

ALL YOU WHO SLEEP TONIGHT BY JONATHAN DOVE:
A THEORETICAL AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE

by

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Chapter 1: Jonathan Dove

“I’ve come to think about my music as a means of telling stories...”¹

Jonathan Dove CBE has made a significant mark in the musical world to date. With his large output of music, including opera, sacred choral, chamber and orchestral music, this British composer has influenced the sphere of modern music through his effective storytelling, evocative textures, and memorable musical lines. Dove has been regarded as a continuation of British music since Benjamin Britten.² This talent has not gone unnoticed. In the summer of 2019, Dove was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) at Queen Elizabeth II’s Birthday Honours for services to music. Such recognition from his own country highlights the enormous impact Dove has made in the world.

Jonathan Dove was born in London in 1959 to architect parents.³ He studied piano, organ and viola when he was young and was continually making up songs on the piano.⁴ “As a child,” Dove states, “I used to spend all my time improvising at the piano, but I would often have a story book on the music stand next to me so that I could read while I was playing. So I was able to associate music with action...”⁵ The idea of understanding music with story would be present later in Dove’s music. As a teenager, his talents increased as he played the organ for his local church and viola in the London Schools Symphony Orchestra. Dove then studied composition in his college years with Robin Holloway at Cambridge University. Dove admits that during this time writing music with a diatonic sensibility was “a

¹ Andrew Palmer, *Encounters with British Composers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2015), 150.

² Richard Fairman, “DOVE All You Who Sleep Tonight: Song Cycles,” *Gramophone*, Accessed on April 15, 2019, <https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/dove-all-you-who-sleep-tonight-song-cycles>.

³ “Jonathan Dove,” *Faber Music*, Accessed on January 6, 2020, <http://www.fabermusic.com/composers/jonathan-dove/biography>.

⁴ Frances Marshall, “Telling Stories with Jonathan Dove”, *Final Note Magazine*, November 2018, <http://finalnotemagazine.com/articles/jonathan-dove/>.

⁵ Palmer, *Encounters*, 150-151.

questionable activity.”⁶ Chromaticism and serialism, 20th-century compositional styles featuring 12-note scales and figures, were the preferred genre of writing following the tradition of the Second Viennese School. After his graduation, Dove looked for ways to freelance as a composer. He contacted director and writer Jeremy Sams, who told him to play for the Handel Opera Company. This step “completely changed my life”⁷ according to Dove. By working as a rehearsal pianist and coach, Dove cultivated “a deep understanding of singers and the complex mechanics of the opera house.”⁸ He continued his operatic exposure as the Assistant Chorus Master at Glyndebourne, where he was offered the position of Chorus Master. He saw this as a step to being a conductor and realized his passion for writing music instead.⁹ Since then, he has written almost thirty operas including his comic opera, *Flight*, which was commissioned by and premiered at Glyndebourne in 1998 to enormous success. Other commissioners of Dove’s music include the London Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, Festival d’Aix-en-Provence, English National Opera, the UK’s Channel 4 television, The Opera Group and The Young Vic, Opera North, King’s College Cambridge, Cathedral Organists’ Association, BBC Radio, and the BBC Proms. His music is celebrated at both the professional and amateur level. Some of his operatic output is geared towards children and amateur musicians, like some of the works of Benjamin Britten. In an interview with *Final Note Magazine*, Dove explains the inspiration he draws from Britten.

He [Britten] showed that you can write music that’s worth listening to, that combines professionals and amateurs. That children can have a role in opera, that opera can happen without a symphony orchestra or a huge opera house. You can have it in a church, you can have a chamber opera, you can write opera for TV.¹⁰

⁶ Palmer, *Encounters*, 152.

⁷ Marshall, “Telling Stories.”

⁸ “Jonathan Dove Biography,” *Edition Peters Group*, Accessed on April 15, 2019, www.jonathandove.com.

⁹ Palmer, *Encounters*, 151.

¹⁰ Marshall, “Telling Stories.”

This versatility is necessary for the life of modern music. Instead of sticking to a large performance hall with large sets and expensive costumes, opera needs to live in today's economy and culture. Dove is an excellent proponent of tangible, modern music that is economically reasonable and easily accessed. His music is a beautiful combination of tonal stability and modern tendencies—where traditional and present-day practices combine and compel realistic drama for both audiences and performers. After the premiere of *Flight*, critics praised Dove for this ability: “Perhaps, then, this is the future: modern opera which is appealing and enjoyable and which provides a contemporary synthesis of popular elements and contemporary developments.”¹¹

