

The Kapralova Society Journal

A Journal of Women in Music



Special points of interest:

Women composers in contemporary American music

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Contemporary American Women Composers and Their Choral Music: Part I by Jennifer Kelly

Current scholarship on American choral music remains minimal as we progress further into the 21st century. With notable exceptions such as reference books by Nick Strimple, Catherine Roma, Evelyn Davidson White, and David DeVenney, the information on contemporary music for vocal ensemble is slim.¹ Slimmer still is the printed scholarship regarding composed choral music of contemporary American composers. Information is almost nonexistent when it comes to the contemporary choral music composed by American women.² In the United States, numerous women composers have a wealth of choral music that has yet to receive critical attention. The following article in two parts serves as an introduction to contemporary American women composers of choral music.

This author recognizes the significant contributions of many more composers than are introduced here, and this text does not attempt to provide complete information on all contemporary American women composers of choral music. It serves as a brief examination of sixteen living female composers, each of whom deserve more in-depth study. It is hoped that this examination will inspire further study of both contemporary American women composers and music for vocal ensemble. For the purposes of this article, I am using the definition of American music as music created within the United States. As the world becomes ever more interconnected and musical styles merge, defining musical categories become less and less significant. Therefore, the following article will present each composer in alphabetical order and focus on contemporary music for vocal ensemble written in the past 20 years.

Each of these composers is commissioned, and has won numerous fellowships, grants and awards throughout her

career. Many are freelance or college professors and advocates for young composers and women in music, as shown in their work on editorial boards, residency programs, and youth programs. The majority of these women are composers of many ensembles, including large scale works for orchestra, ballet, film, and opera, chamber music, and solo vocal and instrumental repertoire. Well-known composers, such as Tania León and Jennifer Higdon, better known for their instrumental compositions, also compose strong music for vocal ensemble and are presented here.

The following text is Part I of a two-part article. In alphabetical order, composers to be examined in Part I include: Beth Anderson, Nancy Bloomer Deussen, Emma Lou Diemer, Jennifer Higdon, Edie Hill, Libby Larsen, Mary Jane Leach, and Tania León. Part II will include: Meredith Monk, Judith Shatin, Joan Szymko, Hilary Tann, Augusta Read Thomas, Janika Vandervelde, Gwyneth Walker, and Judith Lang Zaimont. What follows is a series of brief synopses focusing on the composers' music for vocal ensemble: their voicings, thrust of choral compositions, publishers, recordings, and brief biographies. To give the reader a broader understanding of these composers, the discussion elaborates on select pieces from their choral catalogs. When possible, a current website and/or career position is noted. This article is not the final voice on any of these composers or their music, but offers a beginning.

Beth Anderson

Beth Anderson was born in 1950, in Lexington, Kentucky. Her formal education includes degrees from the University of California at Davis and Mills College. Her influential teachers include John Cage, Terry Riley, Robert Ashley, and Larry Austin. Anderson's early music with

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voice is comprised of songs, and works combining taped sounds with voice such as in her opera *Queen Christina* and her oratorio *Joan*. Her self-described “text-sound pieces” are rhythmic and percussive portrayals of poetry. As her compositional style changed in the 1980’s from a strong Cagian influence to a more neo-romantic style, Anderson began composing “swales.” She explains on her website, “A swale is a meadow or a marsh where there is nourishment and moisture; and, therefore, a rich diversity of plant life. My work, since 1984, has been made from swatches (of newly composed music, rather than found music) which are reminiscent of this diversity.” Anderson uses “swale” as a musical term, and has composed numerous critically acclaimed swales for chamber ensemble, orchestra, and string quartet. To date, she has yet to compose a vocal swale. In addition to her opera, operetta, text-sound works, and instrumental swales, Anderson has also written for film, two off-Broadway shows, solo instruments and tape, band, dance ensemble, and vocal ensemble. The choral compositions in her catalog are written for mixed ensemble (SATB) and treble voices, employing both sacred and secular texts.

In the Company of Women (1998): A sixteen-measure piece written in homophonic chorale style with six verses, words by Jo-Ann Krestan. The melody is reminiscent of an American folk song. Written for a church service, the words celebrate women, as they exist “in the presence of God’s grace.”³

Precious Memories (1996): Words by Jo-Ann Krestan and Beth Anderson, *Precious Memories* is a single-movement *a cappella* piece for mixed ensemble with *divisi*. Anderson describes the piece as a collage of American styles, with lyrics including “memories of old time hymns, life threatening experiences, survival as a woman composer, the search for love, perfect bliss and a descriptive critic.”⁴

Beth Anderson is currently a freelance composer in Irvine, California. Having lived in New York City for several years, she continues to produce “Women’s Work,” a concert series for Greenwich House Arts & New York Women Composers Incorporated. Several publishers work with Anderson’s music including Joshua Corporation/EMI, Recital Music in England, and Antes/Bella Musica in Germany. Much of her music including her works for vocal ensemble is available from the composer through her website *beand.com*. Her work is recorded by various artists on different labels and includes three instrumental recordings of all-Beth Anderson music.

Nancy Bloomer Deussen

Nancy Bloomer Deussen was born in 1931, in New York City. Her formal education includes the study at the Julliard School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, University of Southern California, California State Universities at Long Beach and San Jose, and the University of California at Los Angeles. Her influential composition teachers include Vittorio Giannini, Lukas Foss, Ingolf Dahl,

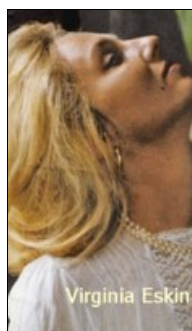
and Wilson Coker. Deussen was born with absolute pitch and began studying piano at age six and composing at age fourteen. The recipient of a number of awards and commissions, Deussen is Founder and President Emeritus of the San Francisco Bay area chapter of The National Association of Composers, USA. Her compositional catalog includes music for orchestra, band, chamber and recorder ensembles, and solo vocal and instrumental repertoire. Her choral music is composed for both mixed (SATB) and women’s ensemble, both *a cappella* and accompanied. Her texts are equally divided between sacred and secular, and Deussen’s choice of texts is often inspired by nature. Tonal and lovely, Deussen’s choral music is frequently celebrated for being beautifully accessible. As she explains that melody is foremost in her music, Deussen is also a self-proclaimed champion of accessible contemporary music.

