An Introduction to the Songs of Miriam Gideon (B. 1906).

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SONGS
OF MIRIAM GIDEON
(B. 1906)

A Written Document

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in partial fulfillment of the
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in

The School of Music

by
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ABSTRACT

American composer Miriam Gideon (b. 1906) has earned a place as a prominent exponent of American art song through her contribution of high quality works for the genre.

This study deals with ten songs chosen to represent her piano/vocal solo songs which span her compositional life from 1937-1987. Individual studies of each song have been approached from a performer's vantage point, as prepared for a Lecture/Recital.

The songs are: Lockung (1937), Vergiftet sind meine Lieder (1937), She Weeps Over Rahoon (1939), Gone in Good Sooth You Are (SONNETS FROM "FATAL INTERVIEW, 1952), Epitaph for a Wag in Mauchline (EPITAPHS FROM ROBERT BURNS, 1952), Mixco (1957), To Music (1957), Farewell Tablet to Agathocles (SONGS OF VOYAGE, 1961), Bells (1966), and To Thomas Moore (POET TO POET, 1987).

Information and observations presented for each song include: publication data, source of poetry, suggested voice type, harmonic structure, range, tessitura, meter signature/changing meters, expression and tempo indications, dynamic range, length, consideration of specific difficulties of the vocal line, translations of foreign texts or unfamiliar words in English texts, and interpretive suggestions for performance.
Although the earliest songs of Gideon are clearly descendants of the German Lied, her mature works are composed in a unique and individualized style described by the composer as "free atonality."

Conclusions drawn from the study include: (1) textual communication was of utmost importance; (2) although atonal and dissonant, Gideon's mature songs do not lack for lyrical qualities; (3) while Gideon may make extreme demands on the musicianship of singers, she does not make unrealistic demands on the voice; and (4) extremes of dynamic intensity and emotional colors are required for an artistic performance of this repertoire.

A chronological appendix listing all of Gideon's songs that are available with piano accompaniment is included with names and addresses of the publishers.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BIOGRAPHY

In the book Women Composers, Conductors, and Musicians of the Twentieth Century; Selected Biographies, Jane Weiner LePage makes the following statement about American-born composer, Miriam Gideon:

"Miriam Gideon—composer, professor, humanist—has helped to pave the road for the acceptance of women as serious productive artists in the 20th century. Her works based solidly on intrinsic value, musical literacy, and sensitive human potential have projected her artistic capabilities into the mainstream of this century's contemporary music. She is a leader of her contemporaries. She has been judged on merit alone."

Although Miriam Gideon, born 1906, has made a significant contribution to twentieth-century vocal literature, she remains virtually unknown to singers today. In addition to an opera and various choral works requiring vocal soloists, she has composed twenty-one song cycles, many with chamber instrumental accompaniments and several individual songs, most with piano accompaniments.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the reader to the songs of Miriam Gideon. Although several fine articles have been written on a variety of her chamber pieces with voice, little has been written on her songs for voice with piano. This study will specifically consider these songs.
Miriam Gideon was born in Greeley, Colorado on October 23, 1906. Her parents were Abram Gideon, a professor of philosophy and modern languages at Colorado State Teachers College, and Henrietta Shoninger Gideon, a school teacher before her marriage. Although her parents were not schooled in music, Miriam did receive early musical training in the Colorado public schools. She recalled:

"My sister and I were taught solfege from the first grade. We used 'movable doh,' and everybody learned this system until it became automatic, which is the only way it can be useful. This has remained a permanent help to me."

In 1915 the family moved to Chicago, where at age nine, Miriam began to study piano. The next year, 1916, they relocated to New York where she studied piano for three years with Hans Barth at the Music Conservatory in Yonkers. It was during this time that Miriam's uncle, Henry Gideon, an organist-choral director at Temple Israel in Boston, noticed her exceptional musical ability. He took over her musical training in 1921 when Miriam's parents allowed her to move to Boston. She lived with her uncle through high school and college. At the age of nineteen, in 1926, she received a BA from Boston University.

Miriam had always dreamed of being a concert pianist, but eventually her interest turned to composition. She says:

"I recall about the age of nineteen reading a poem by an American poet, whose name I've forgotten."
I set it, and realized that for the first time I had found my own voice as a composer. From that time on, I was 'hooked.'

Upon graduation Miriam returned to New York where she has remained throughout her life. She enrolled at New York University intent upon completing a teacher's license. While a student there, she became acquainted with members of the music faculty and played some of her compositions for them. She states:

"I'll always be grateful to Martin Bernstein, one of the professors. He said, "Why, you're a composer!" That meant a lot to me at the time because he could just as well have said, "Oh, you need an awful lot of study,' or, "What do you mean, you want to compose, you're a woman..."

