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A Performer's Guide to Joelle Wallach's A Revisitation of Myth

Lauren Brown

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO JOELLE WALLACH'S
A REVISITATION OF MYTH

A Dissertation

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
Lauren May Brown
B.M., Simpson College, 2008
M.M., Louisiana State University, 2010
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF EXAMPLES	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER 1. JOELLE WALLACH’S LIFE AND WORKS	1
Biographical Information.....	1
CHAPTER 2. THE POETS	7
Religious Ideology	7
Luann Keener Biographical Information	10
Muriel Rukeyser Biographical Information	11
Denise Levertov Biographical Information	13
Delmore Schwartz Biographical Information	15
CHAPTER 3. “EXTENDED TONALITY IS PERSUASIVE . . .”	18
CHAPTER 4. A PERFORMER’S GUIDE TO JOELLE WALLACH’S <i>A REVISITATION OF MYTH</i> : .	24
Basic Characteristics of <i>Icarus Swims</i>	24
Basic Characteristics of <i>Ms Lot</i>	30
Basic Characteristics of <i>Hymn to Eros</i>	35
Basic Characteristics of <i>Abraham and Orpheus</i>	39
CONCLUSION.....	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	47
APPENDIX A. LIST OF PUBLISHED SOLO SONGS FROM JOELLE WALLACH’S WEBSITE.....	49
APPENDIX B. SKYPE INTERVIEW WITH JOELLE WALLACH.....	51
VITA.....	58

LIST OF EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: <i>ICARUS' ATTEMPTED FLIGHT</i> , MM. 1-2.....	27
EXAMPLE 2: <i>ICARUS' FLIGHT/SWIMS</i> , MM. 2-4.....	28
EXAMPLE 3: <i>ICARUS' FLIGHT/SWIMS EXTENDED</i> , MM. 4-7	28
EXAMPLE 4: <i>MS LOT</i> , MM. 1-2.....	33
EXAMPLE 5: <i>THE TANTRUM</i> , MM. 9-10.....	34
EXAMPLE 6: <i>HYMN TO EROS</i> , MM. 8-9.....	38
EXAMPLE 7: <i>HYMN TO EROS EXTENDED</i> , MM. 9-10	38
EXAMPLE 8: <i>ICARUS' ATTEMPTED FLIGHT REVISITED</i> , MM. 31-33.....	39
EXAMPLE 9: <i>ABRAHAM</i> , MM. 1-3.....	43

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this document is to serve as a performance guide to Joelle Wallach's *A Revisitation of Myth*, a song cycle containing four songs scored for viola, piano and medium voice. Discussed within this guide will be important characteristics found in the songs, overview and analysis of each song, as well as performance recommendations. According to Wallach, this cycle has never been successfully performed to completion.

This document will include biographical information about the composer, Joelle Wallach, as well as commentary about the four poets, Luann Keener, Muriel Rukeyser, Denise Levertov, and Delmore Schwartz, whose texts are set in this cycle. Appendices include: a complete list of vocal works by Joelle Wallach and a transcript of a Skype interview with Wallach.

CHAPTER 1

JOELLE WALLACH'S LIFE AND WORKS

Biographical Information

Joelle Wallach was born in New York City, where she currently resides, on June 29, 1946. At an early age, she became acquainted with other cultures, and was encouraged to branch out from the societal norm and become her own individual; characteristically, spiritually, and musically. For five years of her early childhood, Joelle and her family lived in Morocco. She believes that those five years were transformative and taught her to look at all perspectives while composing. While no specific work was intentionally derived from her exposure to the culture of Morocco, she maintains that she is always aware of that period when composing. Because *A Revisitation of Myth* is a look at new perspectives, Wallach says that in that aspect, this set could be viewed as being influenced by her Moroccan upbringing. She returned to the United States to begin studying music at the preparatory division of Juilliard and remained a student throughout her high school years, studying piano, violin, and bassoon.¹

In 1967 Wallach graduated with her Bachelor's degree from Sarah Lawrence College. As a student there, she studied composition with Meyer Kupferman. In 1969, she earned a Master of Arts degree in composition from Columbia University, studying with Jack Beeson, and in 1984 was awarded the first Doctorate of Composition Degree from Manhattan School of Music, where

¹ "Joelle Wallach, Long Biography," Joelle Wallach, 2013-15, accessed September 10, 2015, <http://www.joellewallach.com/press-kit>.

her primary composition professor was John Corigliano. While at Manhattan School of Music, she also studied theory, piano, and voice.²

Given Wallach's extensive musical education and compositional background she is often grouped amongst other influential female composers of her time. "Women composers – including Libby Larsen, Ruth Schonthal, Elizabeth Vercoe, Joelle Wallach, and Judith Lang Zaimont – have made significant contributions to a genre previously dominated by men."³ Wallach didn't just contribute to the musical world by composing, but also as an educator at the collegiate level, a private teacher of composition, and a lecturer. Her time as an educator was spent at Hunter College City University of New York (1978-79), integrating music into a multi-disciplinary course entitled "Patterns of Contemporary Culture," which focused on roles of the arts in a rich, complex, and global culture, she spent time as a Teaching Artist at Lincoln Center Institute (1990), where she designed and implemented new curricula for the Institute focused on new pedagogical approaches, at University of North Texas (2010-2012) as a Visiting Professor of Composition and most recently at John Jay College City University of New York (2012) as an Adjunct Professor of Piano.⁴

She has been a pre-concert lecturer for the New York Philharmonic, where she speaks on a multitude of topics, and even created her own lecture series. Within the last year, Wallach has

² Ibid.

³ Peter Dickinson, et al. "Art Song." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press. Web. (July 2013), accessed September 15, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A22400687>.

⁴ Wallach, Long Biography.

given lectures entitled “The Dream of Now,” a lecture that touches on the topic of Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*; “Handel’s Miraculous Messiah;” “Rachmaninoff: Melancholy and Marfan’s,” “Mozart in Vienna,” “Magnificent Mozart,” and “Kurt Weill, Music, Politics, Idealism and Exile.” These lectures take place in various settings: College Club in Ridgewood, New Jersey; radio stations WUNC-FM, and North Carolina Public Radio; New York Philharmonic; Lincoln Center Institute and New York City Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.⁵

When discussing a preferable instrument for which to write, Wallach states that, “I wouldn’t want to choose one specific instrument to compose for.” When looking over her long list of contributions to the musical world, it is apparent she is not biased towards one specific medium. Wallach has, and continues to, compose for orchestra, chamber ensembles, solo voices, chorus, and ballets.⁶ She recently completed a four-hand piano piece and several violin and viola duets.

Over the years, Wallach has been nominated, and won, many awards for her compositions. Her first award came in 1980 when she won First Prize in the Inter-American Music Awards for her choral work, *On the Beach at Night Alone*. Following this initial prize she then won First Prize National League of American Pen Women, and in 1984 she won First Prize New Music for Young Ensembles for *Of Honey and Vinegar*, First Prize Chamber Symphony of Princeton, for *Turbulence, Stillness and Saltation*, First Prize Delta Omicron Competition for *Forewords*, First Prize Baroque Choral Guild for *Five American Echoes*, and from 1984-5, Artists Fellowship [Inaugural Year] New Jersey State Council on the Arts (in recognition of

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Joelle Wallach, interview by Lauren Brown, West Des Moines, September 25, 2015.

“Outstanding Artist Merit” and “Achievement as an Artist”).⁷ Her *String Quartet 1995* garnered her the 1997 American Composers Alliance nominee for the Pulitzer Prize in Music, and since then she has won numerous awards nationally and internationally.

Many of Wallach’s choral and vocal works involve various poets, subjects, singers, and audiences.⁸ She has been quoted as stating the importance of collaboration in music, and the importance of trusting the opinion and knowledge of your collaborators, “It is vital to have passion for the opposite discipline.”⁹ She prefers to collaborate with poets who create art that addresses the issues of today; her secular oratorio, *Toward a Time of Renewal* is a great example of this. *Toward a Time of Renewal* is a four-movement piece, commissioned by the New York Choral Society and was written for large chorus, four solo voices and orchestra. For this oratorio, Wallach collaborated with the late poet, Denise Levertov. Levertov used this poetry to create links between global and interpersonal issues of our time “centered on man’s responsibility for the husbandry of the earth.”¹⁰

For many years, Wallach has also collaborated with dancers and choreographers. While an undergraduate at Sarah Lawrence College, Wallach became involved in music for dance through Bessie Schonberg’s legendary dance department. Wallach continued to work with dance companies and choreographers after graduation. Wallach hopes her compositions make people

⁷ Wallach, Long Biography.