Et in Terra Pax (2002): A single-movement, seven-minute work for mixed chorus and piano. *Et in Terra Pax* is a tranquil piece with sweeping melodic lines in every vocal part ending phrases in lush chords. The work is composed as a contemporary ballad without refrain, accessible for choirs of varying abilities. The piano supports the vocal line, as the vocals provide the musical manifestation of the Latin text *Et in Terra Pax* (Peace on Earth).⁵

Nancy Bloomer Deussen has taught at Mission College and the University of Santa Clara (California), and is currently a freelance composer and clinician living in the San Francisco Bay area. As many contemporary composers self-publish their work, Deussen’s music can be found through Accessibility Music Publishing accessed through her website *nancybloomerdeussen.com*. Her instrumental compositions can be heard on several recordings by various artists and labels. Professional recordings of her choral music have yet to be made.

Emma Lou Diemer

Emma Lou Diemer was born in 1927, in Kansas City, Missouri. Her formal education includes degrees from Yale and Eastman School of Music. Influential teachers include Paul Hindemith, Ernst Toch, and Roger Sessions. A child prodigy, Diemer had already written several piano concertos by the age of thirteen. Still a very prolific composer, Diemer has over 500 compositions in her catalog including works for organ, orchestra, chorus, chamber ensemble, band, voice, keyboard, solo instruments, and electroacoustic repertoire. Her works for choir are abundant. She is the recipient of numerous commissions and awards including the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award in Orchestral Music for her 1991 piano concerto, and Composer of the Year for the American Guild of Organists in 1995. Diemer believes that the challenge of being a practicing musician informs her writing and encourages her to compose for both amateur and professional musicians.⁶ Within her long career, her style has changed and adapted with the times. Her most contemporary choral works fre-



Virginia Eskin



Stephanie Chase

Virginia Eskin, a California native and long-time Boston resident, is a remarkably versatile solo pianist and chamber player, known for both standard classical repertoire and rag-time. A long-time champion of the works of American and European women composers, she has recently created and hosted 'First Ladies of Music,' a 13-program radio series sponsored by Northeastern University and produced by WFMT Chicago, carried by over 100 radio stations in the United States and abroad.

Stephanie Chase resides in New York City. Concert tours in twenty-five countries have brought Stephanie Chase international recognition and include appearances as soloist with the world's most distinguished orchestras, among which are the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, London Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony, and San Francisco Symphony.

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Aaron Green, About.com

Kaprálová was one of the major female composers in history, despite her short time on earth; this Koch disc does her music considerable justice and serves as a strong introduction to Kaprálová's music.

Dave Louis, Allmusic.com.

I have no doubt that this release will not only please Kaprálová's enthusiasts but also add many others to her following.

Věroslav Němec, Harmonie

This recording is an important milestone in Kaprálová's discography and testifies to the memory of a brilliant mid-twentieth century composer.

Book Worm, Amazon.com

The recording is strong and the performances sensitive and completely committed.

Rob Barnett, MusicWeb (UK)

Uit al haar muziek klinkt een uiterst krachtige stem, die trefzeker zegt wat zij te zeggen heeft.

Thea Derks, Radio 4, The Netherlands

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quently use a neo-classical or neo-romantic form and structure.

Songs for the Earth (2002-03): A six-movement, eighteen-minute work for soprano and baritone soloists, mixed vocal ensemble (SATB), and orchestra. Commissioned by the San Francisco Choral Society, Diemer was given choice of text. She decided upon a theme drawing attention to Earth and our neglect of it. Inspired by her sister's (Dorothy Diemer Hendry) poem, "Experiment," about our neglectful treatment of Earth and what might be the consequences, Emma Lou Diemer set this poem central and most dramatic of the movements. Diemer continues to describe the work, "Two of the poems celebrate nature: Emily Dickinson's "Nature" and Mary Oliver's "Harvest Moon." Omar Khayyam's "And this delightful Herb" reflects on the temporality of all things, and Emily Dickinson's "I robbed the Woods" I interpreted as a lament. The Hildegard von Bingen text, "Then I saw a greater brightness," is one of vision and hope. I chose to write the entire work in a style far moved from any avant-garde influence, but rather in free tonal, somewhat impressionistic and expressive settings of the words."⁷

Mass (1993-2000): *Mass* is a traditional Mass with traditional text, sounding contemporary without being dissonant. The five-movement work is 40 minutes in length, and scored for soprano and tenor soloists, mixed choir, two pianos (requiring virtuosic playing in the first two movements), optional organ and synthesizer, vibraphone, and percussion. As described in the score, both the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* are extensive, multi-sectional treatments of the Latin text. The final movements *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei* are shorter and simpler in conception with pseudo-recitative texts, background color, and reflective passages.⁸

Emma Lou Diemer has always combined composing with teaching and performing. She helped to found the electronic/computer music center at the University of California at Santa Barbara and taught there for over twenty years. She is currently "Professor Emeritus" at UCSB and organist emerita at First Presbyterian Church in Santa Barbara. Many publishers publish Diemer's works, and most of her choral compositions can be found at Santa Barbara Music Publishers, Treble Clef Music Press, and Seesaw/Subito Music Corporation. Over 100 of her compositions have been recorded. As music publishers today often record excerpts of music on their websites, many of Diemer's choral works, including an exceptional recording of *Mass* by the Donald Brinegar Singers, can be heard at Santa Barbara Music Publishing and on SBMP's choral compilation discs.