From 1931-34 Gideon studied with Lazare Saminsky, the Russian-American composer, conductor and author, who was the music director at Temple Emanu-El in New York. She attributes to him "consolidating my previous knowledge and allowing me to discover my own voice as a composer." Saminsky later suggested that Gideon gather additional ideas through study with a new teacher. Both Arnold Schoenberg and Roger Sessions has recently arrived in this country. Gideon recalled:

"Saminsky felt that either Roger Sessions or Arnold Schoenberg would be a good influence on my development. It was a generous gesture on the part of Saminsky. Since I could not decide which composer to study with, he suggested Sessions, since there was every indication that he would remain in New York, whereas Schoenberg might not. (This proved to be correct --Schoenberg left New York about a year later.) Sessions taught very few students privately at that time, preferring to work with a group, in private
studios or at the Dalcroze School. Composers who studied with him during this period included Vivian Fine, David Diamond, Hugo Weisgall, Milton Babbitt, Leon Kirchner, and Edward Cone, among others.

I studied with Sessions for several years. It is difficult to define in specific terms his influence. He gave me a perspective that was all-encompassing."

Gideon studied with Sessions from 1935-43. She traveled to France and Switzerland in 1939, intending an indefinite stay for further study and composition, but the outbreak of World War II forced her to return home.9

In 1942 Gideon entered Columbia University. She studied medieval music and musicology with Eric Herzmann and Paul Henry Lang and received a Master of Arts Degree in Musicology in 1946.10 After many years of teaching and composing, Gideon was granted a Doctorate of Sacred Music in Composition from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1970.11

An active teacher as well as composer, Gideon's teaching career began in 1944 when she joined the faculty of Brooklyn College. During her tenure she met her husband, Frederic Ewen, a faculty member in the English Department. They were married on December 16, 1949. She taught harmony, composition and music history during her ten years at Brooklyn.12

While continuing to teach at Brooklyn College, in 1947 Gideon was appointed to City College, CUNY. She remained there until 1955 teaching harmony, counterpoint,
composition and period courses in music history. Gideon also served as associate professor at the Cantors Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America beginning in 1955. In addition, she joined the faculty of the Manhattan School in 1967. She returned to City College in 1971, achieved the rank of full professor and ultimately was named professor emeritus in 1976.

At the time of this writing Miriam Gideon is living in her Central Park apartment in New York City with the aid of full time caregivers. Her husband Frederic Ewen died in 1988.

Gideon's various awards testify to the quality of her composition.

1948, Ernest Bloch Award for choral work
1969, National Federation of Music Clubs/ASCAP Award for notable contributions to the symphonic literature by an American woman composer
1974, National Endowment for the Arts, grant for orchestral work
1974, election to the Collegium of Distinguished Alumni, Boston University
1975, election to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters
1981, Doctor of Music honoris causa, Jewish Theological Seminary
1983, Doctor of Humane Letters honoris causa, Brooklyn College

Prestigious commissions accepted by Gideon include an Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge commission from the Library of Congress, and those from the Da Capo Chamber Players, New York New Music Ensemble, New York State Music Teachers
Association, Sigma Alpha Iota, and temples in Baltimore, Cleveland, and New York.16

Endnotes


2 Ibid., 118.

3 Ibid., 118-119.

4 Ibid., 119.


7 Rosenberg, 62.

8 Lepage, 120-121.


10 Ibid.

11 Lepage, 121.

12 Petersen, 224.


14 Petersen, 224.

15 Ibid., 249.

16 Lepage, 136; Petersen, 250.
CHAPTER 2

THE SONGS

General Stylistic Trends

Several descriptions of Gideon's musical style have been written since she first came to prominence in the late 1940's. One of the earliest descriptions of her composition was penned by Lazare Saminsky, Gideon's former teacher. In 1949 he wrote:

"Clear trails of a radical tonal mind showed in even the earliest works of Miriam Gideon...Yet even then the youthful grimness of harmonic facade could not hide an engaging emotional essence wedded to a fine musical thinking. To be sure, a young composer's love for halftones of harmony and all the polytonal bumps of the period are there."¹

Nearly a decade later, in his 1958 article "The Music of Miriam Gideon," George Perle described the texture of Gideon's works as "strikingly personal, characterized by lightness, the sudden exposure of individual notes, constantly shifting octave relationships."² Of her compositional technique he wrote:

"A melodic or harmonic idea will recur with one or more individual elements inflected by a semitone, a shade of difference that may or may not have a large structural meaning but that imbues her music with a kind of personal, reflective quality, almost as though the composer's search for the ideal formulation of her thought had become part of the composition itself."

In the 1960 book A History of Song, Hans Nathan in his chapter entitled "United States of America," wrote
this about Gideon's songs:

"The vocal line materializes through short, restless phrases that rise a little and quickly return to their starting point. Thus motion is often hesitant, and when it is just about to expand, it is usually checked. If there is a trend towards fragmentation of the line, it is never carried to extremes since the separate phrases borrow tones, even whole passages, from each other. In this way coherence and even emphasis is attained...What gives life to the line perhaps more than anything else is the system of irregular, sensitive stresses obtained through longer note values amidst very brief ones and the placement of the notes within a constantly changing metre."\(^4\)

Composer-musicologist Albert Weisser in 1970 stated, "Her characteristic works display those rare qualities of incisiveness, intimacy, pungent tonal diction, and a remarkable wide emotional range."\(^5\)

In 1981 EAR Magazine printed an article by Tui St. George Tucker entitled "Miriam Gideon." The author stated: This music is the opposite of aleatoric. Although full of the extreme dissonance and augmented-diminished intervals of early modernism, it's very harmonious. One feels listeners would leap from their seats at a wrong tone."\(^6\)


"Gideon's personal musical style is essentially expressionistic with a pleasing balance of dramatic and lyrical elements. Her works are immediately engaging but not without strong elements of dissonance and chromaticism. Economy of musical materials and clarity of design also characterize her music..."/

"Gideon balances a musicianly and thoughtful intelligence with a warm, poetic, feminine expression. Although her idiom is atonal and rather dissonant, she writes lyrically for the voice. Her textures are spare and clear, often contrapuntal."

