen, so I think two or three times.

Was it Aspen that commissioned this piece? I know it came about in a personal way, so how did the premiere happen in Aspen?

James, Susanne and Craig were all going to be at Aspen and so we just decided that would be the best place to do it.
Both Susanne and James have told me their impressions of the premiere. What was it like for you to be there in the audience?

In a way that’s usual for me, my heart was just on stage with them. Just kind of floating there with them. There was a man in the audience who was making a lot of noise, I remember that. I think he was even in the front row. Susanne was hanging on to concentrate through the whole concert. So my heart was with her for that. He wasn’t making a lot of noise, but he was kind of like rustling. But there was a quality of silence in the room which is very rare. It was a catharsis. A cathartic silence. That’s what I felt. It wasn’t like, here’s a new piece what should we do with it? It wasn’t, oh these are great performers and let’s admire them. It wasn’t that. It felt to me during the performance of the premiere that we were all enveloped in the kind of emotions which are best felt in profound silence. Actually, I didn’t want people to clap, to applaud. Which, it seems if I recall, it took an hour for them to begin applauding. I’m sure it was ten seconds or something, but there was that quality of silence which carried over for quite some time after the music left the air.

James wrote that it was a silent standing ovation.

Yep, it was. It was extraordinary. People were very quiet leaving the auditorium too. I don’t know about Susanne, James and Craig, but I felt like this was what we needed to do.

Very healing.

Yes, we all needed to do it.

After the premiere, I understand some name changes needed to happen in “A Listing.” The music that I purchased through your website seems to have the original names in it. The recording on your website seems to have the new names. Those are the names you would prefer I sing for my lecture recital?

That has the name Jeff Hardy in it?

Yes.

Yes, those are the names you should sing.

There is a new name that I’m having trouble understanding on the recording. May I check that with you or Grace?

You can check it with me. Tell me which page.

Thank you. It’s the third page, first system; originally the name was Anna Ward.

We changed it to Betty Ward.
The other change I’d like to verify is on page four, third system. The line says, “Brother used to work for CNN.” Is it now Canter Fitz?

Yes, Canter Fitz.

Why did the name changes occur?

Well, Jeff Hardy occurred because he was Susanne’s addition. Susanne wanted to honor them and I did too. I was a little worried they would not grant permission because we’re talking about real people, but they did grant permission. We changed Anna Ward to Betty Ward for singing reasons.

Have you been in contact with the authors of the letters you used and the other people named in “A Listing?”

I have not.

I don’t think they would be upset, being that it’s been so beautifully set.

I don’t know. I’ve been holding this close to my heart for a long time because I can’t be sure. I did change many, many of the names into singable names.

I’m wondering why the recording on your website hasn’t been distributed?

It’s me. I am going to distribute it now. It’s hard because I really, really, really was upset by 9/11 and I was really mad at OUP and I. In fact, we don’t work together anymore. And I think that’s what started it. It’s me. I’ve been holding it close to my heart, but now I’m going to release it on Interlope recording.

I’m so glad because I really want more people to hear it. It’s just stunning.

Thank you. I think it was just because I was stunned.

I’d like to go back quickly to briefly talk with you about some of the most important motives. The first being the opening of “A Listing.” What does this motive represent to you?

Because the viola is really the internal light of grief, I wanted to create a lullaby to the self. When I grieve, and I’m old enough now to recognize the process because I’ve been through it a couple of times, there are moments where I just rock myself. I kind of hold myself in my own arms and rock myself. This is a lullaby to the self. Then the keening, which I think is the next most important motive, is pain. The third important motive is in measure 45, in the piano. This is, I believe, understanding.

I also love the use of what I called the “heartbeat” motive.

Yes, that’s exactly what it is.
In the third song, one of my personal struggles is just how am I going to perform this? Because I still can’t listen to it without getting emotional so I feel like I’m going to have to sing it many, many, many times before my lecture recital.

(Laughter) Pretend you have passed on and you are on the other side, holding in your vision whatever it is from the other side. The people you love who are really grieving and just pretend you’re very simply asking them to let go of it.

I feel like that’s the message for the singer throughout this cycle. I envision the singer as the narrator and the whole thing needs to be very simple and straightforward because the way you’ve set the music and the text does the work, if that makes sense?

Yes, it completely makes sense. There are so many one syllable words, which are a hallmark of American English anyway, but in lyric writing there are a lot of one syllable words which that been crafted into place. Many of the texts for this song, not the Vasquez, the words were just written. There wasn’t somebody struggling, biting their pencil and staying up all night, they just came. These words just came out of grief. So I need them to be simple and I think you’re absolutely right that the singer is more the narrator.

Do you have any advice for my violist who is so excited about your music? He’s in heaven.

(Laughter) Tell him to stay in heaven. His is an operatic role. He should listen to James’ performance. He doesn’t have to repeat James’ performance, but James and I shaped it together and his is not a technical display, it’s an operatic role.

I love that. Would it be all right with you if I use musical examples in my paper?

Yes, absolutely.

May I contact Grace to get a letter of permission?

Yes, Grace and I inhabit the same attic so we’ll be together.

I have to say, Grace has been so lovely to me and very helpful.

Well, thank you. I’m really honored that you’re going to perform the piece and that you’re taking such great care with it. It means a great deal.

Well, I’m honored. You’ve been one of my favorite composers for a long time and when I started this process I was wondering who I was going to write about and a friend recommended that I search out some of my favorite contemporary composers. Your website was the first one I went to and when I found “Sifting” I madly searched the dissertation sites for hours in hopes that no one had been writing on it. I was thrilled to find out no one had. I emailed your website right away and wasn’t sure if I’d ever hear back. I heard back from you and Grace the very next day and I just can’t thank you enough for all of your help.
I just wish you all the best. If you like what you do with it, can I hear a recording?

Absolutely. What I’d like to do is email your the transcripts from our conversation and then after my paper is finalized and the lecture recital is over, I will mail everything to you.

I look forward to it and I just wish you all the best. Let me know if I can help any more.

I appreciate that very much. Thanks again for your time.

Email Response from Libby Larsen, September 8, 2011.

Dear Kori,

The title of song #4 is “Untitled.” I did this specifically because death itself is an unanswered question specific, anonymous, in groups, or in unfathomable number. Death is death and cares not for specificity. It’s the human being who searches for meaning in it.

Best,
Libby
APPENDIX B

TRANSCRIPT OF PHONE INTERVIEW WITH SUSANNE MENTZER

Phone interview with mezzo-soprano, Susanne Mentzer, July 19th, 2011

Do you mind if I record our conversation?

That’s fine.

I read in high school you ushered for Santa Fe Opera and that is where you discovered your love for opera. Can you talk a bit about that experience and was there a specific opera which spoke to you?