Jennifer Higdon

Jennifer Higdon was born in 1962 in Brooklyn, New York. She received her formal education from Bowling Green University, Curtis Institute of Music, and University of Pennsylvania. Higdon has been consistently composing and having her works performed since the age of twenty-

one. The press took notice of her in 2002, when the Philadelphia Orchestra commissioned and premiered a new work *Concerto for Orchestra*. In 2005, Higdon won a Grammy Award for her CD *Higdon: Concerto for Orchestra and City Scape*. Higdon is the recipient of numerous awards including a Pew Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, and two awards from the American Academy of Arts & Letters. She has a large and varied catalog of orchestral, chamber, and vocal music. In the last ten years, Higdon has composed nearly a dozen choral works for mixed voices (SATB) and four-part men and women's ensembles. Her choral compositions are often a *cappella* or accompanied by keyboard with a few notable accompaniment exceptions such as flutes, crystal glasses, chimes, vibraphone, and orchestra. Her choral works are composed to be accessible, although they do not sound traditional. Both amateur and professional choirs have performed her works, as her music tends to appeal to a broad audience. Her style changes depending on the commission, however her innate sense of form and full use of instrumental range are apparent in her compositions. Higdon takes inspiration from the world around her and everything she has experienced. She explains, "I think a composer writes everything they hear in their world. Everything they started hearing when they were young, everything of the language they speak – American music sounds so different than French music and German music. I think the sound world in our heads arises from everything we experience and hear in our lives."⁹

O magnum mysterium (2002): A single-movement seven-minute work for mixed ensemble, flutes, crystal glasses, and chimes.¹⁰ The traditional text is sung in both Latin and English. The traditional harmonies of the vocal parts are paired with a more contemporary flute duet and percussion. With a bold and majestic sound, the piece arcs in the middle with increased movement, vocal *divisi*, dynamics, and English text.

The Singing Rooms (2007): *The Singing Rooms* is Higdon's most recently composed piece with vocal ensemble.¹¹ Composed for solo violin, mixed choir, and orchestra with varied percussion, *The Singing Rooms* is a seven-movement, thirty-minute work featuring the poetry of Jeanne Minahan. At the premiere of the work with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Philadelphia Singers, and violinist Jennifer Koh, Higdon described the work as "a journey through a house where the violin leads the way."¹² *The Singing Rooms* is a balance of instrumental and vocal independent lines, rhythmically driven, with the most prominent foreground presence being the solo violin.

Jennifer Higdon is currently a member of the composition faculty at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Her works are self-published through Lawdon Press, and various artists perform her compositions on multiple recordings and labels. Higdon's choral music is found on recordings by The New York Concert Singers, The Philadelphia Singers, and Handel and Haydn Society

Chorus. The composer's website: jenniferhigdon.com.

Edie Hill

Edie Hill was born in 1962, in New York City. Her formal education includes degrees from Bennington College and the University of Minnesota, and her formative teachers include Vivian Fine, Lloyd Ultan, and Libby Larsen. Hill is an active advocate for music education and young composers through her work with youth programs in public schools, Minnesota Music Educators Association, and Girl Scouts of America. To date, the thrust of her compositional catalog is choral music, with over twenty choral compositions. Hill's catalog also includes a number of works for orchestra, chamber ensemble, and solo repertoire. Her choral compositions are written for varied ensembles including mixed (SATB), treble voices, women's and men's ensembles. Mostly *a cappella*, her work also includes notable accompaniment such as viola, percussion, or guitar. In addition to her instrumental commissions, she has received choral commissions from such groups as the Dale Warland Singers, Rose Ensemble, and several collegiate choirs and private choral societies. Although Hill uses classic sacred and secular texts, her music is often set to poetry of seldom-set poets such as Sarojini Naidu, Jacopo Sannazaro, Joan Wolf Prefontaine, and Serena Fusek. Using a broad timbral palette, Hill washes the sound with color, cluster chords, and frequent *ostinato* passages. Her music is dramatic and gentle, challenging and accessible.

The Bike Let Loose (2004): This single-movement work for four-part treble voices and piano was co-commissioned as a special project in the year 2004 by the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota Music Educators Association. Serena Fusek wrote the text about July in the heartland, and a bicycle riding through "miles and miles of corn." Major chords and open harmonies dominate this exuberant piece. Hill's use of eighth note *ostinatos* sustains the image of the bicycle peddling through the heartland. *The Bike Let Loose* has a modern sound of whole tone passages, cascading lines and unexpected accents. An exciting ride for youth choirs, it is both challenging and accessible as the music fundamentally supports the text of the racing bike.¹³

Dazzle of Day (1998): A single-movement six-minute work for guitar, vocal soloists, and mixed choir with multiple *divisi*.¹⁴ Pablo Neruda wrote the original text composed here using Alastair Reid's English translation. *Dazzle of Day* begins with guitar harmonics and melodic lines that are accompanied by the surrounding ethereal voices. Text and texture build as Hill's use of *ostinato* and repeated notes in the inner voices keep the vocal lines moving without a straight-ahead guitar accompaniment. Guitar is composed as an instrumental voice, trading melodic lead with the voices that generally accompany themselves. *Dazzle of Day* varies texture with cluster chords of multiple voices resolving to smaller sounds with fewer voices. The text exists within the wash of color, repeated syllables for

ostinato effect, and the importance of pulse over meter.

Edie Hill is currently a freelance composer in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Artist-in-Residence at The Schubert Club. Her work is self-published through Hummingbird Press. Although Hill's music has been broadcast internationally, and has been composed through numerous commissions, recordings to date are few. Vocal groups, Dare to Breathe and Cantus have recorded some compositions. The composer's website: ediehill.com.