Lester Trimble, in the 1994 edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* offers this assessment:

"She does not use any precompositional system but allows each work to suggest its own language and design. Her idiom may be described as freely atonal, with wide dissonant leaps in the melodic lines and an intense harmonic underpinning."

Equally illuminating and from a personal perspective are comments by Gideon quoted in published articles about her work.

From 1949:

"I cannot subscribe to a row or any such predetermined structure, believing that the world which the composer creates must come from an inner necessity which becomes restricted by any such facilitation or formulation."

From 1955:

"Composing to me is the discovery of the unique and the inevitable as against the uncharacteristic and the accidental...Each work I write seems to take shape gradually from almost utter darkness, from which no paths to my own tradition or that of others are discernible; the completed work, though, does not seem strange - it usually finds its place in the continuity of my own writing and in the streams of influences to which I have been most susceptible..."

From 1976:

"About the only technical term that serves me when I want to talk about my music is 'free atonality.'...I must see whether what I am writing comes from a
musical impulse, and whether I am responding to it...What I write has to mean something to me. It has to seem new. I have to be...surprised by it, and it must register as feeling."

While Gideon preferred not to be thought of as either a woman composer or a Jewish composer, she offered this response in 1981 to a questionnaire about discrimination against "women composers":

"I strongly believe that a woman composer can have something very special to say, in that there is a very particular woman's way of responding to the world—and this is in some basic way quite different and yet no less important than a man's. I would emphasize that it has nothing to do with professional standards or aesthetic criteria. Trying to be more specific, I might venture the idea that women are freer and more generous about expressing emotion than men (wow!) and this often seems to carry over into their music. They seem (again, often) unwilling to settle for systems or schemes unless guided by a strong emotional impulse. (Maybe I'm just thinking about myself.)"

Representative Songs of Miriam Gideon

The following ten songs of Miriam Gideon have been chosen to represent her piano/vocal songs which span her compositional life from 1937-1987. Individual studies of each song will be approached from a performer's vantage point, as prepared for a Lecture/Recital.

Information and observations presented for each song will include: publication data, source of poetry, suggested voice type, harmonic structure, range, tessitura, meter signature/changing meters, expression and tempo
indications, dynamic range, length, consideration of specific difficulties of the vocal line, translations of foreign texts or unfamiliar words in English texts, and interpretive suggestions for performance. For the purpose of labeling pitches for range and tessitura the system used labels middle C as C4.

TITLE: Lockung
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1937
SOURCE OF POETRY: Joseph Eichendorff

"Hörst du nicht die Bäume rauschen"

VOICE TYPE: High voice

HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Tonal. A key signature of three sharps is given. In an ABA\(^1\) form, the song begins in F\# minor, moves through a middle section with shifting tonalities and returns to F\# minor ending on an F\# major chord.

RANGE: C#4–G#5

TESSITURA: F#4–E5

METER SIGNATURE: 4/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: Allegro

DYNAMIC RANGE: pp–f

LENGTH: 39 measures, 1 minute and 20 seconds
VOCAL LINE:

The melodic line is primarily conjunct with occasional wide leaps for dramatic emphasis. Rhythmic patterns are simple and repetitious. The text setting is syllabic and declamatory.

TRANSLATION: by Miriam Gideon

Don't you hear the rustling of the trees
Outside in the quiet?
Are you not tempted to listen
From the balcony to below,
Where the many brooks flow,
Wonderful in the moonlight,
And the silent castles gaze
Into the river from the high promontory.
Do you still recognize the wild songs,
From the beautiful times of yore?
They all awaken
At night in the solitude of the woods.
When the trees listen, dreaming,
And the scent of the lilac lies heavy,
And in the river the water-nymphs are playing,
Come down here, it is so cool.
Come down here, it is so cool.

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

Although the melodic material might work at a slower tempo, examination of the text reveals that Gideon's indicated 'Allegro' should be observed. A suggested, but flexible, tempo should be in the range of \( \text{tenuto} = 132-140 \), allowing for the use of rubato. Especially recommended is a slight pulling back on the tempo at the ends of phrases as well as at the marked ritards. Each time the main melodic theme returns, the singer should carefully observe the 'a tempo'.
The busy accompaniment patterns provide a feeling of forward motion and impatient energy, reflective of the rustling trees and flowing brooks which are interrupting the quiet night.

A wide dynamic range is required in the performance of this song. The piano and pianissimo sections must be thought of as similar to a stage whisper, soft vowel sounds but with strong, crisp consonants.

The repeated ending phrase; "Komm herab, Hier ist's so kühl", should reflect "Lockung" (enticement).