My mother, she was trying to get me to get some culture because I had never seen an opera before. She tried to get me to go out and be an usher. When I found out that the guys from school were going to be parking the cars out there I thought, well this is great and you get a good excuse to stay out really late. What ended up happening was I really was fascinated by the opera. One of the first ones I saw wasn’t really an opera it was an operetta, Merry Widow, and then La Boheme. Both of those I just sort of fell in love with and would sit on the back step of the theater and watch. Part of the things, well besides the fact it was incredibly romantic out there, you know, outside and beautiful, but also the performers all were different. I always thought opera singers were the stereotypical, kind of boring...very boring people and I got to know them by manning the stage door and stuff and there were all these young, attractive, nice people and I just really got a kick out of that.

Is that what made you decide to choose the music route and do music therapy at University of Pacific?

Well, yeah, I mean I had always been interested in singing in choral groups and had done a little bit of voice training. I remember my voice teacher used to take me to her...when she was singing at a women’s club or something and she would have me do one or two things. I thought I had a nice voice, but I didn’t know for sure. I knew it didn’t fit in very well. I knew that and a lot of people made fun of me and I felt that my voice was very grown up sounding, but compared to everybody I knew who sang, they all thought it was ugly. It was just loud and awkward. So I think I’d always kind of wanted to go into nursing so I thought well music therapy is an interesting mix and that’s what I went...I went two years to the University of Pacific in Stockton, California, but I had barely been there a
year and my teacher tried to convince me to go into performance. So that’s kind of what I focused on and to make a long story short, I went to Aspen Music Festival in the summer of 1976, my sophomore summer, and they gave me a role in one of their professional performances...

Nicklausse?

Yes, it wasn’t even one of their student performances, they had professionals coming in to sing everything and then I was convinced to go to Juilliard and that’s what I did. So I kind of got swept along. I didn’t have a lot of ambition, never did, but I got swept along.

Who was your teacher at University of Pacific?

My teacher at Pacific was Shirley Thompson.

Can you talk a little about your time at Juilliard?

Mmmmm...

Or even just about your teacher?

My time at Juilliard was ok, it was very hard...it was very competitive. Everybody gets there who was at the top of the heap where they came from and then they are at the bottom of the heap. I did two small roles or two roles that were fine, but I felt...I don’t know, I tried to study with one teacher there, who will go nameless, who was a technical teacher and he basically told me to stop singing, that I would never make it, so I changed teachers to Rose Bampton who was a wonderful lady and taught me a lot about style and phrasing and everything. She wasn’t really a technician, so I didn’t really get with a technician until after I got my masters and I was down in Houston.

Yes, you studied with Norma Newton?

Yes.

What about your time with Houston? How long were you there and were you able to do any roles?

Yes, when I first got there I was with Texas Opera Theater which was then a wonderful touring company that we did a bus and truck tour of the United States.
Ten weeks and I did Cenerentola and Boheme chorus. After that, I didn’t have anything so I was a receptionist at the Houston Grand Opera. They had an opening in their studio, somebody backed out, and I auditioned and got in their opera studio. I was there for a year and by that time a manager from New York had heard me in a Pavarotti master class, back in the day, and he had put aside my name as a reminder to call in a couple of years. So he called and wanted to hear me and that was kind of the end of that. He took on my talent and sold me and it was amazing what he did for me. And then I lived in Houston because I was married to the technical director there, so I lived there until 1987. So David Gockley gave me a lot of my big breaks. He gave me my first Composer, first...let’s see here, we did Le Comte Ory and I did Anna Bolena with Joan Sutherland. Big risks he took on me and that was great.

Amazing! Let me go back for one second. I read in 1983 you made your European debut, but I couldn’t find where it was and for which role.

That was in Cologne, Germany and was for Cherubino. That’s kind of a funny story because when I went, I was on my honeymoon in Europe, and I got a call from my manager saying they want to hear you in Cologne. So we drove to Cologne and I sang and they said we’re going to offer you a fest contract right now and I didn’t know what a fest contract was. I said, “Well, I can’t do that because I just got married.” They said they were sorry and then they called back and wanted me just to come in and do Cherubino. That was kind of a nice association because I did this Cherubino a couple years there and I also did Cendrillon. I mean, they brought me back, which was nice and then that made other connections with other people.

How interesting that your European debut was the same as your Met debut.

Oh yeah, that was my debut a lot. That was my debut at Vienna State Opera, in Paris...I mean, that was my lucky role.

Which is your favorite role?

My favorite role is probably the Composer in Ariadne auf Naxos.

As an aspiring opera singer I have to ask you what it felt like to debut on the Metropolitan Opera stage.

(Laughter) Well, I’ll tell you that first of all, the audition was very funny because it was on the set of The Tales of Hoffmann, which I ended up doing later, with an
upright piano and it was just a weird moment, just right before a show. Then they
wouldn’t hire me, and wouldn’t hire me, and wouldn’t hire me and finally they
called with an offer and I remember just freaking out. But I was...Anne Sophie
von Otter was in the first group of Cherubino’s and I did the second and so I
didn’t get any rehearsal on stage or in costume. My debut was like many people
there, you end up going on without orchestra rehearsal or anything and it was fine
except I was sick for two of the performances of the four. But I did make my
debut and that was great and I just had my son, he was about five months old.
Right after I had my son, I made a lot of my debuts in a lot of new roles and it was
just a lot of stress.

I’m sure. I can’t imagine...

It was fun. It was fun in its own way, but it was stressful.

Let’s switch gears. I know you performed the premiere of “Love After 1950” with Libby Larsen.
It’s a piece I performed on my master’s recital and I completely fell in love with them.

They’re hard, though...they’re tricky.

They are tricky! Can you talk about that first time you worked together? I know it was
commissioned by the Ravinia Festival, but how did that all come about? Did you get to pick the
composer you wanted to work with?

There was a group that underwrote it and I’m just blanking out on their name
now.

Artistic circles.

Yes. That was run by a woman in Chicago who was a big supporter of women’s
music. And so I had done a project for them earlier, a recording called Women at
an Exhibition and there was women’s music from the women’s pavilion at the
1893 World’s Fair, the world’s exhibition in Chicago. I had done some of that so
then they asked me if I would be interested in this other project and why don’t we
commission something and then it turned into a whole CD called the Eternal
Feminine. So that whole recital was premiered at the Ravinia Festival and then it
was recorded.