⁸ George Rochberg, “Polarity in Music,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 141, no.2 (1997): 169, accessed October 20, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org.lib.lsu.edu/Stable/1987300>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wallach, Long Biography.

aware of the issues of today. In *Glancing Below*, the first ballet Wallach composed, she used this platform to take a provocative look at gender relations.¹¹

Wallach's compositions are unique to her style and are colored by her Moroccan childhood. Her time in Morocco was an experience that later reflected not only her multilingual ability but also her affinities for Arabic rhythm and melodic modes and scales and her interest in Near Eastern musical perspectives which have informed some of her music.¹² Wallach's engaging, exotic melodies, vivid imagery of nature and myth, and evocative use of non-western rhythms and scales are just a few of the traits she attributes to her years in Morocco.¹³ "Her music's intimate expressivity and persuasive emotional landscapes speak to the soul."¹⁴ Wallach's dramatic and sensual imagination contribute particularly well to her compositions about her cat. *The Alley Cat Love Songs* discuss the sex life of her cat and reflects the human, and occasionally feline, condition. Her cats are the inspiration for many of her compositions.¹⁵

In her vocal music, she is particularly intrigued by "exploring and exploiting inherent musical parameters of speech and language."¹⁶ It seems from my interview with her, she intends that the vocal line be speech-like and believes the majority of her vocal pieces contain words that are set in a natural spoken rhythm. It seems from my interview with her, her intentions in A

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Wallach, Interview.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Revisitation of Myth were to set the music in a way that would be persuasive; “If you were to say something very quickly, then I set it that way.”¹⁷

Many aspects are taken into consideration before Wallach begins composing. She considers the voice/instrument for which she’s composing, character, stage setting, and poetry. All make up the embodiment of a composition. She is ‘living’ in the piece at every moment and believes inspiration only strikes if she works every day. “You must ready your unconscious and make it ready to receive inspiration every day.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

THE POETS

Religious Ideology

Judaism's ideology about reform and the reevaluation of stories plays a large role in Wallach's artistic and daily decisions. She was raised Jewish and maintains a close relationship with the religion. Interestingly, each poet Wallach selected for *A Revisitation of Myth* is Jewish. Wallach considers this a "deliberate but not conscious decision."¹⁹ The four poets, independent of each other, penned nontraditional interpretations of Greek myths that reexamine traditional myths for different, new, or more complex meanings.

Wallach believes fresh perceptions of Biblical passages and mythology, are fundamental to the Jewish faith and every individual is therefore encouraged to seek their own understanding. The poets drawn upon for this cycle, are/were of the same beliefs: that there can be multiple layers to each passage in history, and setting this poetry allowed Wallach to add her own level of interpretation to the myths.

Is this idea of multiple meanings to everything historical truly unique to the Jewish faith? "We are constantly exploring and changing our ideas as we try to gain a greater understanding of God that meets our needs and hopes, and can help us find meaning in our lives,"²⁰ states Rabbi Jeffrey Wildstein. What was the influence behind these new exploratory thoughts and ideas?

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Rabbi Jeffrey Wildstein, *Judaism* (NY: NY, Penguin Random House LLC, 2015), 74.

The Enlightenment was a period in history of Western thought and culture, stretching roughly from the mid-decades of the 17th - 18th centuries, characterized by dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society, and politics; these revolutions swept away the medieval world-view and ushered in our modern western world.²¹

In the Enlightenment, the Jewish community became attracted to the Democratic element. However, those who had become Orthodox had a completely different view of the Enlightenment than those who weren't Orthodox, they had not begun to see the enticing, secular side of culture. Those following the Non-Orthodox path considered what secular culture had to offer in comparison with traditional Judaism, and found traditionalism archaic and unappealing, and began distancing themselves from the philosophies, values, and practices of Talmudic Judaism.²² This gave new ideals of freedom and equality for all, based upon principles of human reason. Prior to the Enlightenment, Rabbis and communal authority had control over the detail and lives of Jews. They began to have the ability to live similarly to those of their friends in Non-Judaic society. They left their communities, and traditional Jewish authorities lost power over them.

Scholars like Julius Wellhausen became influential to the Non-Orthodox Jews by applying modern linguistics to Scripture and argued that the Torah had developed over time from various sources and that the Oral law was “the product of the people.”²³ The Non-Orthodox Jews no longer took the Torah literally.

It was a long period of time before this idea of reformation emerged. But, once it did, Non-Orthodox Jews felt it could be changed intentionally, at any given time, if given a reason to

²¹ Edward N. Zalta (ed.), “Enlightenment,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011), accessed January 7, 2016, plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/enlightenment.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

do so. They adapted the idea of “ethical monotheism,” which only required of them to be good moral people and believe in one God.²⁴ The prior traditions, values, and practices were deemed unnecessary and could become a hurdle to overcome when finding what was important in Judaism.

The early reformers began in Germany in the nineteenth-century and focused on change of rituals. The changes came in form of shortening services by removing repeated prayers and prayers no longer found relevant, like those about the restoration of the Temple. They started adding instruments into their services (like organ), used vernacular language, and seated men and women together.²⁵ By making these extreme changes and attempting to mimic the services of Christians, they became more appealing to those interested in reform.

The Reform movement was a large step forward in history, specifically for women. It emphasized social justice and was the first movement to allow women to become Rabbis. More recently, Reform Judaism has been less critical of Traditional Judaism and its ritual laws, and has been more accepting of traditional values and practices. Contrary to traditional law, they are open to the welcoming of the LGBT community.²⁶ This movement of reform became the largest movement in history for the United States and Canada.

What the reform did for Judaism and women was very empowering and has allowed Wallach, and many like her, to create art in the manner of which they choose, without any criticism from their religious communities.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

As stated previously, all four poets used for *A Revisitation of Myth* are Jewish, three of which are female. While none of the poets argue that their re-written versions of the myths are to be the only way in which to interpret the poems, they are simply constructing another side to the story.

Luann Keener Biographical Information

Icarus Swims, from the 1994 *Color Documentary* collection, was written by Luann Keener (b.1954). This was Keener's very first collection and won a 1990 Virginia Prize award. She grew up in a very small town in rural Texas and graduated in 1972 with a class of eight students. Keener knows that being in that environment intimately connected her to nature, and from her earliest memories she "was one with the enchanted landscape of the outdoors and was born a naturalist."²⁷ Influenced by Emily Dickinson in the third grade, Keener began to write poetry. Keener believes she truly began writing at the age of ten, when "my grandmother, the rock of my childhood, began to lose her personality in the dark mists of Alzheimer's – the "hardening of the arteries" as we called it then."²⁸ She was supported in this world of imaginative writing by her father, who had a "poet's appreciation for the natural world."²⁹ These are the experiences that are the emotional core of her work.³⁰

²⁷ Luann Keener, *Luann Keener Greatest Hits #182* (Columbus: OH, Pudding House Publications, 2004), 30.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Her poetry at this time was becoming increasingly concerned with the environmental crisis and spiritualization of our relationship with the natural world.³¹

Color Documentary, a remarkable collection of poetry, exquisitely investigates our relationships with the natural world – especially animals – while exploring the dominant role of humans and the endangerment of all life. Keener paints a world of light and mortality, a color documentary of the ties among all creatures.³²

Previously an English professor at Virginia Tech and now a licensed clinical social worker she has, since 2000, worked with emotionally disturbed children in residential treatment. She is now a therapist at a private practice, a member of the counseling staff at Randolph College, and a resource social worker for Centra Hospice. As social work occupies much of her time, she still allots time for writing and continues to win awards for her poetry and collections of writing.

Muriel Rukeyser Biographical Information

Ms Lot is a poem by Muriel Rukeyser (1913-1980), a Jewish-American writer and native of New York. She was known as a social activist and protestor and purposely did not live a sheltered or boring life. She attended Vassar College in the 1930s and became editor of the school's *Student Review*.³³ She covered stories of the “underdog” and some of those stories became the basis of her own poetry. In 1932, one of the most popular stories of the time was the

³¹ Ibid.

³² Collin Kelley, “Five Questions for Luann Keener,” 2012, accessed January 7, 2016, <http://collinkelley.blogspot.com/2012/11/five-questions-for-luann-keener-mikenas.html>.

³³ "Muriel Rukeyser" Poetry Foundation, accessed January 9, 2016, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/muriel-rukeyser>.

Scottsboro trial in Alabama, where nine under-aged black children were accused of raping two white girls. This episode is known to be the basis of her poem, “The Trial” and may have been the beginning of her commitment to writing for the “underdog.”³⁴

She was once put in jail for protesting the Vietnam War, travelled the world to protest social injustices, and always had an optimistic view of what the world could become. She had dreams of a world where everything was perfect and all humans had the same rights. According to Roy B. Hoffman in his *Village Voice* review of *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*, Rukeyser's distress with injustice was “mingled with a romantic's belief in the perfectibility of the universe, and a young patriot's belief in the perfectibility of her nation.”³⁵

Among the tools employed by Rukeyser is the rewriting of ancient myths, primarily Greek and Jewish. Today, in the Jewish case, this kind of creative revision and re-invention is sometimes called “modern midrash.” Rukeyser does not replace the original story with a new one; instead, she recognizes poetry and the artistic and cultural value of Biblical and Talmudic imagery. She does, however, strip the original of its canonical authority, showing how the original text inadequately represents women’s experience, constructing another side to the story. In this way, she not only grants a voice to previously silent, passive women, but also undermines the universal claim of the original story.³⁶ She also challenges the Biblical aspects that misrepresent her as a woman and consigns her to stereotypical roles.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Denise Levertov Biographical Information

Denise Levertov (1923-1997), poet of “Hymn to Eros,” was an English born poet who later identified as an American writer after coming to America at the age of 25. Her father was of Jewish descent and later converted to Christianity, becoming an Anglican pastor. It has been said that Levertov knew she was going to be a writer from the young age of five.³⁸ Her early years of admiration for literature were guided by her parents. Her mother, educating her children from home, read aloud poetry and writings from the great works of the nineteenth-century fiction and poems of Tennyson.³⁹ Levertov’s father was fluent in Hebrew, Russian, German and English, and flourished at writing in such languages. He would purchase second-hand collections of books in every language to maintain by volume.⁴⁰ Levertov’s surroundings were filled with art and literature, and almost anything she could ever want to read was within her reach in her home.