TITLE: Vergiftet sind meine Lieder
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1937
SOURCE OF POETRY: Heinrich Heine
"Vergiftet sind meine Lieder"
VOICE TYPE: High voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Shifting tonalities. A key signature of one flat is given. Highly chromatic.
RANGE: G4-F#5
TESSITURA: E4-F#5
METER SIGNATURE: 3/4
EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: Andante
DYNAMIC RANGE: p-f
LENGTH: 23 measures, 1 minute and 20 seconds
VOCAL LINE:

The melodic line is fragmented and primarily conjunct. The rhythmic vocabulary is simple. The text setting is syllabic and dramatic.

TRANSLATION: by Miriam Gideon

Poisoned are my songs;
How could it be otherwise?
Since you have poured poison
Into my blossoming life.
Poisoned are my songs;
How could it be otherwise?
I carry in my heart many serpents,
And you, my beloved!

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

This is a powerful text, teaming with emotion. The singer is required to demonstrate considerable dramatic intensity. An exact repetition of the text and music from the opening phrase begins in measure 11. The repetition might suggest contrasting the hurt and disbelief of the opening statement with bitterness and hatred in the restatement. Emotional intensity should be maintained throughout the climactic ending of the vocal line to the final chord in the accompaniment.

TITLE: She Weeps Over Rahoon

DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1939

SOURCE OF POETRY: James Joyce

"Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling"
This poem "She weeps over Rahoon" was one of thirteen poems published under the title *Pomes Penyeach* in 1927.17

**VOICE TYPE:** High voice

**HARMONIC STRUCTURE:** Tonal. A key signature of one sharp is given. Begins and ends in E minor. Highly chromatic with shifting tonalities.

**RANGE:** D4–A5

**TESSITURA:** F#4–F#5

**METER SIGNATURE:** 4/4

**EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS:** Moderato

**DYNAMIC RANGE:** p–f

**LENGTH:** 29 measures, 1 minute and 40 seconds

**VOCAL LINE:**

In the first section, measures 1–10, the melodic line is conjunct with occasional wide leaps for dramatic emphasis. The middle section, which is delineated by a shift in the accompaniment triplet pattern to rolled block chords, is highly chromatic and much more disjunct. At the return of the triplet figure in the accompaniment, the line again becomes conjunct, while establishing a higher tessitura. The vocal line and accompaniment feature a recurring two against three rhythmic pattern.

The text setting, like the previous songs, is syllabic. Although, unlike the earlier songs, most
phrases contain at least one example of single syllables being set with two notes.

A wide dynamic range and considerable dramatic intensity is needed.

TRANSLATION: English text

Rahoon is the sight of a cemetery in Galway, Ireland.

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

\[ \textbf{J} = 112 \] is suggested as a good tempo for the marked 'moderato'. Gideon has given excellent suggestions for dynamics in this piece and careful observation of them will help immensely in an artistic interpretation of the text.

This song is divided into three main sections each with a different character. Measures 1-10 should be kept soft and legato and should be sung in a simple, declamatory style without unnecessary sentimentality. The middle section, measures 11-17, requires more voice and dramatic intensity. It should be always legato and the desired effect of the 'piano' in measure 14 would be described as echo-like.

Pulling back the tempo in measure 17, allows a smooth transition to the third section, measures 18 to the end.

Careful pacing of dynamic and dramatic intensity is necessary to facilitate a constant building of
tension to the climax on A5 in measure 26. The final three measures, with diminuendo and poco ritard, should reflect the emptiness and loss felt after this emotional outburst.

TITLE: Gone in good sooth you are (SONNETS FROM "FATAL INTERVIEW)

DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1952

SOURCE OF POETRY: Edna St. Vincent Millay

"Gone in Good Sooth you are; not even in dream"

This poem is one of a set of fifty-two sonnets published in 1931 entitled Fatal Interview Sonnets.

VOICE TYPE: High voice

HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.

RANGE: Eb4-Gb5

TESSITURA: E4-E5

METER SIGNATURE: Changing meters.


EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: distant ♩ = 92

DYNAMIC RANGE: pp-f

LENGTH: 41 measures, 2 minutes and 10 seconds

VOCAL LINE:

The difficulty level is significantly greater in this selection than in previous pieces. Gideon has entered into her "free atonality" style. The
melodic line is primarily conjunct with a few wide leaps for dramatic interest.

All twelve tones have been used in the vocal line by measure 8, but unlike usual twelve tone systems some notes have been used only once and others have been repeated. Despite this abandonment of tonality the melodic material is appealing and lyrical. Pitches are often prepared in the accompaniment or sounded simultaneously with the voice.

Changing meters throughout necessitate internalizing a steady eighth note pulse. Subdivisions smaller than sixteenth notes do not appear, however, there is often a shift to a quarter note beat which is subdivided as a triplet. These seemingly random rhythmic shifts are Gideon's way of attempting to match natural speech patterns.

The text setting is primarily syllabic with only rare instances of a single syllable being set with two or three notes.

TRANSLATION: English text

One uncommon word is 'sooth' which is an archaic noun meaning reality or truth.