We were trying to think of something...I guess they had approached Libby and
she was interested and it was up to Libby and me. We wanted something
humorous and we went round the bend. There’s a writer named Anne Lamont,
who is sort of a spiritual, but funny writer and she was interested, but her mother had Alzheimer’s and she was dealing with that, so she couldn’t do it. We kept trying to think of Erma Bombeck or somebody funny, but we also wanted it to be more reflective of people our age. Libby came up with these poets, there were a whole bunch of them she sent me, and asked me which ones spoke to me. I chose the ones that did and then she set them. Then we got together and adjusted them. You know, it really was an interesting process because she felt strongly, for instance if something should be piano and I thought it should be forte, just little things like that. Also, tempi. We worked with Craig Rutenburg who was wonderful at adjusting things too and it just all becomes like a big collaboration. So that was really wonderful.

Did she write the melody to fit your voice and did you discuss things which you maybe weren’t completely comfortable?

The things that I needed to change weren’t vocally as much as she would read into a poem one way and I would read it another way. So she’d read it more upsetting and I’d see it as more positive. Things like that. So we would kind of talk that out and come to a happy medium.

Several years go by and 911 happened. Can you discuss the motivation behind going to New York and finding the letters and photos?

You know, 911 was, of course, 911. I was on one of the first flights after 911. I think it was, Angelica Kirchschlager, canceled her concerts with the New York Philharmonic and it was their season subscription concerts, the first ones. So they called and wanted me to go up and do Mahler Rückert lieder and I did. And this was on; I want to say, the 21st, so it was not very long afterwards. I flew into New York with like, maybe three other people and I remember the pilot thanking me for trusting them. I stayed, and it was when people were still searching for people, so I was in New York with all these tributes on the street and pictures and candles. I mean, it was an unbelievable experience. The hotel I stayed in was filled with rescue workers and I didn’t go down to the sight that trip because I just couldn’t bring myself, I mean, it was only ten days after it happened.

I did go again in November and went down there and they had barely made a dent. It looked like you imagined it would look. It was just a stunning experience and to see, again, these tributes everywhere. To have been there when they had so much hope and then to have been there when they realized people were dead...it was two different, drastic times.
Then I was there a year later, because I sing in New York a lot and there was an exhibit at the....I don’t know if it’s called the New York Historical Society, it’s up by the Museum of Natural History on Central Park West. Anyway, they had a banner up talking about 911 so I went in and they had a silent film of the whole disaster which was fascinating to watch because you didn’t hear any of the noise involved, you just watched this event unfold. Then they had letters on the walls from children in Australia who drew pictures of people parachuting out of buildings and ladders reaching up to the top. It was very touching. They had saved, which I hadn’t realized, every piece of paper, every chunk of sidewalk, every possible memento from the tributes. New York City has these, just like they have every piece of what was left of the trade center. It was fascinating to me that somebody had the presence of mind, first of all, to save all this stuff and they had photographed a lot of them and reproduced them exactly how they were when they were on the street. I was just so moved by it and I walked through thinking this is just so powerful and I would love to have some of this set sometime. I don’t know why I felt that, but I started writing everything down that was moving to me.

Then I sent it to Libby and I said this is a bunch of text I found and I would really love to...what do you think? She went through it and picked out what she thought she could set, so there was a lot more there before she got a hold of it. She took the ones that meant the most to her and set them how she felt. So that is pretty much how it happened. We did record it and I don’t know when that’s ever going to come out.

I wish it would. She has it on her website, so I’ve heard it and it’s fantastic and powerful. I’m wondering why it hasn’t been published yet.

Yeah, I don’t know. We’ve performed it live a couple of times but, then we did record it for a recording, so I’m not sure what happened to that. Maybe it’s going to come out. When we did officially record it, we had to change some of the names because she had to get permission from the families to use the names. Some people said no and some people said yes, so it just depended on who it was. Then we did put in a name of somebody that I knew who had died as like a secret tribute. His name wasn’t on the original paperwork of the tributes, but he had died and so I just wanted to put that in there. That’s how it all came about. I think it’s incredible because she puts really the most mournful music in the viola. The viola is so hard, that part is so hard.

The piece is amazing. I have to admit, I have yet to listen to it and not sob. I’m feeling concerned when I do this lecture recital things could go very badly.
(Laughter) Yes, it’s a hard thing to program because the few times we’ve done it, we’ve done it without applause afterward. We’ve actually requested no applause. Usually we would end the program with it because it’s hard to follow it with anything. One time we programmed, I think it was some kind of viola piece which was sort of a mournful thing and he played a solo. I have to dig out the program...I don’t know what I did with it. It’s a tricky piece to program and I don’t think it’s particularly going to get performed all that much because of that, but maybe we’ll get it out there this year being that it’s the tenth anniversary.

It’s strange when I look back, my first instinct was to call my voice teacher who lived in New York and I got through to her immediately. Then, everything went down. But I knew people who have apartments on the Hudson and who saw the plane go by and thought that plane is flying awfully low. Just weird things like that. I have a lot of friends in New York so their take on it was different. I was in Chicago and we were worried about the Sears Tower and I remember I had to go into DePaul to teach and I went into the dean’s office and I said I’m very uncomfortable being here, I think school should close because this is a horrible thing. The students are freaking out and finally they closed it, but that was when things were just sort of developing, they didn’t know much.

My boyfriend’s parents, at the time, were on a plane from Munich and it had to get turned around and for a long time we didn’t know where the plane was. The panic that was ensuing was quite big. The other thing for me, it’s one of those situations where at the time the grief was so deep I thought I’d never get past it. Now you look back and you think...well, you know, you can talk about it without getting hysterical. It’s amazing how you get over things.

Can you talk a bit about your personal interpretation of this cycle? I can’t imagine the impact of singing these words for the first time.

I just wanted to be straight forward. Libby gave so much of it in the music. For me, the hardest part was saying the names and knowing they were real people. That was really, really, really hard. Every time I’ve done it, it’s been very hard because it’s very real and you’re not making it up. Very upsetting.

The viola part is very important, almost as if it is in duet with the singer.

Yes. There are some tricky times to coordinate. I know, also, there is an interlude before the last song and originally that wasn’t there. I remember we were talking and I said it just seems like it needs something else and that’s what came out of it. Libby kind of went home and wrote this thing and came back with it. I’m not sure
if that was there when we first did it in Aspen or whether we added it for Houston. We might have done that. I don’t know.

So after the premiere in Aspen, you went to Houston to perform it?

Well, yeah, because I went down there to teach. I teach at Rice University now. When I got there the violist, James Dunham, happened to be in the office next door and I needed to schedule a starting recital kind of thing and 9/11 was open so we did it on 9/11/2006. That would have been the fifth anniversary. We did that then in concert and then we recorded it that following week for a label that was supposed to be on a Libby Larsen CD.

Do you have any advice for the performer who sings this set?

I think you just have to sing it the way it is and not put too much extra stuff in it because everything is right there. Does that make sense?

Yes.