By the age of twelve, she had sent a large portion of her poetry to T.S. Eliot and it was well-received. T.S. Eliot responded with a type-written letter and she felt he gave “excellent advice.”⁴¹ Thus, with a renewed confidence and ambition to receive advice from other well-known members of the literary world, she sent her works to critic Herbert Read, co-founder of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, Editor and English poet, Charles Wrey Gardiner, and author Kenneth Rexroth, all of whom then corresponded with one another, discussing this young female

³⁸ Brenca Knight. *Women of the Beat Generation*, (Newbury Port: MA, Conari Press, 1998), 205.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

poet. It was especially apparent to them that Levertov was talented and was going to be successful when in 1940 she was published for the first time, in *Poetry Quarterly*. Rexroth was highly fond of Levertov's new voice of Romanticism and remarked that her poetry had about it a wistful "*Schwarmerei*," or excessive sentiment. Rexroth stated her poems "could be compared to the earliest poems of Rilke or some of the more melancholy songs of Brahms."⁴²

Although she spent her first twenty-five years in England, many of her readers and critics would identify Levertov as an American writer. Drew Calvert, author of *Review: On "The Collected Poems of Denise Levertov,"* writes that "Levertov is probably best known as an activist of the 1970s who strongly opposed the Vietnam War and fought for social justice."⁴³ During three years of WWII, Levertov was a civilian nurse and this aided in her opposition to war, which shone through in her writings. Common themes throughout her works reference her spirituality and politics. One critic states that her "poetics, politics, and spirituality were always intertwined."⁴⁴

Levertov explains that her poetry aspired to "the accurate notation of thought and feeling-patterns,"⁴⁵ which would result in "both human testimony and aesthetic experience."⁴⁶ This is relevant in her *Hymn to Eros*, where Levertov's speech was a product of her "thought rhythms, or patterns," which resulted in a more personal, natural, yet theological, tone.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Delmore Schwartz Biographical Information

Delmore Schwartz (1913 -1966), poet of the final song, *Abraham and Orpheus*, was born to Romanian Jewish immigrants in 1913, only living a short 52 years of life. He took a few different routes to obtain a collegiate degree by beginning at Columbia University, then University of Wisconsin, and eventually graduating with a BA in philosophy from New York University in 1935. After completing his Bachelor of Arts, he was to begin graduate studies at Harvard, but soon after starting his coursework, quickly returned to New York. He returned to Harvard in 1972, and it eventually became a place of comfort and his home, when he began a dual career of teaching at Harvard and writing. From 1955-1957, Schwartz was a visiting lecturer and professor at many prestigious institutions: Bennington College, Kenyon College, Princeton University, and Syracuse University.⁴⁷

Although a poet and short-story author, Schwartz was not one to shy away from his diagnosis of depression, instead using it as a driving force behind much of his works. David Zucker, author of “*Self and History in Delmore Schwartz’s Poetry and Criticism*,” writes that Schwartz was “a brilliant poet and critic who had a deeply painful awareness of the contradictions of his own personality.”⁴⁸ His manic-depression turned into a paranoia and overwhelmed him, physically. This illness, and an apparent addiction to narcotics, alienated him (mentally) from life and work, contributing to his corrupt and tragic view of the world.

⁴⁷ David Zucker, “Self and History in Delmore Schwartz’s Poetry and Criticism,” *The Iowa Review* 8, no.4 (1977): 96, accessed January 8, 2016, <http://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2302&context=iowareview>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Schwartz's altered view of the world gave his writings different undertones than those before him.

Abraham and Orpheus comes from a collection of poems, *Summer Knowledge*, a collection that returns to biblical themes and messages. Because his outlook on the world was corrupted by his illness, he had to return to his faith-based writing and knowledge and attempt to re-write history in a way that he understood it. His Jewish faith and life experiences were often challenged by his illness and addiction, always fighting for positivity and faith to win, but often losing this battle.

This underlying theme of Non-Orthodox Judaism, the tolerance of new meaning through re-evaluation, provided these poets the foundation to reinterpret freely without consequence. This freedom allows the reader the chance to view unfiltered perspectives brought about by various experiences grounded by common religious belief.

CHAPTER 3

“EXTENDED TONALITY IS PERSUASIVE . . .”

While discussing the lack of tonal structure in these four pieces with Joelle Wallach, she responded that “extended tonality is persuasive.”⁴⁹ In this statement she did not seem to imply that tonality is not persuasive, or that there isn’t beauty in tonality, but that the blending of Western and Non-Western musical tonalities as well as modern tonal theories could better help to unlock the musical experience for the listener. I will explore Wallach’s statement by examining the current research on the objective and subjective process of listening to music, as well as a brief history of Arnold Schoenberg and his reasoning for straying from tonality.

Professor of Music Theory and Composition at University of Oregon School of Music and Dance, Jack Boss, wrote an article in 2009, entitled *The Musical Idea and the Basic Image In an Atonal Song and Recitation of Arnold Schoenberg*. Mr. Boss has received the Wallace Berry Award for a distinguished book by an author of any age or career stage, from the Society of Music Theory, for his research and writings on Arnold Schoenberg, and has been credited for being well-versed on the composer and his compositional style.⁵⁰ In his 2009 article, Boss discusses the global coherence of atonal song, and that our “understanding” of coherence is based on a subjective listening experience. He states that while listening to music, the listener creates a pattern in a song, as you listen to and study the song, to make the song “hang

⁴⁹ Wallach, Interview.

⁵⁰ Jack Boss. “The Musical Idea and the Basic Image In an Atonal Song and Recitation of Schoenberg,” *A Music Theoretical Matrix: Essays in Honor of Allen Forte* (July 2009), accessed February 1, 2017, <http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=gamut>.

together.”⁵¹ If the listener can describe the patterns and elements of the listening experience, they can then describe how the song coheres. If the listener has derived a coherent way of hearing the work, they can then share that with another listener and the new listener can “hear it that way” or reject that notion, based on a variety of reasons. Objectivity and its properties make the song and its recitation hang together.⁵²

One of the first composers to experiment with atonality was Arnold Schoenberg. He freely composed without structure or system, and deliberately avoided elements that would suggest tonality. In the 1920s Schoenberg taught in Vienna and had students begin working with his new theories of atonality. His hope was to eventually develop systems for composition that did not rely on tonal hierarchies. This new structure of composition became known as the Second Viennese School.⁵³

The composers of the Second Viennese School then developed the Twelve-tone scale. The Twelve-tone scale organizes all twelve notes of the Western musical system into a tonal row that cannot be repeated until all twelve notes of the scale are used. The composer then writes inverted variations of the initial tone row. It is a prescriptive system for composing that lacks a tonal center, but gives equal importance to all the notes of the Twelve-tone scale.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Once the Second Viennese School implemented the Twelve-tone scale, this technique was quickly recognized as the only respectable way to write music, within the “academic spheres” of music composition.⁵⁵

By the 1950s, atonality was being rejected by the concert-going public. In 1958, rebuffing this rejection the American composer Milton Babbitt wrote an article in the music magazine *High Fidelity*, which still evokes anger today. The article, entitled “Who Cares If You Listen?” bluntly told other modern composers that they should not care about the response from listeners, especially those who are not educated in music.

Milton Babbitt argued that composers should not be concerned with the animosity given by listeners, but they should welcome it. If the listener was intrigued or interested in this newer style of music, then the composer should disregard the response and stop making compromises to his craft for the public.⁵⁶

The attempt to write in tonal tradition would be considered as tasteless or crass, as the followers of the Second Viennese School dominated the 1950s with their atonal compositions. Milton Babbitt included himself in the group of atonal composers that found it highly disrespectful to compose in such a manner.

Pierre Boulez extended Schoenberg’s serialist ideals pertaining to the perceived constraints of how pitch was to be organized to include other musical elements such as rhythm and dynamics. This led to a mode of composition called “total serialism” that employed very

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

strict rules.⁵⁷ The result was not received well by the concert-going public: they felt the music sounded “fragmented, bleak and inaccessible.”⁵⁸ Babbitt, angered by the audience’s response, chalked the results up to conservatism and ignorance. If and when there is an additive of text, Babbitt believed the listener would be more apt to be affected by atonal music.

Schoenberg, who was not only concerned with the twelve-tone scale but how it related to text, had his own interpretation of how atonal music uses word painting. He states:

a poem and its proper musical setting will reflect each other on an abstract level of meaning, but not necessarily on the superficial level of expressive correspondence between music and its texts, a composition may still achieve the homogenous unification of elements that is requisite in any genuine art work, provided that text and music are congruent on a deep level.⁵⁹

Before this question is explored in more detail, we should ask what distinguishes tonality from atonality? Philip Ball, writer of *Schoenberg, Serialism and Cognition: Whose Fault if No One Listens?* explores Carol Krumhansl’s study and analysis of this idea. Krumhansl, Professor of Psychology at Cornell University, directs the Music Cognition Laboratory, where she studies the psychology of music and how to conduct research on any topic related to music, speech, hearing, or language. Krumhansl has written numerous journal articles one of which is entitled *Cognitive Foundations of Pitch*.⁶⁰ Philip Ball states that the perceptual rules we use to establish tonality when we listen to a piece of music are not the ones that derive from any musical theory;

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

they are purely statistical.⁶¹ We learn which notes to expect by “acculturation,” rules we learn by the age of five, when a child can identify if something is “in key” or “out of key.”⁶²

He argues that the key of a tonal piece of music does not determine which notes should or should not be used, but the key gives probabilities of the various notes it will contain: the chance that any note in the music, picked at random, will belong to a specific pitch class. For example, the key of C Major will be more apt to include a G, rather than an F# or C#. Krumhansl asks, “What ultimately makes us decide that a G is a better fit in the key of C than is F#? Is it musical exposure or is it determined by innate mental factors, influenced by considerations of consonance which composers have put into practice?”⁶³

Krumhansl conducted a correlation analysis of the tonal hierarchy against measures of consonance and actual tonal distributions in Western Classical music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The result suggests that the learning of statistical probabilities is far more important than intrinsic consonance. This implies we should be able to learn new ideas about “rightness” if we hear them often enough.⁶⁴

This study helped to illuminate how text painting is interpretive in song literature and how Wallach’s statement “extended tonality is persuasive” is applied to this particular cycle. Arnold Schoenberg felt a poem and its proper musical setting will complement each other.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

However, research shows the composer's interpretation may be lost in the listener's subjective interpretation of the same piece.