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

This is the first piece examined in this study that has a metronomic tempo marking, \( \text{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}} \text{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}} \text{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}} = 92 \). Reading the text aloud, in rhythm at a slightly faster tempo,
will reveal a masterful setting that captures natural speech patterns to a remarkable degree.

Also new in this piece is an instruction from Gideon as to the character of the music. She has used the word 'distantly'. Adopting a feeling of separation or aloofness helps to achieve the desired effect.

Investing more emotion at the 'poco crescendo' in measures 11-12 will bring needed energy and intensity to the end of section one at measure 20.

With the return to 'piano' and 'a tempo' in measure 21 comes one of the most lyric gestures in the song. It is a sweeping and rhapsodic melody until the 'subito piano' in measure 29 at which point everything comes to a halt. From here to the end, the feeling of quiet resignation and painful loss is revealed to be anything but distant.

TITLE: Epitaph for a Wag in Mauchline (EPITAPHS FROM ROBERT BURNS)

DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1952

SOURCE OF POETRY: Robert Burns

"Lament him Mauchline husbands a'"

This poem, dated 1786, was originally entitled "Epitaph on a Wag in Mauchline". The "wag" is
James Smith, a young friend who was one of the "Court of Equity", a secret bachelors' group who met on an irregular basis at the Whitefoord Arms Inn in Mauchline.

Reportedly, two of the four members were responsible for the pregnancies of several local unmarried girls. The purpose of their meetings was to "search out, report and discuss the merits and demerits of the many scandals that crop up from time to time in the village", and to determine fitting punishments. 21

VOICE TYPE: High voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.
RANGE: D4-Ab5
TESSITURA: D4-Eb5
METER SIGNATURE: 4/4
EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: boldly \( \text{\textbullet} = \text{ca 100} \)
DYNAMIC RANGE: pp-f
LENGTH: 17 measures, 1 minute

VOCAL LINE:

The melodic line is disjunct and very difficult. Although this piece is atonal, the pitch 'D' seems to be a pivot tone. In fact, if one excludes the pick up to the first measure, the piece begins and ends with an octave on 'D'. The ability to recall this pitch throughout the song is crucial.
Rhythmically there is nothing difficult in this song and the text setting is predominantly syllabic and declamatory.

TRANSLATION:
"Mauchline" - a village in Scotland
"a'" - all
"awa'" - away
"bairns" - children

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

Lest it be thought that Miriam Gideon set only serious or dramatic texts, here is a wonderful example of her choice of humorous material.

Gideon's primary instructions to the singer include the markings 'boldly' at \( \frac{5}{4} \) = ca 100. This tempo marking seems better suited to the 'slower' section at the end of the song. But it is too slow for the beginning. A better tempo to accomplish a 'bold', energized performance here would be in the range of \( \frac{5}{4} \) = 112-120.

The forte section, measures 1-8, should be strong, perhaps even bawdy. The 'subito piano' in measure 8 should be attempted despite the high tessitura and a change in tone color is recommended as the singer is now addressing children. A quality that would be described as "sweet" or "tender" might be appropriate.
The final measures, 13-17, serve as the punch line and should be treated gently with humor.

TITLE: Mixco
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1957
SOURCE OF POETRY: Miguel Angel Asturias

"The Indians descend from Mixco" is the English translation included in song text by Miriam Gideon. The original work is "Los indios bajan de Mixco" from a collection of poetry written by Asturias from 1918-1949 entitled Sien de alondra, (Temple of the Lark), 1949. 22

VOICE TYPE: High voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.
RANGE: C#4-G#5
TESSITURA: F4-E5
METER SIGNATURE: Changing meters.

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS:
    con moto, ritmico \( \text{♩} = 138, \text{♩♩} = 1 \)
    poco piu animato, ma tranquillo \( \text{♩♩} = \text{♩} \)
    scherzando
    molto legato
    poco piu animato, ma sostenuto
    meno mosso, molto legato
This selection, which is more than twice the length of any previous song in this study, is very difficult, both melodically and rhythmically. Constantly changing meters and shifts of pulse as well as beat unit are further complicated by an interweaving of the vocal line with a complex and independent accompaniment.

This was the first time that Gideon used a bilingual text setting, which she repeated many times later. The original four stanza Spanish text is augmented by the setting of an English translation of each stanza, which precedes the Spanish verse. This through composed song has eight sections, or four sections "coupled" by the texts. The English and Spanish versions of each stanza, while characteristically similar, are differentiated by the changing flow of the two languages.

The text setting for both languages is primarily syllabic. One new element, which has not appeared in any of the earlier songs in this study, is the
use of a melismatic gesture which is used as a text painting device. Gideon has used this twice in each language. In the first stanza it appears on the word "trembling" in English and its Spanish equivalent "asustadas" and in the forth stanza on the words "silken" and "seda".

TRANSLATION:

Since the English translation by Miriam Gideon is used as well as the original Spanish as the text for the song, it is not included separately here.

"'Mixco' is presumably Mixco (or Mixcu) Viejo, an ancient Maya Settlement in the Southern highlands of Guatemala."23

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

The musical complexity of this piece makes an artistic performance extremely challenging. Strong concentration is required to merely achieve an accurate performance of the notes on the page. Only a strong musician should undertake this piece.