You don’t have to act it or overdo any of it. For me, it’s more about the viola part than anything. The singer is almost a narrator and the violist is the real emotion in it.

I can’t thank you enough for letting me interview you. I’ll definitely send you a copy of my dissertation and if you’d like, I can also send you a transcript of this interview once I’m done transcribing.

Great! Did you talk to Libby?

We have an interview set for August 10th and I’m really looking forward to speaking with her.

She’s great to talk to, she really is. She’s very upbeat and energetic.

I can’t wait. Thank you very much.
APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTS OF EMAIL AND PHONE INTERVIEWS WITH JAMES DUNHAM

Email Response from violist, James Dunham, August 2, 2011

Hello Mr. Dunham,

My name is Kori Jennings and I'm currently working on my dissertation at Louisiana State University. My topic is a performance guide on Libby Larsen's cycle “Sifting Through the Ruins.” I have been in contact with Susanne Mentzer and Libby Larsen, and I was hoping to ask you questions regarding the part you played in the premiere of this cycle. Saying that I have fallen in love with this piece would be an understatement and I would like to include your thoughts regarding this work. I am very interested in the collaborative process during the rehearsal period, your thoughts about the first performance, the impact working on this piece has had on you personally and how you feel it was received. Would it be possible for you to take a few moments to answer some questions? We could do the interview via email or phone, whatever would work best with your schedule.

Thank you very much for considering my request and I hope to hear from you soon.

All the best, Kori Jennings

Dear Kori,

I'm delighted to know of your interest in Libby's "Sifting..." and will happily help with some answers. At the moment I'm in the midst of my final week at the Canadian string program le Domaine Forget in Quebec. (Don't cry: we're on the banks of the St. Lawrence River looking out on its vista every day in moderate temperatures and surrounded by music!) I'll be home late Friday but go back out again on Sunday for a family trip before school begins on the 22nd...!!

Internet up here is spotty, but if you can wait until the latter part of August, a conversation would be wonderful! If you need answers more quickly, perhaps e-mail is the way to go.

Briefly: I met Libby when she wrote a string quartet for the Cleveland Quartet ca. 1991 ("Schoenberg, Schenker and Schillinger.") As a fellow Minnesotan, she and I hit it off immediately and we spoke of a viola sonata at that point. Sure enough, in 2001 she gifted me with her Viola Sonata which I premiered at the Aspen Festival that same summer. At the post concert reception, I found Libby and Susanne Mentzer sitting together and joined them. I had heard Susanne sing but had not yet met her, so my first words were something like "I love your singing!" to which she replied something like "Well, I love your playing!" to which Libby added something like "Well, if you love each other so much, I have to write something for you!" Thus the idea was established!
What followed almost immediately, of course, was the tragedy of 9/11... And I'm sure you heard from Susanne about her collecting the various texts from a memorial following the disaster. One thing led to another, and the work as it is - for mezzo, viola and piano - was born. We gave the premiere in the summer of 2005, once again at the Aspen Festival, with Susanne's favorite pianist from the Met (Craig Rutenberg) and with Libby in attendance. We studied the piece together, played it for Libby, Susanne had some wonderful suggestions for connections between movements, and also felt strongly that we should close the program with "Sifting..." We didn't know what to expect, of course, since the subject and material were heavily emotional and still fresh in everyone's minds. (To this day I can't read the text without tearing up completely - I'm sure I would be unable to read them out loud...) What happened was quite incredible. The audience was absolutely absorbed in the performance, yet when we finished, the applause was soft and muted. Then to our amazement, as one, they rose to their feet - the quietest and most sincere standing ovation I have ever witnessed. It was truly a moment of great beauty and solemnity. Once again, I have tears in my eyes as I recall this deeply moving event.

One additional note: In the original performance, the movement "A Listing" used names of the actual people involved. When we relearned it for performance and recording, Libby had changed the names because she had heard family members asking that their loved-ones' names not be used without their permission. Not wanting to intrude on this terribly sensitive area, Libby changed the names to fictitious, but like sounding, names. Yet one name stuck in our minds: Jeff Hardy, son of Gordon and Lillian Hardy. Gordon Hardy was long-time president of the Aspen Music Festival, he and Lillian were fixtures at the Festival for decades, and they did lose their son Jeff in this terrible tragedy. We sought and received their permission to use their son's name in this wonderful cycle, and it is our memorial to him and his family, for which we are enormously grateful.

In the interim, we have recorded a CD of Libby's chamber music (including "Sifting..." and the Viola Sonata) with our Shepherd School colleagues and I believe a company is just taking it on for production and distribution.

I guess I got on a bit of a roll with this e-mail! Let me know any additional questions you might have, or when we might speak together later this month. I'm so delighted that you have taken up this remarkable work for your dissertation and wish you all the best.

Yours, James

James F. Dunham
Professor of Viola and Chamber Music
Director: MM in String Quartet
Rice University
Shepherd School of Music, MS-532
Phone Interview with violist, James Dunham, August 22, 2011

Do you mind if I record our conversation?

Sure.

Where were you on 9/11?

That was the year I was transitioning to leave Boston, I was at New England Conservatory, and move to the Shepherd School at Rice. I had a handful of students that were going to graduate in a year so I actually moved to Houston, but I went back every other week and taught these students until they graduated the next May. So it was as clean a break as you can make, I didn’t want to leave any stranded students. I was going back and forth and one of my first trips was on the Monday before 9/11. I arranged to fly in late Sunday night, work like crazy on Monday and then fly home Monday night. So I flew home less than 12 hours before it happened. If I had been a day later I couldn’t have gotten home. I flew home from Boston on Monday and then on Tuesday morning two of the planes flew out of Logan.

In fact, a colleague of mine, Marcus Thompson, who also does some teaching at NEC and is full time with the music division at MIT, was on a United flight at Logan, on the tarmac shortly after nine and his plane got called back. The pilot didn’t say what it was, but they were called back to the gate. So he said he had been walking around the terminal with these terrorists. Isn’t that terrifying? So I was home when all of that happened and of course, many, many friends in New York and in Boston, for that matter, but the New York friends I checked on them immediately.

I understand you had expressed interest in working with Susanne Mentzer at the post-concert reception, but how did you first hear about “Sifting Through the Ruins?”

Well, Susanne is just such a down to earth person, she’s now teaching at Rice. Our studios are right next to each other so we get to see each other all the time. When I first heard her, she was scheduled to do a recital at Aspen and I find most singers get totally into themselves and that’s kind of all they can do. Somebody bailed at the last minute to sing Mahler 3 and she said “I’ll do that” on top of her recital. I had never heard of a singer doing that. I heard it and her sound...I want to sound like that. I thought how in the world do I get to know this woman and somehow do something together.