Taking this research into consideration, Wallach's statement "extended tonality is persuasive" is better understood. It is up to the listener to open their consciousness and become acclimated to atonality. Musicians are accustomed to tonal music because that is generally the first level of training we receive and we grow accustomed to the "tonal rules" that a key should follow. We listen to tonal music in our training more often than that of atonal or extend tonal music. Krumhansl's research conclusions show that if we listen to modern music in abundance, without our own perceptions of what the music should really be doing tonally, we will become acclimated and be persuaded by the composer's initial intentions for the music, whatever those may be.

CHAPTER 4

A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO JOELLE WALLACH'S *A REVISITATION OF MYTH*:

Text painting took on a whole new meaning and demeanor by the modern era and with atonal music. Wallach adheres closely to Schoenberg's method of text painting, and we will see this being employed in her four pieces of *A Revisitation of Myth*.

Basic Characteristics of *Icarus Swims*

- **Poet:** Luann Keener
- **Vocal Line:** The vocal line is moderately challenging and often times does not find a tonal center. The piano and viola introduce a variation of the vocal line/melody, making the singer's first phrase easier to anticipate.
- **Range:** B₃- G₅
- **Tessitura:** Middle Voice.
- **Metric organization:** 4/4, no changes of meter, throughout.
- **Expression and Tempo Markings:** *cantabile, poco dolce, ma ben cantabile, poco e poco pensivo, con passione, dolce lontano, appassionato.*
- **Rhythm:** The main rhythmic structure is compiled of triplets, 8th notes, and 16th notes.
- **Accompaniment:** Relative to the vocal line, comprised of triplets, 8th notes, and 16th notes. The viola, while playing all of these figures, must continually change clefs, generally every other stanza.
- **Level of Difficulty:** Moderately difficult, due to the use of accidentals. *Icarus Swims* is one of the shorter pieces in the cycle, however rhythmically challenging. Wallach set the pieces to be fairly declamatory or "speech-like," resulting in a syllable or word on almost every note.
- **Length:** 30 measures, 2 minutes and 15 seconds.

Song Overview

Icarus Swims is deducted from the Greek Myth about a father and son, *Daedalus and Icarus*. Daedalus, a creator of many things, was a subject of Minos, the King of Crete, and was a highly respected and talented Athenian artisan who was known for his skill as an architect, sculpture and inventor.

Minos instructed Daedalus to build an inescapable labyrinth. It was to be grand with enough rooms and winding halls so that no one would be able to find their way out. This is where Minos would imprison the dreaded Minotaur (half man-half bull), and where it fed on humans. Daedalus succeeded at the task with his son Icarus by his side, and the city of Athens was required to provide the ‘human tributes’ for the Minotaur. However, Theseus, the King of Athens, decided to go himself into the labyrinth as a self-sacrifice. When he arrived in Crete he fell in love with Ariadne, Minos’ daughter. Ariadne pleaded with Daedalus to save Theseus and he relented. He revealed the secret of the labyrinth giving him the opportunity to kill the Minotaur.

Upon the discovery of Daedalus’ betrayal, Minos declared that Daedalus and Icarus would become prisoners of the labyrinth themselves, wherein they quickly tried to develop a plan for their escape. The structure of the labyrinth was so grand and detailed that Daedalus and Icarus had forgotten what escape route they had originally made. So instead, they gathered a multitude of feathers, Daedalus using them to create a pair of wings for each of them, binding them by wax to their shoulders.

The escape began the way Daedalus planned and he warned his son not to fly too close to the sun. Icarus being young and eager, disregarded the cautions of his father’s advice. Flying too close to the sun, the melting of the wax caused Icarus’ fall to the sea, drowning him.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ H.A. Guerber, *The Story of the Greeks* (North Carolina: Yesterday’s Classics, 2006), 17-18.

Luann Keener wrote *Icarus Swims* as an invitation to regard Icarus' fall into the sea in a new light. The poem now suggests that instead of a plunge or drowning, the fall may be viewed as a baptism, an entry into a new domain, born of his adventurousness and daring.⁶⁶

The piece begins with a dynamic marking of *mezzo piano*, tempo of quarter-note equaling 63, and instruction for all three performers to play and sing *Cantabile*, "singable, singingly. i.e. with the melody smoothly perfect and well brought out."⁶⁷ For the instrumental line, it could be interpreted that the piano and viola should attempt to imitate the style of the human voice, or to be used as a measured tempo and to be played with legato or flexibility. "Cantabile is a style of singing which is characterized by the easy and flowing tone of the composition."⁶⁸

Initially, the piano begins then introduces the viola, and lastly, the singer. Each part begins with the same pattern of a triplet followed by a descending sixth. The descending figure is a forethought of the impending fall or "baptism" of Icarus.⁶⁹ To emphasize Keener's poetry and phrasing, Wallach resolves the final word of each phrase in the vocal line on the equivalent of quarter note or longer after a triplet figure. This triplet followed by either a quarter, dotted quarter, or half note figure is one of the motives that appear throughout the entirety of the piece, either by itself or within one of the other motives.

⁶⁶ Joelle Wallach, *A Revisitation of Myth: Four Songs for Viola, Piano and Medium Voice* (Fayetteville, AR: Classical Vocal Reprints, 1998).

⁶⁷ Tim Rutherford-Johnson, et al ed. "Cantabile." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (2013), accessed February 7, 2016, <http://www.oxfordreference.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199578108001.0001/acref-9780199578108-e-1558?rskey=AImH89&result=1>.

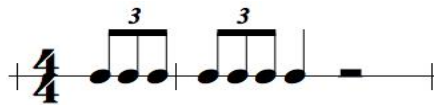
⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Wallach, Interview.

The song is based on Wallach using these reoccurring motives both in direct quote or in imitation to represent a character, feeling, movement/action, noise, etc. The motives are very rhythmically specific, and are the driving force behind the emotion of the piece.

Icarus Swims is comprised of three main motives, found within the first seven measures of the piece and represent Icarus' attempted flight, Icarus' flight/swims, and an extended version of the flight/swim motive. The first motive, as discussed previously, introduces the piece and sets the tone for the remainder of the story. Representing Icarus' first two attempts at flight, with the pickup to measure one, the piano plays two triplet figures followed by a quarter note. This motive is then repeated by the viola beginning on beat three of measure one.

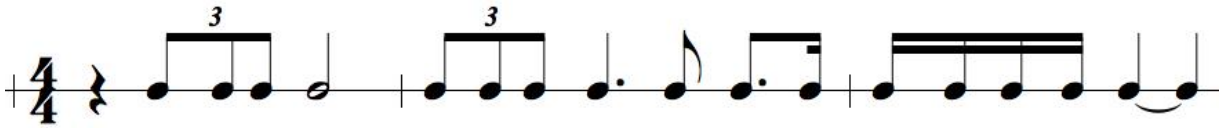
(Example 1)



Example 1: *Icarus' Attempted Flight*, mm. 1-2

Following the initial motive, the voice enters with the Icarus Flight/Swim motive, representing his descent into the water.

(Example 2)



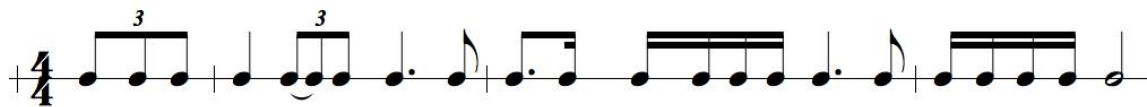
Think of it, love, what if the tales, the price-less paint-ings all were wrong.

Example 2: *Icarus' Flight/Swims*, mm. 2-4

The duality of this motive is shown in measures 21-24, here it represents Icarus swimming after his fall, rather than his flight throughout the rest of the piece.

The final motive is almost an exact repetition, rhythmically, of the second motive, but with an added extension. Found in the vocal line, this extension will need to be paid close attention by the vocalist to maintain or even increase the momentum to the end of the extended motivic phrase.

(Example 3)



What if they lied, lied be-cause the old cults thrived on sa-cri-fice, and had to say he died.

Example 3: *Icarus' Flight/Swims Extended*, mm. 4-7

Integrated with the three motives, Wallach writes marking for *dolce*, *poco dolce*, *dolce lontano*, and *molto espr. dolce*, specifically for the instrumental line. The viola and piano could be portraying the sweetness and delicacy of a young child and the sheer innocence that comes

with their curiosity. Combined, the motives and expressive markings work jointly to represent the intentions behind the poetry.