Libby Larsen

Libby Larsen was born in 1950, in Delaware, but was raised in Minnesota. Her formal degrees are from the University of Minnesota, and teachers include Dominick Argento, Eric Stokes, and Paul Fetler. Her other musical influences include singing Gregorian chant in school as a child, the influences of television, radio, theatre, and the sounds of culture that surround her in her travels and in the artistically celebrated city of Minneapolis. A tremendous supporter of contemporary composers and their music, Larsen co-founded the Minnesota Composers Forum, (now the American Composers Forum), in 1973. A recipient of numerous commissions, awards, and artists-in-residence programs, Larsen is a prolific composer with a very large catalog of works for orchestra, opera, chorus, dance, band, and chamber and solo repertoire. Her choral texts are varied, often based on poetry by or about strong women. She won a Grammy Award in 1994 for the CD *The Art of Arleen Augér* on which Larsen's song cycle *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1989), poetry by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, is featured. Her music for vocal ensemble is plentiful and encompasses about half of her total catalog. She composes for all traditional voicings and varied accompanying forces, often using noteworthy combinations of percussion. Larsen is fascinated with the melody and percussive sounds of spoken American English, and her choral music is inspired by the "music" of spoken poetry.¹⁵

Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth (1991-92): A six-movement thirty-minute work for soprano solo, mixed chorus (SATB), and chamber ensemble¹⁶ in the structure and spirit of a traditional Mass, yet "replacing the texts with words addressing human beings' relationship to the Earth."¹⁷ In the program notes contained on her website, Larsen goes on to describe her intent to perform this traditional Western ritual with new reverence, spirit, and meaning in order to effect change. There is a theme of circles throughout *Missa Gaia*, employing chord progressions taking us around the circle of fourths (fifths), and chords and intervals often associated with jazz-like passages. *Missa Gaia* has an emphasis on movement and pulse, passages of chant and whole tone melodies, strong use of imagery, and a balanced mixture of thick harmonic textures and unison passages. Poetry is kept in the foreground by utilizing the traditional structure of a Western Mass and drawing texts from the Bible, Native American poets Joy Harjo and Maurice Kelly, medieval

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mystic Meister Eckhart, the Chinook Psalter, and poets M. K. Dean, Wendell Berry, and Gerard Manley Hopkins. The accompanying chamber ensemble includes string quartet, oboe, four-hand piano, and percussion.

I Just Lightning (1994): A single-movement seven-minute work for soloist, four-part women's ensemble, and percussion. *I Just Lightning* is based on a Mazatec chant surrounding the Mushroom Ceremony from the Mazatec Indians of Mexico. Larsen uses the original chant recording by a Mazatec *curandera* or *shaman*, Maria Sabina. Translated into English, each line of the chant ends with the Spanish word "dice" meaning "I say." The liner notes of the Las Cantantes CD (see recording information) explain that the chant evokes the Divine Spirit with a supplication for healing. The score presents a mix of approaches, at times pulsing rhythm and bold strength; at times ethereal and beautiful; and at times evoking the chant. All the while, text remains in the foreground. The chant is sung in the first person from the perspective of a strong woman.

Libby Larsen is a freelance composer in Minneapolis, Minnesota who accepts numerous commissions and active residencies. Larsen's works are published by Oxford University Press, ECS Publishing, and the composer. For detailed information regarding compositions, see her website libbylarsen.com. Much of Larsen's music has been recorded by various artists and labels. *Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth* was recorded on the Koch label by the Oregon Repertory Singers, Gilbert Seeley, conductor; *I Just Lightning* is on the 2002 recording *I Just Lightning: The Music of Libby Larsen*, by the University of New Mexico Women's Chorus Las Cantantes, Bradley Ellingboe, conductor.

Mary Jane Leach

Mary Jane Leach was born in 1949, in Vermont. Her formal education includes study at the University of Vermont, and Columbia University. Influential teachers include Mark Zuckerman and Jeanette Lovetri. The thrust of her compositional catalog is music for vocal ensemble. She is the recipient of several awards and commissions, including a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, which was established by Jasper Johns and John Cage to support innovative artists in the performing arts. Leach is enjoying recent critical attention for her music directed toward advanced women's ensemble and mixed chorus (SATB). Also in Leach's catalog are works for chamber ensemble, solo, and electroacoustic repertoire. Leach's choral music embraces sound exploration. She is particularly interested in how sound interacts with space. Leach creates sounds produced by the purity of the voice, the combination of tones at exact intervals and beats, and the acoustics of the space. Gathering inspiration from early music such as Claudio Monteverdi, and romantic music such as Anton Bruckner, Leach creates her own subtle color palette developing into a bold and developed contemporary sound.

O Magna Vasti Creta (1997): A single-movement nine-minute work for eight-part women's ensemble and

string quartet.¹⁸ Taking inspiration from early music, *O Magna Vasti Creta* is virtually free of dynamic and expressive markings, as they are composed into the piece. Pedal tones provide the foundation, pulse, and reference pitch for the gradually developing sound. An effective use of strings, the quartet is treated as an equal voice as opposed to accompaniment, and their pitches are utilized as pedal tone, melody, and inner harmonic voices. The text for *O Magna Vasti Creta* is made up of phrases taken from ancient Cretan, ancient Greek, and Italian describing Ariadne, mythical Queen of Crete. Leach employs a prolongation of pitch and sound, creating a layered texture that is less about the text and more about the changes in timbre manifesting the text. *O Magna Vasti Creta* stacks layered voices and strings above the persistent pedal tones. Ensemble is everything. Deceptively contemporary, Leach's music gives the impression of traditional early music, yet creates a subtle and sophisticated sound of new music.

Mary Jane Leach is a freelance composer who currently lives in upstate New York. Her website includes a picture of an old brick church "with good acoustics" that she recently purchased as her home and a place for concert performance. C.F. Peters publishes several of her choral works, and Leach's music can also be found through the composer and her website mjleach.com. Much of her choral music exists on two all-Leach recordings: *Celestial Fires* and *Ariadne's Lament* featuring the New York Treble Singers, conducted by Virginia Davidson and The Rooke Chapel Choir, conducted by William Payn on XI and New World labels.