That was how I first heard her and then for her to show up after I played the viola sonata and then get to sit with her and Libby and one thing led to another. Libby at that moment said “I’m going to write you a piece.” So we already knew there was going to be something. Then she and Susanne were in touch about the libretto part of it and the collection of writings was done by Susanne when she was in New York. So she collected all of that stuff and it’s a little bit edited. I saw the
raw lists Susanne presented Libby with. Then I got connected into the process. I’m trying to think, I think Libby...she’s very good about trying things and how does this work. She doesn’t do a lot of that because she’s got great instincts, but she may have sent me something and while we were working on it together we did some editing.

I’m very interested in the rehearsal process. Could you talk a little bit about working with Libby, Susanne and Craig and the process you went through to really form the trio?

Yes, the nice thing with Aspen, especially at that time, was because of the nature of the piece they were willing to bring Susanne’s favorite pianist, Craig Rutenberg, from the Met. I listen to the Met broadcasts from time to time and they have this intermission feature where they bring on experts and somebody will play excerpts that they have to identify. It’s a miracle to me that they can do that. Craig Rutenberg is often the pianist who is doing that stuff. He is inside you and I don’t know how he does it. She just loves to work with him so she requested that he be the pianist. They worked a lot just on their own because for singers just identifying the pitches, it’s not like second finger on the D string. She’s got great ears and tremendous control, but even so they are gnarly pitches sometimes and so they did a lot of work together. What impressed me when I was playing with them is that she would say “Craig I’m having trouble finding this pitch” and he would voice it in his hands. That pitch, a note before she would sing it, would suddenly appear in the piano. It’s not overt at all, but it’s just so perfect.

We did another piece, the Frank Bridge laments for viola, for viola and piano. Very depressing stuff. At a certain moment I asked Craig if I was clear in this place, should I cue and he said, “Oh no, I hear your breathing.” First of all I was flattered because I thought well I’m breathing, but also he is so tuned in we should all sing. He made it such a seamless process and then when Libby came, we had done work with her, and worked balances were like. Between the fourth and fifth movements there is a viola cadenza. That was Susanne’s idea, she said “Libby I feel like there is something needed before that last movement.” Libby said, “You’re right. I need something.” She gets out this paper, which I still have, and rips off this cadenza. “James can you do that?” “I think so.” That completed the work.

Did I email you an MP3 of this?

Well, I was able to get a recording off of Libby Larsen’s website. Do you have any advice for my violist? When I interviewed Libby she referred to the viola part as the “operatic role.”

Isn’t that wonderful? I love it. Well, I mean it’s been a gratifying thing. There have been many singers who have been just wonderfully complimentary to what I do. I don’t try that, but I guess it’s my instinct. I guess the only advice is to feel the music. What we tend to do as instrumentalists is we’re taught bow strokes, vibrato and we’re taught shifting. Our tendency to approach music, even though we know about line, is to approach it as an instrumentalist. I can find this note by
this kind of shift and I can vibrate here because my teacher told me to. It’s not to forget that, but to go beyond it. There are places in there where you just don’t want to vibrate. It’s just not right or needed and it doesn’t feel good. It’s as if you do it because it’s this automatic thing that we’ve been trained to do.

Something like the siren in the fifth song, that’s a gesture, it’s not viola playing anymore. It’s how to get away from the technique now. The heartbeat motive, what does a heartbeat feel like. Or the sound of breathing how does that feel? How can you turn that into a sound that you make with a bow and a string? That’s what I would urge. Does that make sense?

Perfect sense.

In those rock and rolls things...partly where Libby and I really hit it off...we’re born in the same year. I used to play electric bass in a jazz trio and so some of the vernacular of that stuff is a little bit in my background from my days of playing studios in Los Angeles. I got to do backup to some fun stuff. So when Libby came...I don’t know if I told you this part.

In the string quartet, there are three movements. It’s called Schoenberg, Schenker and Schillinger. The Schoenberg movement is not twelve tone, but it’s very much kind of aleotoric oriented. The Schenker is very minimal stuff. Bill Pusley used to call it “Copeland on the Plains.” It’s very still. It’s this broad, broad horizon like the plains of the United States. And then the last movement...Schillinger is a theorist and we found a book of his which is very gnarly, by the way, at least to us. But it inspired people like Duke Ellington and maybe Gershwin, I can’t remember. It inspired their aesthetic. It’s a very rock ‘em, sock ‘em last movement. I’ve always been impressed by the jazz players who can play and sing in unison. Sometimes bass players do it, sometimes guitar players do it.

In the viola part there was this section that went like (sings). I said that sounds just like something you could sing and play so I learned to do that. When it came time to meet Libby, who we did not know yet, I was shy about that. I asked the guys not to tell her I did that to her piece. So, of course, first thing they did was tell her. Well, she loved it and she left it in. So I’ve actually scatted in Tully Hall. So that’s when we first met and I just adore her. She’s a little pistol.

In your email you mentioned your school has done a recording of Libby Larsen music.

Yes. So on her website, am I playing the piece?

Yes, it’s you, Susanne and Craig, but the recording uses the original words.

So that would be from the Aspen performance? Wow...so that still has the actual names of the people.
Yes it does. I purchased the music and that also has the original names. She is currently working to get a new edition which will reflect the name changes. When you recorded it at your school did you use the original names or the newer version?

We used the made up names and it threw us off. It was very bizarre. We felt, maybe just because we spent enough time rehearsing with it, we felt a connection to those people. It was Libby who heard this interview where the families were saying they wished people would not use their family’s names unless they specifically said it was okay because it was personal to them. Libby thought, “Oh my gosh, I’ve got this whole list of names and I’m sure some of these people would feel the same way. So the only real name in our recording, and I think Libby said she found a company who wants to release it, is Jeff Hardy, who is the son of the former Aspen president who died in one of the towers.

Is she thinking about putting the original names back in?

No. Now the only copy that I was able to purchase through her website still has the original names. When we spoke she mentioned how close she has held this piece to her. She hadn’t gone ahead and made any of the changes and she kept discussing how she needed to hold it close. But at this point, she’s decided she is ready for more people to hear it.

Amazing. I have to say, the post edits she’s not always the best at. When I recorded the sonata, during the first performance we did some little changes and when I purchased the music the changes aren’t reflected. So I have a sheet for the viola sonata. People contact me and say “I’ve heard your performance and it’s a little bit different” and I send them my sheet.

You’ve led me to my next question, which is if you had a copy of the first song with all of the name changes and melody changes notated?

I must have it.

Would that be something you would be willing to share with me just in case it takes her a little longer to get the changes to me?

I don’t see why not. Can you write me an email later and remind me of that? I should be able to scan it and just email it to you.

I can’t thank you enough for taking the time to speak with me.