Wallach uses the dynamic marking, *forte*, conservatively, in this piece. Perhaps to preserve that soft portrayal of Icarus and to keep Keener's perspective of the fall as a "rebirth" of the child. The moment Icarus flies too close to the sun and is forever separated from his father, is represented by an ascending scale in the piano beginning in measure 20, beat three, that quickens to a *sfp* chord on beat two of measure 21. It is important the pianist play it with this intent. In contrast to the second song of this chamber work, *Ms Lot*, which uses many forceful and extreme dynamics, one could say she is maintaining the balance of the symphonic structure by using contrasting dynamics and tempi.

After the vocal line "we must save ourselves and him," the triplet figure followed by a descending sixth motive returns in all parts, perhaps representing Icarus swimming further and further away from Daedalus. The final words of the poem are "and swim." "Swim" is accompanied by one final chord of the piano and viola, no postlude, the word is left bare and free. Swim to your new life of freedom, baptism, rebirth, and begin anew.

Performance Suggestions

The singer should always begin by looking over expression and dynamic markings, tempo, and meter changes (if any). If English is the singer's native language, it can sometimes be more difficult to pronounce words phonetically correct, when singing, as many of us fight to not sing with the habits we use in every day conversation. To become familiar with the poetry, the singer should speak through the text with the phrasing as Keener has written it and as Wallach

has musically phrased it. The singer should also make themselves familiar with the original story of Icarus, as it will aid in a more emotional performance.

Once the singer has become familiar with the phrasing, it would be beneficial to speak the text in rhythm which is the most difficult aspect of the piece and to find the stress and meter of each phrase. Wallach has written a note for almost each syllable, making it easier for the singer. Practicing in rhythm will eliminate that stress and will also make it possible to sing in a speech-like style, as Wallach prefers.

Wallach's dynamic and expressive markings are straightforward, with little room for interpretation. The singer's entrance(s) should emulate the introduction(s) played by the viola and piano (Wallach has instructed them to each be at the same dynamic level and often times expressively alike). If all three performers are conscious of the motives and the development of the myth, Wallach's intentions for the piece will be appropriately represented.

Basic Characteristics of *Ms Lot*

- **Poet:** Muriel Rukeyser
- **Vocal Line:** Difficult, particularly rhythmically. The accompaniment may mirror the vocal line rhythmically, but it rarely doubles it melodically, with the pitches sometimes clashing with the accompaniment.
- **Range:** B^b₃-A₅
- **Tessitura:** Middle voice
- **Metric Organization:** 4/4
- **Expression and Tempo Markings:** Like angry muttered murmuring, muttering under breath, *espr.*, *sotto voce*, *jangly*, *sotto voce murmur*, *piangere*, *sul ponticello*, *espr. cantabile*, *poco lontano*, *dolce lontano*.
- **Rhythm:** 16th notes and 8th notes.
- **Accompaniment:** The accompaniment becomes increasingly difficult as the pieces progress. The accompaniment is frequently playing constant 16th note structures, no chordal harmony.
- **Level of Difficulty:** As the accompaniment becomes more demanding, the vocal line does as well. The quick accompaniment figures below the vocal line and the

- emotional intensity behind the text could leave the singer slightly anxious, affecting the vocal sound.
- **Length:** 62 measures, 3 minutes and 13 seconds.

Song Overview

Ms Lot is a representation or interpretation of the Biblical story of Lot and his daughter/s. The original story begins in the book of Genesis, chapter eighteen, and the bulk of the story ends in Genesis, chapter nineteen, verses 30 - 38. Scholars describe the Biblical story as an “etiologial” (explains the origin of something) myth, in this case, the myth of the Moabites and Ammonites.⁷⁰

These specific collections of verses depict Lot’s characteristics and how they vary or contrast from his uncle, Abraham. Like his uncle, Lot is considerate of his guests and gracious when it comes to their welfare. He contrasts with Abraham in that his consideration for individuals does not transfer to that of his family. He is continually making bad decisions and poor and selfish judgements.

Genesis, chapter nineteen begins with Lot acting as the generous and considerate man he is to strangers and guests of his home by inviting two angels in disguise to stay with him and his family in Sodom. The story becomes aggressive when the men of Sodom request to “know” Lot’s guests, sexually. In complete and total disregard for his children and family, Lot begs the men to not act on this, but instead offers his two virgin daughters to the mob and announces that they are to do with them as they please.

⁷⁰ Hillary Lipka, “Lot and His Daughters,” accessed October 23, 2016, www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/lot-and-his-daughters.aspx.

Disgusted by Lot's offer and rebuttal, the mob refuses and they become agitated and extremely violent with their threats and actions. Intervening, the two angels unveil themselves and save Lot and his family. Although Lot's family was saved, his wife was later turned into a pillar of salt, leaving him and his daughter's to be the sole surviving individuals of Sodom.

Taking his daughters in tow, Lot finds a secluded cave on a hill and begins to live a life of isolation. His daughters, unaware of the truth, are of the belief they are the last people alive on Earth. Believing they must procreate to save the human race, the daughters decide they must lie with their father and become impregnated. Knowing Lot would most assuredly not approve, the daughters feed their father wine to inebriate him and sleep with him on two consecutive evenings. Both daughters conceived and then gave birth to two sons, Moab and Ben-Ammi.⁷¹

Muriel Rukeyser wrote the poem in the perspective of one of the daughters, Ms Lot. Ms Lot does not believe her father is a good person and thinks he betrayed their family (her sister and her mother). Ms Lot is "frantic and whine-y and self-centered." She suddenly has to adapt to a new life that doesn't involve anything of familiarity, especially her mother. Throughout the song, a relentless, repetitive, murmuring figure passes back and forth between the musicians. The murmuring figure is the connectivity between all the voices and "encapsulates the protagonist's hysteria."⁷²

In contrast with *Icarus Swims*, *Ms Lot* begins with a tempo of quarter note equaling 100 - 104 with the marking to be played like "angry muttered murmuring" at a *pianissimo* dynamic. As Wallach explains in her notes preceding the work, this murmuring figure that begins in the piano

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Wallach.

and viola is used to depict the hysteria that Ms. Lot is feeling, and the overwhelming anxiety that consumes her when she thinks of her father and the uncertainty with which she is left. The *pianissimo* dynamic (that quickly crescendos to *mezzo forte*) of the murmuring also represents how anxiety can begin slowly and internally and quickly advance to an overpowering outburst of fear.

Motive one is the murmuring figure played by the viola. Wallach indicates that the viola should play as if muttering under the breath. This could depict the hysteria embodied by Ms Lot, but could also depict the murmuring amongst the mob of men that causes the anxiety in Ms Lot to intensify. This motive is found in measures one and two and repeated in measures five and six of the vocal line.

(Example 4)



Example 4: *Ms Lot*, mm. 1-2

Throughout a larger portion of the piece, the viola’s instructions are to play at the tip of the bow, or *sul ponticello* (to play near the bridge) or *pizzicato*. Often times, this instruction to play near the bridge is used to make a stringed instrument sound spooky or metallic and *pizzicato* for a more percussive or staccato effect. In measure 32, the viola is given a *sul ponticello* marking, while in the same instance Ms. Lot is singing “She couldn’t even hear, and he knew: Mother could not even hear, she was not to turn around and look.” The eery effect of the viola,

the disturbing text, along with the quickly moving 16th notes of the piano, paints a terrifying picture.

Although Ms Lot appears to be operating with a variety of emotions that would make one sympathize or empathize with her, the incessant whining becomes tantrum-like and could leave the listener with a sense of annoyance. This reveals the second motive, the tantrum. Wallach achieves her goal in portraying a whiny and self-centered young woman with the repetitive motive by the viola in duet with the voice, sung on the text “Who’s going to want me now?”

(Example 5)



Example 5: *The Tantrum*, mm. 9-10

The final cries of “Who’s going to want me now, to want me now, to want me now?” are to be sung *poco lontano*, a little distant, giving the illusion of energy depleting with no more tears to cry, as someone who has exhausted themselves. A five-measure postlude is played by the viola and piano as they continue to get softer and softer, ending in *pianississimo*, leaving the listener bothered, slightly annoyed, and with an eerie sense of uncertainty.

In this piece, Wallach intensifies the dynamics and uses every technique to make the listener feel the stress and anxiety of the character. The three parts collaborate in a manner that is more visible and audible than in the first piece. The third piece, *Hymn to Eros*, contrasts in emotion, tempi, character, and dynamic, again like that of symphonic movements. One could say

Wallach is giving the listener an emotional break before enduring a dynamic final piece,
Abraham and Orpheus.

Performance Suggestions

As stated in the previous performance suggestions, the singer should become familiar with the text as to emphasize the stress of the meter and to encompass the character of Ms Lot. Since Muriel Rukeyser wrote this piece from the perspective of Ms Lot, it is important that the singer knows the Biblical passage as well as the anxiety and fear felt by Ms Lot.

Wallach rarely, in this cycle, keeps a continuous key signature throughout, rather she adds accidentals liberally. The singer should pay close attention to the detailed notation, as it could become increasingly difficult. Along with close attention to notation detail, the dynamic and expressive markings are equally important.