Thankfully, Gideon has given so many instructions, listed above under the heading "Expression and Tempo Indications", that a wonderfully clear blueprint is there to guide the performance. This is such a finely crafted piece, that careful observation of these instructions from the composer, in
combination with thoughtful expression of the text, will yield a powerful performance.

TITLE: To Music
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1957
SOURCE OF POETRY: Robert Herrick
"Charm me asleep, and melt me so"
VOICE TYPE: High voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.
RANGE: C#4-Ab5
TESSITURA: F#4-F#5
METER SIGNATURE: Changing meters.
6/8 12/16 4/8 9/16 14/16 13/16 10/8 10/16
EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS:
dolce ma un poco agitato \(\text{\textscript{\textbullet}}\) =116
un poco cedendo, sempre p
poco meno mosso
somewhat freely
DYNAMIC RANGE: pp-f
LENGTH: 64 measures, 4 minutes
VOCAL LINE:
As with Mixco, this song is not suited to a singer who is a weak musician. The vocal line is very difficult with extreme rhythmic complexity. Rapidly
changing meters, many of which are atypical as listed above under the heading "Meter Signature", were used. In addition, Gideon has notated sixteenth note groupings above all measures beginning at the 'tempo 2' in measure 20 and continuing to the end. One example to demonstrate the type of rhythmic shifting that occurs throughout the song is the following taken from measures 50-55:

\[
\begin{align*}
9/16 &= (5+4) \\
11/16 &= (4+2+5) \\
12/16 &= (4+3+4+1) \\
10/8 &= (4+4+4+4) \\
11/16 &= (3+3+4+1) \\
12/16 &= (2+3+2+3+2)
\end{align*}
\]

The text setting is primarily syllabic with an occasional melismatic gesture for emphasis.

TRANSLATION: English text

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

Contemplation of the title "To Music," gives an indication of the depth of emotion needed as the singer is asked to express with words what is often inexpressible.

Gideon has left little to chance, by writing many instructions for the performer. Reading this poem aloud is an invaluable tool for finding the "right" stresses and inflections of the text as the performance is prepared.

A broad range of dramatic and dynamic intensity is required for an artistic performance of this song. In the opening section, measures 8-19, marked 'sempre
piano', the feeling is serene and restful as the singer suggests that music can "charm" one to sleep.

The next section, measures 20-29, grows more restless, even frantic, as the singer now asks music to heal sickness of the body and mind. From measures 30-34 music is seen as the power working to answer this cry for help.

The section from measures 35-39 takes on a sad quality of pleading for happiness. After a brief piano interlude, measures 40-46, the next section, measures 47-52, is reminiscent of the opening section, full of quiet wonder.

The vocal line from measure 53 to the end should continuously build in intensity as the singer embraces music to ease the pain of this life and to break the bonds of this world. This is not a time to be subtle, invest much in genuine emotion and draw the audience into this powerful text.

TITLE: Farewell Tablet to Agathocles (SONGS OF VOYAGE)
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1961
SOURCE OF POETRY: Florence Wilkinson
"Naked and brave thou goest, without one glance behind!"
VOICE TYPE: High voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.

RANGE: E4-A5

TESSITURA: F4-F5

METER SIGNATURE: Changing meters.

13/16 7/8

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS:

andantino \( \frac{3}{16} = 116 \)
distantly
dolce
nostalgically
tenderly
agitato
rubato
molto espressivo ed allargando
calando

DYNAMIC RANGE: ppp-f

LENGTH: 59 measures, 2 minutes and 20 seconds

VOCAL LINE:

The melodic line is primarily conjunct with occasional wide leaps for emphasis. The rhythmic material is complex, although much less so that the previous two songs. The text setting is primarily syllabic and declamatory.

TRANSLATION: English text
INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

Gideon has provided many instructions to the performer. Unlike the earlier songs in this study, in which her markings dealt primarily with tangible things such as tempo and articulatory style, some of these markings demand an emotional response, i.e. 'nostalgically', 'tenderly', and 'distantly'.

After a three measure flowing, legato introduction there is an abrupt change of character in the music as the voice enters. Here the melodic line is fragmented and halting. A marked articulation is suggested. At measure 13 a much more legato line is recommended until measure 31.

The extended piano interlude is uncharacteristic as compared to other songs in this study. It reflects influences of the many instrumental chamber works she had composed by this point in her career, especially her skill with instrumental interludes. Careful attention to filling this time with thoughtful expression is crucial.

When the voice re-enters at measure 43, the singer must be ready for rapid emotional shifts, i.e. tender, to agitated, to horrified. Then a two bar piano interlude is used to return to the calm and quiet "farewell".
TITLE: Bells
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1966
SOURCE OF POETRY: William Jones
"When Abraham Lincoln was born no bells were rung"

VOICE TYPE: Low voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.
RANGE: A3-B4
TESSITURA: C4-G4

3/4 4/4 2/4

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS: moderato $\frac{\dot{}}{\dot{}} = 66$
sempre p

DYNAMIC RANGE: p-f

LENGTH: 23 measures, 1 minute

VOCAL LINE:
The melodic line is simple, using generally stepwise motion. Rhythmic materials are also simple.
The text setting is predominantly syllabic with the exception of a melismatic gesture for text painting of the word "weeping". The tessitura is low and the range is limited. Entrance pitches are generally provided in the accompaniment preceding the singer's entrance.