I love the piece. I wish there were a way for her to get a Pulitzer Prize for it. She’s due and I think it’s a worthy piece.

That’s why I’m so happy she’s working to get it released and that your school has recorded it again. I feel it needs to be heard by more people.
Absolutely. The school actually didn’t have anything to do with the recording. We used their facilities, but it was a Libby project and we were the performers and it’s going to be released on an independent label.

Susanne was the mezzo?

Yes, but the pianist was a woman named Jeanne Kiernan Fischer. The viola sonata is on it. She has a duo for cello and double bass so my wife played the bass and Jeanne Fischer’s husband is our professor of cello, Norman Fisher, he used to be in the Concord Quartet. It was all a family thing. Kirk Mackenberg is married to Judith Sherman, who is a multi-Grammy winning producer. She was our producer so it was all family. So when it comes out it will be a good chunk of Libby Larsen chamber music.

I’ll definitely be purchasing it.

Good, I can’t wait to see it in print.

Thanks again so much!

Hang on a second, let me just check something. I’m wondering if you have our Aspen performance, I might be able to send you MP3’s of our recorded performance.

That would be wonderful.

Ok, put that in your email as well.

Great! Thanks very much!
## APPENDIX D
### TEMPO MODIFICATIONS

#### “A Listing”

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<tr>
<td>16</td>
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#### “To the Towers Themselves”

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#### “Don’t look for me anymore”

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#### “Someone Passes”

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APPENDIX E

PROGRAM NOTES BY THE COMPOSER

Composer’s Notes

*Sifting Through the Ruins* is a set of five songs composed in memory of the human lives changed forever by the bombing of the World Trade Center in September 2001. Susanne Mentzer, James Dunham, Craig Rutenberg, and I give these songs to you with a wish to honor the profound love of life, so gentle, but at present ferociously and blindingly evident in every second of our lives.

Susanne privately collected a number of texts which she discovered on her personal journey towards understanding the events of September 11th. We chose the words we present today as a way of bringing out essential emotions. The truths are stark. The words are startling simple, innocent, direct, and bereft of contrivance. In short, they are authentic. They are the only logical response of human beings to the utter shock of sudden death. That there are words at all astounds me. These are the hardest words with which I have ever partnered as a composer. But we four artists trust that our work together can in some small way articulate their weight by letting the words speak for themselves, born up by the music we make.
APPENDIX F

DISCOGRAPHY OF VOCAL WORKS

*All information is available on Libby Larsen’s website www.libbylarsen.com

**Title:** “Ah! Love, But A Day: Songs And Spirituals Of American Women”  
*Cowboy Songs*  
**Performers:** Louise Toppin, soprano; John O’Brien, piano  
**Label:** Albany Records

**Title:** “American Art Song Today Alive”  
*Songs from Letters*  
**Performers:** Anne Marie Church, soprano; Linda Sweetman-Waters, piano  
**Label:** Josara Records

**Title:** “American Dreams: The American Music Sampler, Volume II”  
“I Thought Once How Theocritus Had Sung”  
*Sonnets from the Portugese*  
**Performers:** Arleen Augér, soprano; Members of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra; Joel Revzen, conductor  
**Label:** Koch International

**Title:** “American Songbook: The American Music Collection, Volume III”  
“I Thought Once How Theocritus Had Sung: from Sonnets from the Portugese”  
**Performers:** Arleen Augér, soprano; Members of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra; Joel Revzen, conductor  
**Label:** Koch International

**Title:** “The Art of Arleen Augér”  
*Sonnets from the Portugese*  
**Performers:** Arleen Augér, soprano; St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra Members; Joel Revzen, conductor  
**Label:** Koch International

**Title:** “Be Still My Soul: Selections from American Art Song for the Sacred Service”  
*Missa Gaia: Agnus Dei/Sanctus: How Lovely Are Thy Holy Groves*  
**Performers:** Karen Leigh, mezzo-soprano; David Heller, piano  
**Distributor:** Classical Vocal Reprints

**Title:** “De Toda le Eternidad, Songs of American Women Composers”  
*De Toda La Eternidad*  
*Songs from Letters*  
**Performers:** Bonnie Pomfret, soprano; Laura Gordy, piano  
**Label:** ACA Digital Recording, Inc.
Title: “Emily Dickinson In Song/Dupuy”
Chanting to Paradise: In this Short Life
Performers: Virginia Dupuy, mezzo-soprano; Shields-Collins Bray, piano
Label: Gasparo Records

Title: “The Eternal Feminine”
Love After 1950
Performers: Susanne Mentzer, mezzo-soprano; Craig Rutenberg, piano
Label: Koch International Classics

Title: “Fabulous Femmes: Talma, Boulanger, Larsen Coulthard, Et Al”
Cowboy Songs
Performers: The Athena Trio; Nannette McGuinnes, soprano; Jan Roberts-Haydon, flute; Sylvie Beaudette, piano
Label: Centaur Records

Title: “Grand Larsen-y: Vocal Music of Libby Larsen”
Beloved, Thou Hast Brought Me Many Flowers
Chanting to Paradise
Hell’s Belles
Margaret Songs: Three Songs of Willa Cather
Songs from Letters
“The Color Duet” from Dreaming Blue
Performers: Terry Rhodes, soprano; Ellen Williams, mezzo-soprano; Benton Hess, piano; Steven Reis, cello
Label: Albany Records

Title: “Heartbeats: New Songs from Minnesota for the AIDS Quilt Songbook”
Perineo
Performers: Bradley Greenwald, baritone; Tim Linker, piano
Label: Innova Recordings

Title: “A Journey in Song”
Songs from Letters
Performer: Laury Christie, soprano
Commemorative CD: University of South Carolina School of Music

Title: “Larsen/Hagen/Moravec/Cipullo: New American Song Cycles”
My Antonia
Performers: Paul Sperry, tenor; Margo Garrett, piano
Label: Albany Records

Title: “Libby Larsen”
Songs from Letters
Songs of Light and Love
Performers: Benita Valente, soprano; Joel Revzen, conductor; Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Label: Koch International Classics
Title: “Licorice Stick – Clarinet Chamber Music of Libby Larsen”  
*Songs from Letters*  
**Performers:** Kathleen Roland-Silverstein, soprano; Katerina Strom-Harg, piano; Stefan Harg, clarinet  
**Label:** Rhode-Kil Records

Title: “Love Lies Bleeding: Songs by Libby Larsen”  
*Cowboy Songs*  
*Sonnets from the Portugese*  
*Try Me, Good King: Last Words of the Wives of Henry VIII*  
**Performers:** Eileen Strempel, soprano; Sylvie Beaudette, piano  
**Label:** Centaur Records