Basic Characteristics of *Hymn to Eros*

- **Poet:** Denise Levertov
- **Vocal Line:** This piece is moderately difficult and not as challenging, harmonically, as the other three pieces. Wallach gives the singer a “break” to prepare for the bold final piece.
- **Range:** B₃-G₅
- **Tessitura:** Middle Voice
- **Metric Organization:** $\frac{3}{4}$
- **Expression and Tempo Markings:** Wistful and yearning, *espr. cantabile, legato, leggere, e sempre gracioso, dolce, e piu lontano*.
- **Rhythm:** 8th notes, triplets, and 16 notes (common rhythmic theme in this cycle).
- **Accompaniment:** Mostly comprised of 16th notes and 8th notes, but more chordal than two previous pieces.
- **Level of Difficulty:** The intensity and difficulty level diminishes, slightly, for every performer in this piece.
- **Length:** 65 measures, 4 minutes and 26 seconds.

Song Overview

Eros is a god that takes on many paths and characteristics in mythology, theology, poetry, and art. In Greek religion, Eros is the god of love. In the “Theogony of Hesiod,” an instructional poem describing the “origins of the cosmos and the complicated and interconnected genealogies of the gods of the ancient Greeks, as well as some of the stories around them,”⁷³ he is a primeval god, son of Chaos, the original primeval emptiness of the universe. Later traditions made him the son of Aphrodite, goddess of sexual love and beauty, by either Zeus, Ares, or Hermes. In Alexandrian poetry, he became a mischievous child. In archaic art, he was represented as a beautiful winged youth and history continued to make him younger and younger until by the Hellenistic period, he was an infant.⁷⁴

Portrayed as a winged infant, it was believed he would select targets then strike at their hearts so they would get an overwhelming feeling of confusion and love for one another. This image later became known as Cupid, the adolescent that appears on Valentine’s Day and makes everyone fall in love.

Wallach describes *Hymn to Eros* as a plea, a sinuous, sensuous, strenuous wish,⁷⁵ and that is simply what it is. In Greek mythology, those without love who felt undesirable would plea to Eros for a partner who would yearn for their love.

⁷³ Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. “Eros-Greek God.” *Encyclopedia Britannica* (November 8, 2007), accessed December 12, 2016, www.britannica.com/topic/Eros-Greek-god.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Wallach, *A Revisitation of Myth*.

Set in three-quarter time, it creates a waltz-like feel, the viola and piano play a five-measure introduction at a tempo of quarter note equaling 66 and playing “wistfully and yearning.” Wallach may have had a play on words when instructing the accompaniment to play “wistful and yearning,” as the character has a deep yearning for themselves and their partner to ultimately become the world to one another.

Wallach uses imitation between voices, specifically the viola and singer, throughout a large portion of *Hymn to Eros*. As composers use imitation for a variety of reasons, it is possible Wallach is using imitation to show the importance of each “player” and to represent their unity, but to also signify the repetitiveness of the pleas in the piece. If what an individual seeks is of importance to them, they will be passionate about not giving up and continue to plea or ask for help in their hopes of a positive conclusion.

The viola plays *espressivo cantabile* when introducing the melody and the voice then enters by singing the repeated pattern *dolce*. The appropriate manner in which to ask for something you seek, whether it be from an individual, a god or mythical creature, would be *dolce*, or sweetly. Wallach sets the tone for this plea with a dynamic setting of *mp* and to be sung with charm.

Let it be noticed that the singer and viola are the two integral voices of this piece, the viola being given a solo in the pickup to measure 60, but it cannot go unnoticed that the piano plays an important role in supporting each of these voices. The songs may not be tonal but Wallach constructed a way for the performers to guide one another.

Unlike the other three pieces, this work does not have a motive that embodies a character or a story, these are simply rhythmic motives that are generally played in duet by viola and voice. The first instance we see of this Eros motive, is in measures eight and nine.

(Example 6)



Example 6: *Hymn to Eros*, mm. 8-9

This motive is then repeated, immediately, with an extension, in measures nine and ten.

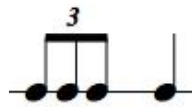
(Example 7)



Example 7: *Hymn to Eros Extended*, mm. 9-10

The final, and third motive, is a triplet figure followed by a quarter note, found in measures 31-33 with repetitive variations continuing until the end of the piece. Interestingly, within this figure, the initial stating of the *Icarus' Attempted Flight* scene reappears using this same triplet quarter-note figure with a descending sixth of the viola part in measures 18-19, in the vocal line on the text, “figures of smoke” in measure 32 and “figures of flame” in measures 52-53.

(Example 8)



Example 8: *Icarus' Attempted Flight Revisited*, mm. 31-33

Aside from the use of imitation, this piece is exactly how Wallach explains: simply, a plea. As stated before, this piece was used as an emotional and physical break for the listener and performers before the grand finale of the symphonic-like work, *Abraham and Orpheus*.

Performance Suggestions

While continuing the theme of becoming familiar with the text and speaking through the piece rhythmically, the singer should take note of all the tied 8th notes. These tied 8th notes hold onto the stress of the words to emphasize the idea of the singer's plea.

Although there are many 8th and 16th notes, the phrasing should feel very legato and highlight beats one and three. While the piece is legato and moderately less demanding than the other three pieces, the singer should maintain focus on the accidentals placed throughout the piece, as there are many intricate half-steps to be found.

Basic Characteristics of *Abraham and Orpheus*

- **Poet:** Delmore Schwartz
- **Vocal Line:** This vocal line is extremely difficult and the quick pace and large leaps could make it intimidating to the singer. There are many leaps and it often is not harmonically structured.
- **Range:** B₃-G^b₅

- **Tessitura:** Middle voice
- **Metric Organization:** Cut time.
- **Expression and Tempo Markings:** Prophetic and declamatory, *poco a poco più dolce, poco a poco più lontano, poco più agitato, ben dolce, legato, lontano e sotto voce, e più dolce, piangere.*
- **Rhythm:** Double dotted 8th notes, 16th notes, 8th notes, and triplets.
- **Accompaniment:** The accompaniment is grand and continuously moving with the same rhythmic figures as the voice.
- **Level of Difficulty:** This piece is the most difficult of the four, it is the longest piece with the largest story, constantly moving with accidentals found with almost every note.
- **Length:** 99 measures. 5 minutes and 10 seconds.

Song Overview

As mentioned in chapter two, Delmore Schwartz takes what he calls two “mythical heroes:” Abraham, from the Bible, and Orpheus, from Greek mythology, and gives us their similar situations with widely different conclusions.

We first encounter Abraham in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. He lives amongst pagans, idols, and immorality. Once acquainted with God, God promises to make Abraham flourish and become fruitful. Over a duration of twenty-five years, the former pagan becomes a man of God. Once a liar and deceiver, Abraham becomes full of truth and wisdom. As he continues his walk with God, he becomes stronger and more resilient and thus resulting in becoming a model of faith for generations to come.

In a test of faith, in Genesis 12, God asks Abraham to leave everything that is familiar comfortable, and secure, in order to fulfill God’s plan for his life.⁷⁶ In Genesis 22:1-19, the story of Abraham and his son Isaac, is told. Genesis 22: 1-2, God told Abraham “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt

⁷⁶ Jack Kuhatschek. *Abraham: Hearing God’s Call* (InterVarsity Press, 2004), 6.

offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.”⁷⁷ So, Abraham takes his son, Isaac, two servants, and a donkey, and sets off on a fifty-mile journey. He orders the servants to wait with the donkey while he and his son go up the mountain. Isaac questions where the lamb for the sacrifice is, and Abraham reassures him God would provide it. He binds Isaac with ropes and places him on the stone altar. As he raises the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord calls out to Abraham to stop and not harm his son. When Abraham looks up, there was a ram, provided by God, which he then instead sacrifices instead of his son.

Genesis 22: 16-18: “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”⁷⁸

Orpheus, a gifted minstrel, was charming to many people. Along with an appealing singing voice, Orpheus learned to play the lyre from Apollo, adding to his charming ways.

Orpheus fell in love with a nymph, Eurydice, who was also approached and pursued by Apollo’s son, Aristaeus. Eurydice, not flattered by Aristaeus, fled for the exit, and in her rush to leave stepped on a poisonous snake, was bitten and died. Lost without her, Orpheus was determined to find a way to her. He discovers a cave that led to Hades, where Eurydice was. Using his musical charm, he persuades the King of the Dead to allow him to take Eurydice home with him. The King of the Dead agreed to this notion, but would only allow it under one

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 10.

condition. . . Orpheus was not to turn around and look at Eurydice on their journey back.

Orpheus, unlike Abraham, disobeyed, and he failed, resulting in the loss of his love, forever.

The synopsis for *Abraham and Orpheus*, given by Wallach in the introduction to *A Revisitation of Myth*, mentions the techniques she used to display text/word painting. She states the calling motive played by the viola and piano is repeated and/or imitated and then modified, throughout the piece.

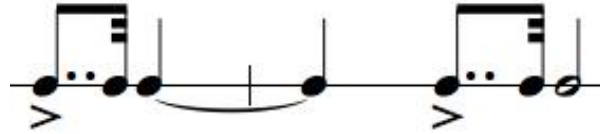
It evokes a variety of other voices: the calling of Abraham the father and Isaac the son, the tragic calls of Orpheus and Eurydice, the singer's own exhortation for reprieve from the myths' harsh lesson; and it recalls as well the traditional call of a ram's horn, a heritage of these same spiritual struggles. The myriad, shifting suggestions implied in the musical 'calling' figure reflect, too, the more global unfolding and elaboration of myth and meaning themselves.⁷⁹

The motive of which Wallach speaks, is a double dotted eighth note descending to a 32nd note, then ascending to two tied quarter notes. This pattern repeats in variations, with the intervals and final note durations changing, ever so slightly. We hear this motive passed back and forth between viola and piano roughly thirteen times, with the final seventeen measures of the postlude being a continuous repetition of the figure. As we have seen in the previous three pieces, often the repeated pattern is written into the vocal line, as well. This final piece is an exception to the prior three, as the vocal line does not emulate what is played by the piano and the viola.