Tania León

Tania León was born in 1943, in Havana, Cuba, and has lived in New York City since 1967. She received two degrees from the Peyrellade's Conservatorio de Música in Havana and studied composition at New York University with Ursula Mamlok. Equally respected both as composer and conductor, León was a founding member and first musical director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, and acted as Advisor to Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic. She was the Latin American Advisor to the American Composers Orchestra, and founder of the award-winning Sonidos de las Americas festivals. In 2008, she was appointed the United States Artistic Ambassador of American Culture in Madrid, Spain. Additionally, she is the recipient of many awards and fellowships such as the Guggenheim Fellowship and the Ignacio Cervantes Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement through the Cuban Cultural Center. León's compositional catalog consists of numerous works for large ensemble including orchestra, ballet, opera and theatre, and mixed genre. She also has a large catalog for solo and smaller instrumental repertoire. Her music for vocal ensemble includes *Samarkand* (2005), a major work for speaker, mixed voices (SATB), children's chorus, and instruments. In addition to *Samarkand*, León has composed over a dozen

works for vocal ensembles from two to twelve solo voices. Often written for advanced ensembles with technical and musical skill such as her work *Batéy* (1989), her music is both a *cappella* and accompanied. León's music is inspired by her upbringing in Cuba and her experiences in the United States with the Dance Theatre of Harlem, musical theatre directing, and classical connections. Her harmonies often combine western sounds and compositional techniques with textual and rhythmic influences from Africa, Cuba, and American jazz. León's music for vocal ensemble abounds with independent vocal lines, rhythmic energy and motion, and unexpected percussive sounds.

Drume Negrita and *El Manisero* (2002): These two Cuban folk songs are secular, twelve-part arrangements for mixed vocal ensemble that complement each other in style and text. *Drume Negrita* is a lullaby with gentle and consistent movement, originally composed by Ernesto Grenet. *El Manisero* is an energetic and light-hearted song about a peanut vendor looking for love, originally composed by Moises Simons. The first page of both scores¹⁹ explains, "Both *Drume Negrita* and *El Manisero* have become icons representing the spirit of the people of Cuba." Arranged by León, both songs are composed with a light instrumental quality that, despite their multiple *divisi*, do not sound overdone or heavy. León's subtlety of rhythmic accents in the melody and vocal percussion lend an uplifted sound and graceful vocal quality to the voice. The composed vocal percussion adds a contemporary feel to the *a cappella* pieces and balance with the interplay of melodic parts. Staying true to the original folk songs, syncopation is an integral element in both pieces. Instead of heavy accents emphasizing the syncopated rhythm, León's modern Latin "madrigals" have independent lines with articulation and dynamic markings that indicate a light and precise sound.

Tania León is currently Tow Distinguished Professor of Music at Brooklyn College with visiting professorships and clinicians at conservatories and universities. Peer Music Classical publishes her music. Numerous recordings of León's instrumental music exist. Chanticleer and The Western Wind Ensemble have recorded a few of León's work for vocal ensemble. The composer's website: tanialeon.com.

Notes:

1. The following books are noted resources: *Choral Music in the Twentieth Century* by Nick Strimple, *The Choral Music of Twentieth Century Women Composers: Elisabeth Lutyens, Elizabeth Maconchy and Thea Musgrave* by Catherine Roma, *Choral Music by African-American Composers* by Evelyn Davidson White, and *Source Readings in American Choral Music* by David DeVenney.
2. Information on individual American women composers of choral music can be found in the archives of such journals as *Choral Journal*, *Journal of the International Alliance for Women in Music*, and *The American Choral Foundation Research Memorandum Series*.
3. Beth Anderson, *In the Company of Women*, 1998.
4. Beth Anderson, *Precious Memories*, 1996.

5. Nancy Bloomer Deussen, *Et in Terra Pax* (Palo Alto: Accessibility Music Publishing, 2002).
6. Anne Gray, *The World of Women in Classical Music* (La Jolla, California: WordWorld, 2007), p. 244.
7. Jennifer Morgan Flory, "A Guide to the Choral-Orchestral Works of Emma Lou Diemer," *The American Choral Foundation Research Memorandum* 193 (Spring 2008): 7.
8. Emma Lou Diemer, *Mass* (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Music Publishing: SBMP 350, 2000).
9. Jason Victor Serinus, "Interview: The Award-Winning Jennifer Higdon," *Secrets of Home Theater and High Fidelity* (June 2005) <http://www.hometheaterhifi.com/volume_12_2/feature-interview-jennifer-higdon-6-2005.html> (28 August 2008).
10. Jennifer Higdon, *O magnum mysterium* (Philadelphia: Lawdon Press, 2002).
11. Jennifer Higdon, *The Singing Rooms* (Philadelphia: Lawdon Press, 2007).
12. Christina L. Reitz, "Jennifer Higdon: The Singing Rooms and Concerto 4-3," *Journal of the IAWM* 14 (2008): 7.
13. Eddie Hill, *The Bike Let Loose* (Minneapolis: Hummingbird Press: HP04-11, 2004).
14. Eddie Hill, *Dazzle of Day* (Minneapolis: Hummingbird Press: HP04-02, 1998).
15. Jennifer Kelly, "Libby Larsen: Insights and Influences through Love Songs," *Choral Journal* 2 (February 2008): 21-22.
16. Libby Larsen, *Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth* (Boston: ECS Publishing: 4807, 1999).
17. Libby Larsen, "Missa Gaia: Mass of the Earth. Composer's Notes" 2008 <<http://libbylarsen.com/>> (28 August 2008).
18. Mary Jane Leach, *O Magna Vasti Creta* (New York: C. F. Peters Corporation: 678883, 2006).
19. Tania León, *Two Cuban Songs* (New York: Peer Music, 2002).