Title: “Music From Lucerne: Barab, Bolcom, Larsen, Previn: Chamber Music”  
*Beloved, Thou Hast Brought Me Many Flowers*  
**Performers:** Theresa Treadway Lloyd, mezzo-soprano; Toby Blumenthal, piano; Bert Phillips  
**Label:** Albany Records

Title: “New American Song Cycles/Paul Sperry, Et Al”  
*My Antonia*  
**Performers:** Paul Sperry, tenor; Libby Larsen, piano  
**Label:** Albany Records

Title: “Rich, Edwards, Larsen, and Others”  
*Cowboy Songs*  
**Performers:** Louise Toppin, soprano  
**Label:** Albany Records

Title: “Roosevelt”  
*Eleanor Roosevelt*  
**Performers:** Camerata Singers; Floyd Farmer  
**Label:** New World Records

Title: “A Sampler in Song: Art Songs by Women Composers”  
*Cowboy Songs*  
**Performers:** Judith Cline, soprano; Michael Sitton, piano  
Hollins University

Title: “She Says, Sonya Gabrielle Baker”  
*Mary Cassatt*  
**Performers:** Sonya Gabrielle Baker, soprano; Vicki Berneking, piano; Jeannie Little, trombone  
Murray State University

Title: “Storyteller”  
*Songs from Letters*  
**Performers:** Mary Southworth, soprano; Philip Amalang, piano  
**Label:** CDBY
Title: “Treasures: Little Known Songs by Women Composers”  
*Cowboy Songs*  
**Performers:** Linda Dykstra, soprano; Joan Conway, piano  
**Label:** SPERA Recordings

Title: “The Unique Heart – American Song Cycles”  
*Try Me, Good King: Last Words of the Wives of Henry VIII*  
**Performers:** Karen Smith Emerson, soprano; Arlene Shrut, piano  
**Label:** Albany Records

Title: “Vitality Begins: Lieder by Women Composers”  
*Late In the Day*  
**Performers:** Patricia Stiles, mezzo-soprano; Graham Cox, piano  
**Label:** Cavalli Records

Title: “Women of Note”  
“How Do I Love Thee?” from *Sonnets from the Portugese*  
**Performers:** Arleen Augér, soprano; Members of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra; Joel Revzen, conductor  
**Label:** Koch International

Title: “Woman Spirit: Songs by Libby Larsen”  
*Sonnets from the Portugese*  
*My Antonia*  
*Margaret Songs*  
**Performers:** Ann Tedards, soprano; Marva Duerksen, piano  
**Label:** MSR Classics

Title: “Women’s Voices: Five Centuries of Song”  
*When I Am an Old Woman*  
**Performer:** Neva Pilgrim, soprano  
**Label:** Leonarda
APPENDIX G

LIST OF VOCAL WORKS

*All information is available on Libby Larsen’s website www.libbylarsen.com

**Vocal Works with Orchestra**

COWBOY SONGS – soprano, piano (orchestra); Anonymous, Belle Star, Robert Creeley, texts; 6:45 min; 1979

DE TODA LA ETERNIDAD – soprano, wind ensemble (or piano); Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, text; 15 min; 2003/2005

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT – mezzo-soprano, speaker, SATB chorus, clarinet, violoncello, piano, percussion played by chorus; Sally M. Gall, text; 1996

MARY CASSATT – mezzo-soprano, trombone, orchestra and slides; historical narrative and letters of Mary Cassatt, text; 30 min; 1994

MOABIT SONNETS, THE – two sopranos, tenor, bass and chamber orchestra; Albrecht Haushofer trans. M.D. Herter Norton text; 17 min; 2011

NOTES SLIPPED UNDER THE DOOR – soprano, solo flute, orchestra; Eugenia Zukerman, text; 15 min; 2001

RASPBERRY ISLAND DREAMING – mezzo-soprano, orchestra; Joyce Sutphen, Patricia Hampl, texts; 15 min; 2002

SONGS FROM LETTERS – soprano, piano (or chamber ensemble); Calamity Jane, text; 13 min; 1989

SONGS OF LIGHT AND LOVE – soprano, chamber ensemble; May Sarton, text; 19 min; 1998

THIS UNBEARABLE STILLNESS: SONGS FROM THE BALCONY (ORCHESTRA VERSION) – soprano, percussion I, II, III, celeste, and string orchestra; Dima Hilal, Sekeena Shaben, texts; 17 min; 2008

**Vocal Works for Soprano**


CENTER FIELD GIRL – soprano, piano; Michele Antonello Frisch, text; 3 min; 2007

CHANTING TO PARADISE – soprano, piano; Emily Dickinson, text; 7 min; 1997

COWBOY SONGS – soprano, piano (orchestra); Anonymous, Belle Star, Robert Creeley, texts; 6:45 min; 1979
DE TODA LA ETERNIDAD – soprano, wind ensemble (or piano); Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, text; 15 min; 2003/2005

HOW LOVELY ARE THY HOLY GROVES – (See Missa Gaia: “Agnus Dei/Sanctus”) – soprano solo, piano; Chinook Psalter, text; 1992

LATE IN THE DAY – soprano, piano; Jeanne Shepard, text; 1998

MARGARET SONGS – soprano, piano; Willa Cather, Libby Larsen, texts; 9 min; 1996

ME (BRENDA UELAND) – soprano, piano; Brenda Ueland, text; 37 min; 1987

MOABIT SONNETS, THE – two sopranos, tenor, bass and chamber orchestra; Albrecht Haushofer trans. M.D. Herter Norton text; 17 min; 2011

NOTES SLIPPED UNDER THE DOOR – soprano, solo flute, orchestra; Eugenia Zukerman, text; 15 min; 2001

RIGHTY, 1966 – soprano, flute, piano, Michele Antonello Frisch, text; 2:30 min; 2007

SAINTS WITHOUT TEARS – soprano, flute, bassoon; Phyllis McGinley, text; 12 min; 1976

SELECTED POEMS OF RAINER MARIA RILKE – soprano, flute, guitar, harp; Rainer Maria Rilke, text

SONG – soprano voice; e.e. cummings, text; 2:30 min; 2009

SONGS FROM LETTERS – soprano, piano (or chamber ensemble); Calamity Jane, text; 13 min; 1989

SONGS OF LIGHT AND LOVE – soprano, chamber ensemble; May Sarton, text; 19 min; 1998

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGESE – soprano, chamber ensemble (or piano); Elizabeth Barrett Browning, text; 21 min; 1991

TAKE – soprano, piano; Margaret Atwood, text; 5 min; 2006

THIS UNBEARABLE STILLNESS: SONGS FROM THE BALCONY – soprano, string quartet; Dima Hilal, Sekeena Shaben, texts; 17 min; 2003