This repetitive figure or motive seems to represent a trumpet call, as if someone is frantically calling on Abraham or Orpheus and pleading with them to assist with their need for their beloved. I call this the Abraham motive.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

(Example 9)



Example 9: *Abraham*, mm. 1-3

Abraham and Orpheus is also an exception to the first three pieces in that there is not a complete recording to be found. Wallach’s professional site is set up for the visitor to have the ability to listen to many full recordings of her compositions. The first three pieces of this cycle are available with no recording of *Abraham and Orpheus*. Wallach has never been satisfied with a performance of this cycle, and this is why there is no complete recording of the final piece on her site. What you are able to hear, are the first forty seconds that include the recurring motive that she so desperately wants the listener to recognize.

The introductory tempo played by piano and viola is a quarter note equaling 92 and with the viola being instructed to play “prophetic and declamatory.” The rhythmic pattern, as discussed above, needs to be played with accuracy as it sets the tempo, tone and overall emotion of the piece. This piece takes on numerous emotions: emotions of the poet/singer, Abraham, Isaac, Orpheus and Eurydice. The accompaniment is to give the listener the ability to feel as if they are there experiencing these emotions, the sacrifices of love, the singer wanting to end this cycle of harsh love lessons, and the nature of the surrounding stories.

The piece ends with the singer pleading “Abraham and Orpheus, Abraham and Orpheus be with me now” and followed by a nineteen-measure postlude (seventeen of those measures

playing the initial motive/figure) played by the viola and piano. As we near the end of the postlude, the figure no longer begins on *sfz* but on *f* then *mf* and eventually depletes to a softer sound. With the continual diminishing of sound and harshness, Wallach could be portraying many emotions or thoughts. Knowing the content and background of the text, she is painting a picture of the ease Abraham felt, his son remaining alive and his faith rewarded. Wallach could also be portraying the numbness Orpheus felt when he lost his love forever.

Performance Suggestions

As always, importance lies within the rhythm, meter, text, and notation. But, because there are two stories being told, it is imperative that the singer does detailed research on both. While Abraham and Orpheus are being tested similarly, the two are characteristically different. The performers must be prepared to transition between the two characters as smoothly as Delmore Schwartz does in his writing. There's a subtlety about Abraham and an intensity about Orpheus and this is the most important showcase of the cycle. If the singer can flourish at portraying and emoting for two grand characters, the piece and cycle will be successful.

CONCLUSION

Joelle Wallach, like many other composers, has a background in multiple facets of music. As previously mentioned, Wallach is trained in piano, voice, theory, bassoon, violin, and composition, maintaining degrees in more than one of these specificities. This extensive training aides in the inspiration that strikes her, daily, to compose. As Wallach is not firmly positioned in one specific genre or voice of which to compose, she is able to consider, with great knowledge and experience, every voice and performer when composing.

A Revisitation of Myth was created with the understanding and awareness of each performer in mind. Wallach's ample background in each instrument of the piece allowed her to become the performer when composing.

Each song of the cycle is near and dear to Wallach's heart and a piece for which she desires greatness when performed. Wallach feels this cycle is a "dear child that never gets a good teacher,"⁸⁰ a piece that she knows can be beautiful when all three voices collaborate and perform from the same place of inspiration and intent.

A Revisitation of Myth is best performed in its entirety, so that it resembles the contrasting textures of a symphony. Conscious of the assorted motives displayed throughout the cycle, I desire to perform these songs with a passion similar to Wallach's, when she is composing a piece.

It's noted that the song cycle is based on repetitive motivic figures that continually pass from piano, to viola, then the voice, and vice versa. Often times, two of the parts in duet with one

⁸⁰ Wallach, Interview.

another. These motives are what makes this cycle “persuasive” to the listener, it’s just repetitive enough that the listener is able to internalize the rhythmic and notational movement that by the end of the cycle, the listener will have connected the text with the motives, the very intentions of Wallach’s when composing.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF PUBLISHED SOLO SONGS FROM JOELLE WALLACH'S WEBSITE

Alleycat Love Song for high voice and piano

Cantares de los perdis for voice, tuba, timpani and crotales

Cords for soprano and two doublebasses

Dancing Toward Dush

Daughters of Silence for soprano and piano

Dorr Standing Open four serious songs of spiritual torment for baritone and piano

Dream of Now six reflective songs for low or medium voice and piano

Ephemeris: Five Songs of Daily Private Life four songs for medium voice and piano

Firefighters' Prayer for tenor and piano, for baritone and piano, duet for tenor, baritone and piano; of for baritone and strings

In this My Green, Green World: Six Verdant Longs for high voice and piano

La musica, los muertos y las estrellas or a cappella or vocal quartet

Love in the Early Morning: Two Songs about Making Love to Milkmen

Meow Mix: Several Songs Inspired By or About Cats

Mourning Madrigals for soprano, tenor, flute and harp

Nightwatch high voice with chamber orchestra

Obligato Songs with saxophone or clarinet

Of Honey and Vinegar for medium voice and two pianos

Partings and Farewells seven songs for high voice and piano

Post-Millennial Love Songs

A Revisitation of Myth four songs for viola, piano and medium voice

Seasonal Songs medium voice and piano

Shir Hamaalot

Simeni Kachotam al Libbcha, Set Me as a Seal Upon Your Heart for mezzo and chamber orchestra

Sin mañanas: Three Spanish Songs for medium voice and piano

Songs for an Unborn Child for medium voice and piano

Spiritual for medium or low voice and piano

Spiritual Speculations

Three Whitman Songs for medium voice, clarinet, horn and cello or bassoon

Up Into the Silence

V'erastich li l'olam, a Biblical Love Song from Hosea for two unaccompanied voices

When Lost in the Forest

Who is that Stranger?

William Carlos Williams Songs voice and piano

Yeatsongs of a Fool: Three Songs for high voice, string quartet and two percussion, or for high voice and piano

APPENDIX B

SKYPE INTERVIEW WITH JOELLE WALLACH

September 25, 2015

Lauren: Are you ready for the interview to begin?

J: Yes, and I mean, you can ask all kinds of questions, it shows you actually know who you're talking to.

L: You are in New York, correct?

J: I'm in NY.

L: Your skype says Denton, Texas.

J: Oh, I was teaching at UNT for a while.

L: Oh, were you?

J: Mmhmm.

J: So, you're really a singer?

L: Yes, I am.

J: So, I assume you became interested in this piece because you're a mezzo.

L: Actually, I sing mezzo rep and I also sing more dramatic soprano type rep, and now that I'm a little bit older, the music is a little more comfortable in this range. I really became interested in this piece and I was researching pieces that hadn't had a dissertation written on them before, and I wanted a female composer, and someone who was still alive, to get my primary source. I came across these pieces and I got really intrigued by you and the music.

J: So, what can I do that would be helpful?

L: Maybe we should go through the questions that I emailed you, and see where we go from there? Does that work for you?

J: That sounds great, let me get my glasses, excuse me a moment.

L: Yeah, go for it.

J: Ok, I'm back.

L: OK. So, the first question is about your upbringing in Morocco. How long did you live there?

J: 5 years.

L: 5 years? Have you ever gone back?

J: I always mean to but something always gets in the way.

L: That happens. So, I wanted to know if your Moroccan upbringing opened your mind to different mythological perspectives or different cultures as a whole?

J: Yes.

L: Yes, overall yes? Did that have anything to do with this work, specifically?

J: It's hard to say the answer to that question, but I guess so. It's a new look at myths and different cultures. In the stance that you're looking at new perspectives, yes.

L: This isn't a question on the list, and I don't want to be offensive, if you don't want to answer, completely fine. I was just wondering if you are Jewish?

J: Yes, why do you ask that question?

L: Because, when I researched the poets, the majority of them are Jewish.

J: Oh, that's interesting, I never thought of that.

L: Oh!

J: I think it may be because Jews are not afraid to revisit things that are supposed to be sacred and re-interpret them.

L: Ok.

J: I think that would be the big connecting thing here.

L: Awesome, I didn't know if that was intentional or not.

J: I never thought of it before, no, I never thought of it. But each of these poets were re-examining, it's something that Jews do, no story is apt per se.

L: I was raised Christian, and you were taught to believe exactly what you read, and you weren't to revisit anything.

J: Exactly.

L: And the second you grow and mature and want to question anything.

J: Then you're gone. You know it's a very interesting question, and I hadn't thought of it that way before, but if there is a reason they're all Jewish, that's why. Because the whole reinterpreting what was supposed to be holy stories, is traditional among Jews and it's forbidden among Christians. So, I didn't choose them because they were Jewish, I chose them because they were reevaluating stories and it's a traditional welcome.

L: I don't know too many Jewish individuals, so I haven't had a chance to sit down and have these types of conversations with them.

J: Where are you from?

L: Originally from Iowa, which is where I am now, um, and then I went to LSU for my Masters and Doctoral Degree.

J: And that's Baton Rouge?

L: Yes ma'am. And I moved back to Iowa so I could teach at my undergraduate for a sabbatical replacement for one of my professors. Then I stayed in Iowa and couldn't find a job right away, so I got started in the car dealership world, lost track of the music world.