TRANSLATION: English text
INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

This is a reflective setting of a text that might, arguably, be considered weak in comparison to the others which have been examined in this study. However, the music is complementary to the text. A simple, straightforward presentation is suggested. Avoidance of excess sentimentality and careful attention to dynamic markings is recommended.

TITLE: To Thomas Moore (POET TO POET)
DATE OF COMPOSITION: 1987
SOURCE OF POETRY: George Gordon, Lord Byron
"What are you doing now, Oh Thomas Moore?"
Moore and Byron were known to be close friends.
Indeed, Moore eventually wrote a biography of Byron.²⁴

VOICE TYPE: High voice
HARMONIC STRUCTURE: Atonal. No key signature is given.
RANGE: E₄-A₅
TESSITURA: A#₄-G₅
METER SIGNATURE: Changing meters.
3/₄ 2/₄ 9/₈ 6/₈ 5/₈

EXPRESSION AND TEMPO INDICATIONS:
In sprightly fashion \( \text{♩} = 72 \), \( \text{♩}= \) liltingly
deliberately

playfully

DYNAMIC RANGE: pp-mf

LENGTH: 26 measures, 1 minute and 20 seconds

VOCAL LINE:

The melodic line is slightly disjunct, yet there are some tuneful moments in this song. Although there are changing meters, the rhythms in this song are not terribly complex. The text setting is primarily syllabic with only two examples of melismatic gestures for emphasis.

TRANSLATION: English text

INTERPRETIVE SUGGESTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE:

Gideon's musical setting captures this lighthearted, playful text. It should be a fun piece for the performer and the audience.

Using contrasting articulation to delineate the four sections is recommended. Measures 4–9 should be sung in an energetically marked style, followed by measures 10–13 in a liltingly legato style. This same scheme may then be repeated in verse two.
Summary and Conclusions

Although the earliest songs of Miriam Gideon are clearly descendants of the German Lied, her mature works are composed in a unique and individualized style described by the composer as "free atonality." Gideon has remained true to this style throughout her career.

Textual communication was of utmost importance to Gideon. She repeatedly uses whatever manipulation of meter necessary to imitate natural speech patterns. Her text settings are overwhelmingly syllabic with the primary deviation from this standard being the occasional use of a melismatic gesture as a text painting device. Her many expressive markings describing the desired emotional projection of the text are extremely effective when incorporated in performance. The organization of formal musical sections is primarily derived from the structure of the texts.

Although Gideon's mature songs are atonal and dissonant they do not lack for lyrical qualities which are found in vocal lines that use, primarily, small intervals. Wide leaps are generally reserved for particular dramatic effects. Despite the abandonment of tonality, there are many melodic gestures that are pleasing to the ear.
Songs by the composer are available for every voice type with varying degrees of difficulty. Although nine of the ten songs chosen for this study were for high voice, many of these and others are available in alternative versions for different vocal ranges. In some of the more complex selections, Gideon makes extreme demands on the musicianship of singers particularly in the area of rhythmic complexity. Gideon is, however, generally sensitive to including helpful pitches for the singer somewhere in the accompaniment. She does not make unrealistic demands on the voice, reserving extremes of range for dramatic emphasis.

Extremes of dynamic intensity and emotional colors are required for an artistic performance of this repertoire. It is characteristic for Gideon to utilize a dynamic range from pianissimo to forte, while calling upon the singer to invest a broad range of contrasting emotional energy within a single song.

Composer Miriam Gideon has earned a place as a prominent exponent of American art song through her contribution of high quality works for the genre. It is hoped that this study will serve not only as an introduction to the songs of Miriam Gideon but that it may inspire singers to include this body of work in recital programing.
Endnotes


3 Ibid., 2.


13 Petersen, 225.

14 "In Response," *Perspectives of New Music* 20 (Fall-Winter 1981, Spring-Summer 1982): 301.

16 Ibid.


18 Ibid.


23 Ibid., 33.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


"In Response." Perspectives of New Music 20 (Fall-Winter 1981, Spring-Summer 1982): 301.


### APPENDIX

A Chronological listing of Songs for Voice and Piano

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE/POET</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VOICE TYPE</th>
<th>RANGE</th>
<th>TESSITURA</th>
<th>PUBLISHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German Songs (A collection of early songs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium-High voice</td>
<td>B3-G5</td>
<td>D4-E5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Also available for Low voice)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einsamkeit (N. Lenau), 1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>C#4-G#5</td>
<td>E#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leise zieht durch mein Gemut (H. Heine), 1930</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>E4-F#5</td>
<td>G4-E#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abendlied (M. Claudius), 1937</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>D4-A5</td>
<td>F#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ach du, um die Blumen sich verliebt (J. Lenz), 1937</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>E4-Bb5</td>
<td>F#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockung (J. Eichendorff), 1937</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>D4-A5</td>
<td>F#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergiftet sind meine Lieder (H. Heine), 1937</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>E4-F#5</td>
<td>G4-E#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockung (see above—single available for High voice)</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>C#4-G#5</td>
<td>E#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vergiftet Sind Meine Lieder (single available for High)</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>E4-F#5</td>
<td>G4-E#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She Weeps Over Rahoon (James Joyce), 1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>D4-A5</td>
<td>F#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Too-Late Born (Archibald MacLeish), 1939</td>
<td></td>
<td>High voice</td>
<td>E4-Bb5</td>
<td>F#4-F#5</td>
<td>ACA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sonnets from "Fatal Interview" (Millay), 1952