THIS UNBEARABLE STILLNESS: SONGS FROM THE BALCONY (ORCHESTRA VERSION) – soprano, percussion I, II, III, celeste, and string orchestra; Dima Hilal, Sekeena Shaben, texts; 17 min; 2008

TRY ME, GOOD KING: LAST WORDS OF THE WIVES OF HENRY VIII – soprano, piano; Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Katherine Howard, Katherine Parr, texts; 15 min; 2000
WHEN I AM AN OLD WOMAN – soprano, piano; Jenny Joseph, text; 3 min; 1990

WITHIN THE CIRCLES OF OUR LIVES – soprano, baritone and wind ensemble; Wendell Berry, text; 5 min; 2007

**Vocal Works for Mezzo-soprano**

BELOVED, THOU HAST BROUGHT ME MANY FLOWERS – mezzo-soprano, cello, piano; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Hilde Doolittle, Rainer Maria Rilke, Percy Bysshe Shelley, texts; 20 min; 1994

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT – mezzo-soprano, speaker, SATB chorus, clarinet, violoncello, piano, percussion played by chorus; Sally M. Gall, text; 1996

HELL’S BELLES – mezzo-soprano, handbell choir; four movements; Talulah Bankhead, Billy Jean King, Gertrude Stein, Nursery Rhyme, texts; 14 min; 2001

LOVE AFTER 1950 – mezzo-soprano, piano; Rita Dove, Julie Kane, Kathryn Daniels, Liz Lochhead, Muriel Rukeyser, texts; 15 min; 2000

MARY CASSATT – mezzo-soprano, trombone, orchestra and slides; historical narrative and letters of Mary Cassatt, text; 30 min; 1994

RASPBERRY ISLAND DREAMING – mezzo-soprano, orchestra; Joyce Sutphen, Patricia Hampl, texts; 15 min; 2002

RASPBERRY ISLAND DREAMING (PIANO/VOCAL) – mezzo-soprano, piano; Joyce Sutphen, Patricia Hampl, texts; 15 min; 2002

SIFTING THROUGH THE RUINS – mezzo-soprano, viola and piano; Hilary North, anon., Alicia Vasquez, Martha Cooper, and Ted Berrigan, texts; 18 min; 2005

**Vocal Works for Tenor**

FAR IN A WESTERN BROOKLAND – tenor, piano; A.E. Housman, text; 2:12 min; 2008

FERN HILL – tenor solo; Dylan Thomas, text; 2004


I CRIED UNTO GOD – tenor, piano; Psalms 77:1, 67, 28:7, text; 4 min; 2011

JAZZ AT THE INTERGALACTIC NIGHTCLUB – tenor, piano; Thomas McGrath, text; 3 min; 2001

LORD, MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT – tenor, piano; St. Francis of Assisi, text; 3 min

MOABIT SONNETS, THE – two sopranos, tenor, bass and chamber orchestra; Albrecht Haushofer trans. M.D. Herter Norton text; 17 min; 2011
MY ANTONIA – high voice, piano; Willa Cather, text; 16:30 min; 2000

PIG IN THE HOUSE, A – tenor, piano; Alvin Greenburg, text; 2004

THREE RILKE SONGS – high voice and guitar; Rainer Maria Rilke, text; 1980

VERSE RECORD OF MY PEONIES, A – tenor, tape, percussion; Masaoka Shiki, text; 7 min; 1980

**Vocal Works for Baritone/Bass**

APPLE’S SONG, THE – baritone, piano; Edwin Morgan, text; 3 min; 2001

BEFORE WINTER – baritone solo, organ; Arthur Mampel, text; 2 min; 1982

CHAIN OF HOPE – SATB choir, baritone, actress, piano; various letters and writings regarding Frederick Douglass; libretto by Libby Larsen, Kathleen Holt and Jeanne Soderberg; 15 min; 2010

I LOVE YOU THROUGH THE DAYTIMES – baritone voice, piano; ancient Egyptian, text; 3 min; 2003

MOABIT SONNETS, THE – two sopranos, tenor, bass and chamber orchestra; Albrecht Haushofer trans. M.D. Herter Norton text; 17 min; 2011

PERINEO – baritone, piano; Roberto Echavarren, text; 5 min; available in “The AIDS Quilt Songbook,” published by Boosey and Hawkes; 1993

QUIET SONG, A – baritone voice, piano; written in memory of Bruce Carlson of the Schubert Club; Brenda Ueland, text; 2 min; 2007

STRANGE CASE OF DR. H.H. HOLMES, THE – baritone, prepared piano; H.H. Holmes, aka Herman Medgett, text; 18 min; 2010

TURN, TURN – baritone, piano; Bethany Ringdal, text; 5 min; 2011

WITHIN THE CIRCLES OF OUR LIVES – soprano, baritone and wind ensemble; Wendell Berry, text; 5 min; 2007

**Vocal Works for Duets**

APPENDIX H

LETTER OF PERMISSION

August 17, 2011

Dear Dr. Larsen,

As you know, I am completing my doctoral dissertation at Louisiana State University entitled “A Performance Guide of Libby Larsen’s Sifting Through the Ruins for Mezzo-soprano, Viola and Piano.” I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the following:

Larsen, Libby, Sifting Through the Ruins, ©2005 by Libby Larsen. Published by Libby Larsen Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including non-exclusive world rights in all languages. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that you own the copyright to the above-described material.

If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Kori Jennings

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE USE ABOVE:

[Signature]
Libby Larsen
Date 08-17-2011
VITA

Mezzo-soprano, Kori Jennings, completed her Bachelor of Music degree at Baldwin-Wallace College – Conservatory in Berea, Ohio, and her Master of Music degree at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. While studying at Louisiana State University, Kori is under the instruction of Robert Grayson.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, her opera performance credits include: The Witch in Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, The Old Baroness in Barber’s *Vanessa*, Berta in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, Gertrude in Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette*, Bianca in Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia*, Baba the Turk (cover) in Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress*, The Mother in Stravinsky’s *Mavra*, Zita in Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi*, Czipra in Strauss’ *The Gypsy Baron*, and The Voice of Antonia’s Mother in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Companies she has appeared with are Opéra Louisiane, Nevada Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, and Undercroft Opera.

Ms. Jennings concert and oratorio experience includes performances of Handel's *Messiah* with The Lake Charles Symphony Orchestra and a performance of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater* with the Louisiana State University Symphony. Other experience includes works by Bach, Mozart, Vivaldi and Vaughan Williams.

A recipient of a Baton Rouge Opera Guild Scholarship, Ms. Jennings has also received a teaching assistantship and doctoral enhancement award from Louisiana State University. Her primary mentors are Robert Grayson, Matt Morgan, Patricia O’Neill and Loraine Sims.