J: Got distracted?

L: Yeah.

J: It's wonderful to be back in music.

L: It is, it really is, my grandfather passed away a few weeks ago and I was asked to sing for his funeral, and it was the first time I performed in a while. It was probably the easiest singing I had done in a long time, considering the situation, but vocally it brought my need back for singing.

L: Do you have a specific non-western composer by which you are influenced?

J: No, I'm influenced by many, many, many composers living and dead, there's no one composer.

L: No one composer? Do you have a certain few that you'd like to list?

J: I wouldn't dare list less than 15.

L: As an opera singer, we're not really brought into the world of non-western music very often.

J: And even then, they're western if they're operas. I love the cat questions you sent me.

L: Oh really?

J: you want to see my cats? They're all sleeping.

L: They're with you?

J: OH yeah, they're in my studio, this is Coco Puff. Bella is sleeping, she's still very gorgeous.

L: Oh, my goodness, look at that hair! That is one fluffy cat.

J: Look at her face, she's Persian and she's also asleep. They're very spiritual creatures, she's like a spiritual teacher. She's the one that I wrote a song after. They like music, these 3. They are certainly an influence on me, well not an influence, an inspiration.

L: Influence is what I wrote down. What is your voice type?

J: I'm a mezzo.

L: You're a mezzo, do you still sing at all.

J: Only when I work, only when I'm working on a vocal piece.

L: Is that your voice on the recording?

J: No, absolutely not.

L: Just wondered. I'm interested to know, you're so well-rounded as a musician, what is your favorite aspect of music; is it composing, is it theory.

J: Composing.

L: Would you rather compose for a solo vocal work, choral, ballets, or a specific one.

J: I'm very fortunate to be able to do it all, I wouldn't like to choose one. I'm really happy with a variety.

L: I like variety as well. Let's go ahead and get to this specific set of works if you don't mind. I was wondering if the triplets that descend a sixth in Icarus Swims, represent the fall of Icarus.

J: You could certainly say that.

L: Ok, when you're composing this music, after you've acquired the poetry, how do you decide what keys, tempos, etc. . . you're going to use, or is it random?

J: Nothing is random.

L: Everything is thought out?

J: Everything is deliberate, but they don't all get decided at the same moment, you play around with the material for a while, unless you're writing a specific voice/instrument, which prefers a key, etc. . . if possible, you don't write in a flat key for a violin or you don't write in passaggio for a voice. Some things like that are an early decision because you want it to work for whomever you are writing. Sometimes you write it all in one key and realize it would be a lot nicer if it were up a half-step. So, it varies.

L: You have a lot of accidentals and key changes, but the voices work together.

J: I really like tonality, so that kind of extended tonality is interesting to me, but extended tonality is persuasive.

L: That makes more sense now that I read through it. Also, when I was choosing music, I wanted to find something that wasn't extremely challenging, range-wise. What I like is that you put a syllable with every 16th note and it makes it easier to sing than just a vowel. Is that something you think of when writing?

J: I think it's one of the advantages, there are certain benefits of having been a singer or performer, and you subconsciously think about it know it's something that goes with that player or voice. It's deliberate, but not a conscious decision. It's also set in a way that the speech would be persuasive, very speech-like. If you were to say something very quickly, then I set it that way. Every normal speaker would do that.

L: Agreed. How much time do you have?

J: Plenty of time. My student was before, he's gone now.

L: How many revisions do you usually make?

J: When I had to do it with pencil, before, I would only do 4 or 5 revisions, but now that I can do it on the computer, I do around 7 or 800. You don't have to rewrite everything, you can just change it.

L: What system do you use?

J: Sibelius, which I don't like very much.

L: I haven't had to use anything since Finale.

L: This was originally published in 1998, what revisions were made by 2002?

J: You're asking me a question I don't know the answer to.

L: Ok, I didn't know if they were significant or not.

J: I think that it was just cleaned up a little bit, but I don't remember how.

L: One of my favorite questions pertains to the 2nd piece, the murmuring passage that passes between the musicians. When you're writing those things, since you are a composer and you can play and sing, do you embody that character while you're writing for each.

J: You're right about the character, but it's about the stage setting, the lighting, costumes, the staging, like a big Schubert song. Among the many reasons that art songs are among the great art forms.

L: *Gretchen am Spinnrade* is one of my favorite art songs because it is easy to tell what represents the spinning wheel, etc. . . . So, do you have a favorite piece out of these 4?

J: I'm really happy with all of them, happy with the order, it's like a symphony. It's not four separate songs, they complement one another.

L: What do you think of when you decide on the order?

J: Immediately, you think of the ones that contrast one another. Contrasting tempi, textures, poems, and the most significant one would be the last one. The last one is psychologically and musically more difficult than the others. This piece was written, it took several months to write the piece and sort of living in the piece.

L: How do you do that?

J: A student asked me if I wait for inspiration to strike, I was like "what, why would you do that....?" No, inspiration only strikes if you work every single day.

L: That's a great thing to think about.

J: It is, but anyone who plays or sings knows that.

L: I think some of us wait for inspiration or a sign and you could be hurting your success.

J: You ready your unconscious in inspiration if you work every day, you make it ready to receive inspiration.

L: Are you still composing as often as you used to?

J: I don't think you could do it more than every single day.

L: You're still composing every single day? What are you composing for right now?

J: Yes, I just finished big 4-hand piece, small string duets for violin/cello. They're all commissioned works, so I'm not sure what's next.

L: Have you written any solo vocal works, recently?

J: I'm always writing songs, I love writing songs.

L: I was reading about your experience with the ballet, and writing for dance, that really intrigued me. I think with vocal works, it's easier for me to use poetry as a way to be musical.

J: I know exactly what you mean.

L: So what do you use when you're composing for ballet?

J: Well, it's a very important part of what I do, and that's what you ask about the rhythmic part of it. But it comes from hanging out with dancers, because when you work with dancers...when I was in college I worked with dancers. One of the advantages of living in New York. They told me I should dance, I'm a very self-conscious person, but it helped me to understand the muscle of it. Impulse to what lives you off the ground, what makes you move fast, what makes you move slow, underlying harmonic.

L: I've never thought about that area of that compositional brain.

J: Well, it's not part of the compositional brain, it's not typically a composer's attitude. It's one reason why a lot of new music is rhythmically self-defying and doesn't affect your body or your emotions, and it's the reason why jazz always does. It comes from the body, comes from marching.

L: Do you, this is random, but from hearing you talk and from the way you sit. Do you know much about Alexander Technique?

J: Yes, of course. I'm also sitting on a ball, I thought it would be really hard, but it's so comfortable, it makes you sit straight, I highly recommend it. It's extremely ugly, that's the downside of it, but I bought it on Amazon. I don't think I could do it on the piano, because your feet need to be available to the pedals.

L: What all have you studied about Alexander Technique? Has it influenced your composing?

J: In an indirect way. It influenced my composing with my body, the rhythmic parts make more sense, and helps me as a singer to be a composer. Those things are useful, and when I used to be able to play for hours at a time, it was very useful.

L: You just reminded me of a professor who retired my last year at LSU, Patricia O'Neil. She was very well-versed in Alexander Technique, she was a delight to work with and she made you want to learn. Her teachings in Alexander Technique really helped me with singing.

J: Most of the big music conservatories use Alexander Technique.

L: Where are you right now?

J: I'm in my studio.

L: Oh, for some reason I thought you were at a college.

J: No, I was at UNT and I came home to teach private students.

L: Wonderful. The private students you teach, are they in college for music, high school students....?

J: Mostly adults. Pretty seldom you have anyone serious about composing as a child, and if you do, then they are probably ok on their own.

L: Do you teach all day?

J: No, I teach a very strict number of hours so I can compose.

L: Do you have another recording of *Abraham and Orpheus*.

J: I've had several different groups play it, but I've never had anybody get all four movements. Also, in each performance, it's like one terrific performer and one "Ok" performer, and one like "how did that person get to that piece?" I'm very frustrated.

L: Why do you love this piece?

J: There are many reasons I love this piece, it's a very dear child that never gets a good teacher.

L: That's funny. Once I begin singing them more often, I'll probably have more questions and I love having you available to me and as my primary source.

J: I love it, I'd love to hear a final performance of the piece done right.

L: Thank you so much for your time, I'll be sending you another email in the next week or so.

J: Please do engage me in the writing process. Find a good violist that's very musical. It's not a flashy instrument.

L: I will, thank you!

J: It's been a pleasure, Lauren. Have a good one!

L: You as well!

VITA

Voice Teacher and Soprano Lauren Brown, graduate of Simpson College and Louisiana State University, has studied voice and pedagogy under some of the most successful vocal pedagogues of our time, including Dr. Timothy McMillin, Dr. Kimberly Roberts, Terry Patrick Harris, Dennis Jesse, Dr. Lori Bade, Dr. Loraine Sims, and Robert Grayson. She has coached under the direction of Dr. Robert Larsen, Eugen Sirotkine, and Michael Borowitz.

As a part of her recent doctoral work at Louisiana State University, Brown has had the opportunity to complete extensive studies in vocal pedagogy and voice science, as well as a comprehensive research on the life and works of Joelle Wallach. Brown's final monograph/dissertation is on *A Revisitation of Myth* by Joelle Wallach, four songs for viola, piano and medium voice.

Brown is currently a private voice teacher in Iowa, where she currently resides.