About the author:

Dr. Jennifer Kelly is currently Assistant Professor of Music and the Director of Choral Activities at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. She conducts two ensembles at Lafayette, and teaches Women in Music. Prior to coming to Lafayette, Dr. Kelly lived and worked in the Los Angeles area. An Associate Professor at Los Angeles Valley College, she was also a member of the faculty at the Kadima Conservatory, conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra. Dr. Kelly was awarded the *Women in Education Award* at Valley College in 2004. She obtained her doctoral degree in conducting from the University of California, Los Angeles, under Donald Neuen. Her scholarly interests include American music, particularly that of female composers. She has served on the boards of both the Music Association of California Community Colleges and the American Choral Directors Association, California chapter.

Website: www.lafayette.edu/~kellyjw

Intermedia: Redefining American Music at the Turn of the Third Millennium

by Sabrina Peña Young

Outside the realms of traditional art forms, intermedia incorporates digital video, sound synthesis, virtual reality, interactive audiovisual installations, the Internet, and a limitless array of technological innovation. With such a broad range of technological possibility at the composer's fingertips, creativity reaches to the far ends of the imagination. Artists like Maryanne Amacher and Brenda Hutchinson create sound environments that evolve as participants interact with them. Carla Scarletti's Internet gallery, *Public Organ*, invites Internet users to participate by submitting original artwork. Kristine H. Burns uses video generation and sound synthesis to create fluid visual images that captivate the audience, and Laurie Anderson performs large-scale multimedia operas wearing a multi-sensory suit that emits percussive sounds with each movement she makes. With such diverse artistic output, multimedia crosses over disciplines indiscriminately.

The history of intermedia stems from unique philosophical movements that mocked the establishment by an outrageousness and unorthodox approach to the craft. Futurism, Surrealism, and Dadaism birthed the idea of taking art outside of the gallery and into the streets. The Fluxists acted against the materialistic art business. They borrowed from Dada and Surrealism, creating performances of simultaneous unrelated events. Musicians, painters, poets, and a motley of other artists orchestrated these "Happenings." Events ranged from Charlotte Moorman's nude cello performance of Nam June Paik's *Sextonique* to Yoko Ono's *Cutting Piece*, where she invited the audience to slowly cut apart the clothing she wore. Performance art pieces, besides shocking art connoisseurs, stole unabashedly from visual art, electroacoustic music, and theater. A handful of artists contributed to the birth of Fluxism, including Alison Knowles. Both she and her husband Dick Higgins conceptualized the idea of the simple over the extravagant, a major premise of this artistic phenomena.¹

Meredith Monk grew up under the shadow of Fluxism. While a young dancer, Monk performed in numerous "Happenings." She fully plunged herself into performance art with her work, *Juice* (1969). The work showcased her unique choreography with the 85 performers and constantly played with "different spaces and changing sensibilities."² Each of the three parts took place in a different location, with one section involving the spiralling staircase of the Guggenheim Museum. In 1968 Monk founded "The House," a performance art group. Incorporating her fascination with extended vocal techniques and her penchant for choreography, Monk directed the company's interdisciplinary ensemble throughout the 1970s. In 1978 the newly created Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble presented concerts using African and Asian techniques, such as chanting, clucking, and ululating.³ Monk turned her talents to-

ward film in the 1980s, directing both *Ellis Island* and *Book of Days*. The 1990s watched her return to her theatrical roots, as she created operatic events, and the Houston Grand Opera premiered her full-length opera, *Atlas: An Opera in Three Parts* in 1991. In the late 1970s soundscape artist Liz Phillips used interactive sculptures and sonic environments to explore the relationship of the audience to time and space. Her combination of the visual and audio resulted in a multidimensional space that responds to the audience.⁴ *Sunspots I* and *Sunspots II*, (1979–1981), involved an installation with a copper tube and screen acting as a theremin, triggering a nearby synthesizer based on the proximity of passersby.⁵ Other works involved sensors that directed sonic events towards detected body movement. Phillips' installations allow the audience to evaluate the correlation of their own actions and the resulting auditory experience.⁶

Bridging the gap between popular culture and the musical community, Laurie Anderson uses music technology, pop culture, and references to the current political atmosphere in her compositions. Often described as a type of opera, Anderson's multimedia narratives shift from the immediate and real to personal musings. The dichotomy of her work "moves between being an exhibition of technology and live (bodily) performance, between being auditory and visual, between being authentic and inauthentic, real and unreal."⁷ Anderson explains that "...electronics have always been connected to storytelling. Maybe because storytelling began when people used to sit around fires and because fire is magic, compelling, and dangerous. We are transfixed by its light and by its destructive power. Electronics are modern fires."⁸ In the early 1980s Warner Brothers elevated Anderson to a cultural icon by contracting her to do several albums, starting with *Big Science* (1982). The relationship with Warner Brothers continued through several albums, including *Home of the Brave*. Eventually the contract expired, ostensibly because Anderson's work did not generate enough revenue. Anderson continued creating multimedia works, including *Empty Places* (1989), the CD-ROM *Puppet Motel* (1995), and *End of the Moon* (2004), a narrative exploration of her experiences as NASA's first artist-in-residence.⁹

As the United States approached the 1990s, new technologies challenged artists to extend their creativity beyond the existent boundaries. The Internet and virtual reality moved the performance space into a virtual world, leaving concreteness behind. Video editing programs, priced within the ranges of the consumer, gave anyone the ability to edit visual imagery like professionals. Real time performances, run by Max or SuperCollider, enabled musicians to synthesize produced sounds as they played. Robotics, biology, and genetics joined with com-

posers to develop music using scientific tools. An exciting world of limitless possibility had opened up and composers discovered that the realization of their imagination might be only a click away. With the final decade of the 20th century coming to a close, a cyberculture developed, one which became, "...increasingly comfortable with substituting representations of reality for the real."¹⁰ Instant gratification transformed societal expectations as the digital age exploded exponentially. The "death of the author"¹¹ promulgated by the advent of superior computer systems, changed the notion of "artistic genius" as "originality and creativity [became] a matter of software engineering."¹² The computer, once simply a tool used in the creation of a piece, became integral to the compositional process. Ironically, in some instances, the computer took on the role of composer as it ran programs input by the artist. Combining previous techniques with recent digital advances, composers produced a new generation of masterpieces.