High voice  \[ D#4-Ab5 \quad E4-E5 \]

(Also available for voice, string trio)

"Gone in good sooth you are"
"Night is my sister"
"Moon, that against the lintel of the west"

Gone in good sooth you are (see above—single) Galaxy
in American Artsong Anthology, ed. John Belisle

Epitaphs from Robert Burns (Burns), 1952

High voice  \[ C#4-A5 \quad Eb4-E5 \]

(Also available for Low and Medium voices)

Epitaph for a Wag in Mauchline
Epitaph on Wee Johnie
Epitaph on the Author
Monody on a Lady Famed for Her Caprice

Mixco (Miguel Angel Asturias), 1957

High voice  \[ C#4-G#5 \quad F4-E5 \]

(Also available for Low and Medium voices)

To Music (Robert Herrick), 1957

High voice  \[ C#4-Ab5 \quad F#4-F#5 \]

(Also available for Low and Medium voices)
Songs of Voyage, 1961
High voice
D4-A5  F4-F5
(Also available for Low voice)
Farewell Tablet to Agathocles (Florence Wilkinson)
The Nightingale Unheard (Josephine Preston Peabody)

Bells (William Jones), 1966
Low voice
A3-B4  C4-G4

The Seasons of Time, 1969
(ancient Japanese Tanka Poetry)
Medium-High voice
D#4-A5  F4-F5
(Also available for voice, flute, cello, celesta/piano)
Now it is spring
The wild geese returning
Can it be that there is no moon
Gossip grows like trees
In the leafy treetops
A passing shower
I have always known
To what shall I compare this world?
Yonder in the plum-tree

Ayelet Hashakhar (Morning Star), 1980
Medium voice
D4-F#5 F#4-Eb5
Kān Latsipor (The Nest) (Ch. N. Bialik)
Rogez (The Cat is Angry) (Miriam Yalan-Stekelis)
Ayelet-hashakhar (Morning Star) (Leah Goldberg)
Nād, Nād (See-Saw) (Ch. N. Bialik)
A Woman of Valor (Eishet Chayil), 1981

Medium voice  D#4-A5  F4-E5

Psalm 127 (Hebrew texts)
Proverbs 31
Psalm 128

Wing'd Hour, 1983

High voice  E4-Ab5  E4-E5

(Also available for voice, flute, oboe, vibraphone, violin, cello)

Prelude (instrumental only)
Silent Noon (D. G. Rossetti)
My heart is like a singing bird (C. Rossetti)
Interlude (instrumental only)
Autumn (W. de la Mare)

Poet to Poet, 1987

High voice  E4-Bb5  F#4-E5

An Ode for Ben Jonson (Robert Herrick)
To Thomas Moore (George Gordon, Lord Byron)
Ave Atque Vale: In Memory of Charles Baudelaire (Algernon Charles Swinburne)

Publishers

ACA - American Composers Alliance
170 West 74th Street
New York, NY 10023

Boston - The Boston Music Company
172 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02111

Galaxy - Galaxy Music Corporation
131 West 86th Street
New York, NY 10024

Peters - C. F. Peters Corporation
373 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016
Winnie Loraine Murphy was born in Langdale, Alabama, on November 18, 1956. She and her family, her parents, Winnie and Milton, and siblings, Millie, Joe and Erica, lived in various communities in Alabama, Ohio and Kentucky during her childhood, moving frequently until 1970 when the family settled in Oklahoma, where she graduated from Dickson High School in 1974.

Completing a Bachelor of Arts in Education (Music Education) in 1978 at Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, Oklahoma, she then attended Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, and she received a Masters of Education (Music-Vocal Performance) in 1981. Married for several years, she took the name Sims. She moved to Poteau, Oklahoma, and then Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she taught voice privately until 1990.

For the next two years she received an appointment to Southeastern Oklahoma State University as Instructor of Voice and Director of Opera Theatre. In 1992 she entered the doctoral program at Louisiana State University, where, as a teaching assistant, she taught voice, Italian diction and voice class.

Since 1994 she has been an adjunct faculty member at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana, as Instructor of Voice. Graduating in May of 1996 with
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In addition to her academic career, Ms. Sims continues to enjoy an active performing career. She has appeared with Tulsa Opera and Baton Rouge Opera companies as well as being a featured soprano soloist for numerous organizations and symphonic groups in Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate:  W. Loraine Sims

Major Field:  Music

Title of Dissertation:  An Introduction to the Songs of Miriam Gideon

Approved:

[Signature]

Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Pat H. McConnell

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[Signature]

Date of Examination:

March 8, 1996