Science and music joined forces in the works of composers at the turn of the millennium such as the works of San Francisco-based vocalist and composer Pamela Z, who used her technological skills to engineer the BodySynth™, a MIDI controller triggered by body movements. A seasoned singer, she performs with extended vocal technique and bel canto, in conjunction with spoken word, percussion, digital delay and MAX/MSP.¹³ Part of her inspiration for the BodySynth™ came from the freedom she felt as she layered percussive sounds and extended vocal technique with digital delays, saying that "...my hands and my body were freed up for gesture and movement, and I became more focused on the performance aspect of my work. I came to see the sound I was making, and my physical behavior while making it, as an integrated whole..."¹⁴ Wanting to utilize this free motion, Pamela Z developed the BodySynth™ to compose in realtime, using movement and gestures. Pamela Z composes in several mediums, including large-scale multimedia works, film music, and performance pieces. She produces Z Programs, dedicated to interdisciplinary events, and she performs in the interdisciplinary ensembles sensorChip and The Qube Chix.

Composers have discovered that the inherently interactive Internet provides more than an advertising venue and instead creates opportunities for online installations and virtual exhibits. Though composers typically limit their sites with links to their music, biographical materials, and publication information, Brenda Hutchinson, well-known for her instrument The Tube and her narrative pieces, has attempted to transform her web page into a work in its own right. Brenda Hutchinson's Internet page, found at sonic-portraits.org, opens with *Sonic Portraits*, a dizzying array of repetitive noise and white segmented lines moving in time to the looped sounds. Button selection triggers samples of her vocalizations. She takes the site one step further with the piece *Sold* (2004, in progress). *Sold* suggests scathing political commentary of America's economic and foreign policy. Set in an interface representing the United States,

disturbingly out-of-tune recordings of *God Bless America* permeating throughout, *Sold* gives the user the opportunity to explore some of Hutchinson's own exploits into the streets of New York. Selecting a state adds another croaked voice to the dizzying strain of disembodied voices. Hutchinson uses recordings of mental patients and homeless men to sing about the "land that I love." The poignant irony lies in the bold truth that the nation has failed these citizens. They must "stand beside her," the country which relegates them to white walls and cardboard boxes. *Sold* exemplifies how a composer can use the Internet to proclaim a message through the cyber-community. As web design becomes an integral component of music education, more composers will use the Internet to both promote and produce new compositions.

Digital video editing software gave more freedom to visual artists by the end of the 20th century, and within the next decade, electroacoustic composers were regularly incorporating digital video into their compositional output. Ostensibly unrelated to popular music videos, a number of these works balanced electroacoustic music with visual imagery, sometimes in conjunction with a narrator or live musicians. Thematic elements differed greatly from artist to artist. Abstract forms, scathing political commentary, and personal documentaries number among the diverse collection of digital video compositions. Alicyn Warren, Assistant Professor in the School of Music at the University of Michigan, combines video, electronic music, and spoken word to create moving mixed media narratives. Two such pieces are *Molly* (1997) and *Mirror Story: Graveside* (2004), the first scene of an electronic opera. *Mirror Story: Graveside* intertwines live voice, video, spoken word, and music into an impressive multimedia experience. Director of the Electronic Music Studios at Florida International University, Dr. Kristine H. Burns' treats the electronic score and the digital video as musical motifs that counter each other not unlike two themes in a classical work.¹⁵ In *Copper Islands*, liquid metal entrances the audience with its circular undulations. Burns clearly delineates each section, interspersing small motifs between longer audiovisual phrases. *Copper Islands* begins with an amorphous blurred patch of metallic yellow that teasingly appears and disappears from the screen, ending with waves of color subsiding and the piece resolving into a solitary line. At the University of North Texas, Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner's intermedia works focus on her themes related to her personal life.¹⁶ Her approach to composition derives its materials from introspection. Having conquered cancer as a young woman, she pulls from the strength she gained through the illness to develop works sharing her experiences. Her CD-ROM, *Full Circle*, meticulously documents her struggles, and having dealt with a number of obstacles as a cancer survivor, Hinkle-Turner reviews the societal and emotional issues related to the illness. The next generation of composers, such as Hsiao-Lan Wang, Maria Del Carmen

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Montoya, Sabrina Peña Young, and Angela Veomett, continue to find innovative ways of incorporating video into traditional musical art forms.

The Amiga computer system processes realtime movement and displays visual patterns based on the input information, and many composers have used AMIGA in creating exciting interactive works. Using video, electroacoustic music, and logarithms calculated by the AMIGA computer system, Maggie Payne focuses on "[taking] natural sounds and transform them using equalization, convolution, phase vocoding - [with] whatever resources are available."¹⁷ For *Liquid Metal* (1994), Payne collected samples of "unpleasant" sounds she recorded while on a canoeing trip. Using her prowess in the studio, Payne distorts and morphs the harsh sounds into pleasing tones.¹⁸ In both *Chromosonics: Alexander Lake* (1991) and *Chromosonics: The Lady That is Known* (1993) she uses the AMIGA computer's ability to calculate logarithms based on changing video tint. Many of Sylvia Pengilly's works utilize AMIGA's Mandala 3000 computer system. In her work, *Elemental Chaos* (1992), the AMIGA computer calculates logarithms based on chaos theory. The end result splashes the video screen with mesmerizing fractals. *Alternate Spaces* (1999) uses the AMIGA computer to generate a video using the recorded figures of the dancers, a commonly used practice of contemporary dance concerts. By allowing the computer to generate these forms, Pengilly gives up full control over the piece, depending on the performers and the AMIGA to produce a cohesive work. Interactive programs, such as those produced by the AMIGA, have a definitive advantage over standard tape pieces in that they have flexibility. While tape pieces cannot pause without disrupting the concert, the AMIGA creates with live bodily movement. If the performer tires, the AMIGA detects the slowed motions and produces video imagery accordingly. The unpredictability of each performance adds to the anticipation makes each performance fresh and interesting.¹⁹

Contemporary multimedia involves composers that incorporate computers into complex interactive installations and performances. In Lynn Hershman-Neeson's 1992 installation, *Room of One's Own*, she connects the user's choice of object, say a telephone or a bed, to an erotic icon.²⁰ The viewer has unwittingly become a voyeur and a victim.²¹ The McLean Mix, Priscilla Anne McLean and her husband Barton, use their expertise in electroacoustic to envelope the audience in an interactive sonic nature environment. The McLean Mix deals with the subject of nature and environmental awareness in their works. In *Rainforest* recorded sounds and pictures of the rainforest filled the room. The audience participated by playing acoustic and electronic instruments provided, including didgeridoos.²² Raymond Ghirado and Megan Roberts collaborate in large-scale video installations involving sculpture and electronic music such as *Badlands*

(1988), where the pair constructed a dry and eroded mountain with a path leading to the summit 12 feet above the ground. Looking into the crater at the center of the summit, the observer sees the form of a person pounding the ground, an illusion constructed by three television sets partially buried below. Accompanying sound effects mimicking the sound of pounding fists further add to the believability of the construction. Soundscape artist Maryanne Amacher uses a combination of psychoacoustics and ambient sounds to create sonic environments.²³ Live mixing and speaker placement play an integral part in her soundscapes.²⁴ Amacher sometimes adds slides and other visual elements to enhance the space. Visitors often find themselves embarking on an adventure as they explore one area and then another. Her works are considered "site-specific" because the installation conforms to the physical space it occupies.

Current developments in digital technology have challenged composers to further stretch their imaginations and expand the definition of music to include virtual reality, artificial intelligence, software design, 3D animation, and Internet art. Cutting edge artists find themselves flooded by constantly burgeoning media developments. A significant number of these works actively engage the user with intricate environments and inviting interactive computer interfaces. *Public Organ: An Interactive, Networked Sound Installation* (1995) made its debut at the International Computer Music Conference. Created by computer programmer Carla Scaletti, *Public Organ* commented on the impact of the world wide Internet through the user's choice of selected objects, such as a radio, telephone, or spray can.²⁵ Scaletti co-invented KYMA, a sound design computer language, for the *Public Organ* project in which Scaletti designed an Internet gallery inviting participants to submit graphics of themselves, along with original graffiti. The installation instantly added the materials to the online gallery. Other composers, such as Sarah Peebles and Rebecca Allen, have experimented with the Internet and its use as a public space.²⁶

Interactive virtual environments, cyberspace galleries, and music composed by artificial intelligence sound like features of a science fiction film, but such advances are soon becoming the archaic relics of yesterday. Intermedia has left behind pencil and paper, assimilating materializing technologies. The contemporary intermedia composer discovers creative uses for scientific innovation, from Pamela Z's BodySynthTM to Carla Scaletti's cyber *Public Organ* and Sylvia Pengilly's algorithm-based video. These composers have extended their craft beyond the horizon, "foreshadowing in their art the social impact of technological change."²⁷ Already composers have begun to cross the next frontier — biotechnology, virtual worlds, artificial intelligence, and neuroscience. Inspiration balances between invention and imagination.

Notes:

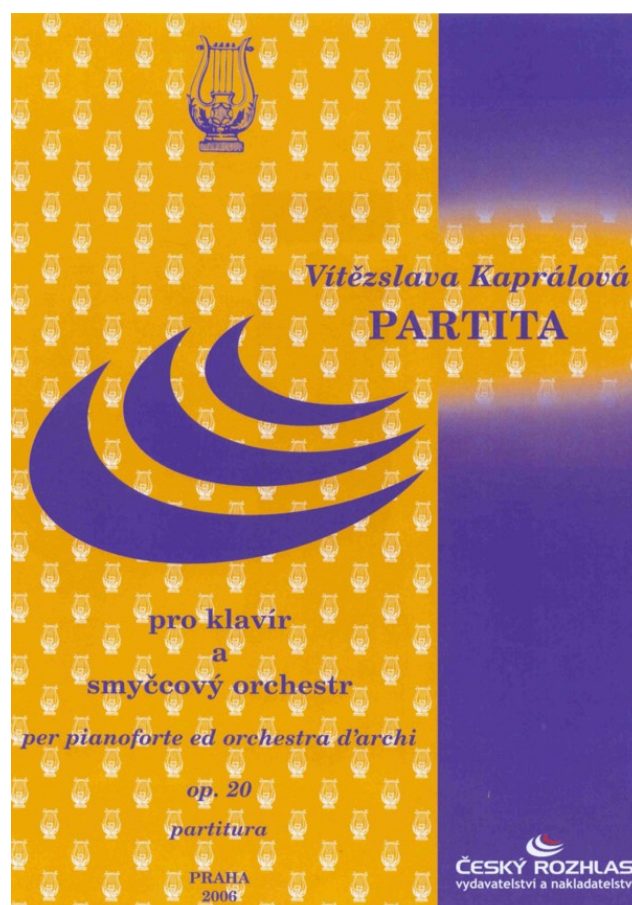
This article is a condensed version of my text *The Feminine 'Musique': Multimedia and Women Today* (2004). Florida International University Collection: MO.P45 2004.

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