A Composer's View

Described as “sensuous and playful”¹², *All You Who Sleep Tonight* combines classical and cabaret musical styles with the evocative poetry of Vikram Seth. Jonathan Dove marries Seth's poetry with the talent of Nuala Willis, whose “dramatic range and versatile character” inspired this collection of songs about the joys and trials of love. I first ran into this set on a CD entitled *Nights Not Spent Alone: Complete works for mezzo-soprano by Jonathan Dove* performed by mezzo-soprano Kitty Whately and pianist Simon Lepper. My teacher, Mary Ann Hart, recommended this recording because of Whately and Lepper's outstanding performance. It was the final song of the set that captured my heart. The simple and poignant message was only highlighted by the ethereal textures of the piano. I performed *All You Who Sleep Tonight* on my final doctoral recital at Indiana University in 2019 with pianist Marika Yasuda. As stated before, my hope is that more of Jonathan Dove's music is performed at schools and professionally. I interviewed Jonathan Dove in an email correspondence about his music and inspiration for this set.¹³ Through these questions, he was able to illuminate the purpose, process, and performance for the cycle. First, I asked about the purpose for the songs, examining the poetry and choice of voice and piano. Subsequent questions revolved around Dove's compositional process in creating the songs. Finally, I

¹¹ Raymond Head, “Oxford: Jonathan Dove's ‘Flight’”, *Tempo*, no. 207 (1998), JSTOR, 37.

¹² Fairman. “DOVE.”

¹³ Courtney Jameson, email to Jonathan Dove, August 27, 2019.

asked about specific performance practices. With these questions, I hope to present the intentions of the composer and his experience with its performances.

The Purpose

My initial queries investigated the purpose of the music through the choice of poetry and instrumentation. While studying the set, I found Vikram Seth's poetry intriguing and beautiful. He can say so much with few words. Dove's affinity for poetry centers around his "favourite 19th century poets" Emily Dickinson and Lord Alfred Tennyson. While Tennyson sticks to more flowery, Victorian-era language with rhythm and rhyme schemes, Dickinson explores a more conversational style of writing with an unrestrained narrator. Both usually stick to traditional forms, explore deep human emotions while asking questions, and have poignant messages. Seth's poetry is a unique combination of both poets. He sticks to traditional rhyming and rhythm forms, while having a distinctive narrative voice. Dickinson's poetry would often trail off at the end (either through words or punctuation), as if unsure of the answer or distracted by another thought. In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, Dove selects poems that often end with no solid conclusion. He uses this unresolved feeling musically and I will discuss this in another chapter. Like Tennyson, Seth can stick to rhyme and rhythm while expressing himself with impressive clarity. Instead of going around in metaphorical circles, both Tennyson and Seth write with a precision that is understood and appreciated by the audience. It does not inhibit the story; rather, it provides a structure through which the written world is stabilized and seen as reality. I was curious to see how these three poetic giants influenced Dove and his music.

Courtney Jameson: *"What drew you to his [Seth's] poetry and how does it influence your music?"*

Jonathan Dove: "In fact, although Vikram Seth is very much alive, he shares with my two favourite 19th century poets a fondness for rhyme and metre – something I have always found appealing, and musically suggestive: somehow rhyme invites

melody, and helps to shape it. Within these formal constraints, he is able to capture human relationships in surprising depth.”

This depth in the poetry allows for Dove to explore the many facets of the human experience. The poems have a traditional form, but they share the feeling and clarity of their 19th century counterparts. This aids the music rather than drawing attention away from it.

JD: “There is also a great emotional range in these poems: “Prandial Plaint” usually gets a laugh from the audience, while it can be hard to sing “Soon” without crying. As with Dickinson, the simplicity is deceptive: the music can enjoy its clarity and directness, while also hinting at its depths.”

This “clarity and directness” is not always seen in 21st century music and is, to me, a great relief to hear and perform. I will be discussing specific musical gestures of Dove in Chapter 3 and how they aid the poetry and create a believable world. These musical gestures are visible in all his works, whether on large or small scale, sacred or secular. Jonathan Dove has written an impressive amount of music: 28 stage works, 20 orchestral works, 19 chamber works, 53 choral works, and 17 solo vocal works. I was curious why, for such a prolific composer, Dove chose to write for voice and specifically for the mezzo-soprano voice. For him, specific voices inspire his music.

JD: “The human voice excites me, so I write vocal music of all kinds. But there are certain singers who I find particularly inspiring, as potential characters in an opera or performers in a concert hall. Nuala Willis’s voice, dramatic range and versatile character inspired me to write several operatic roles, and two song-cycles, over 20 years.”

All of Dove’s songs and song sets have been written for specific singers (who often premiere them). He also writes for certain people more than once – Nuala Willis being just one. Nuala Willis (Rawnsley) is a British mezzo-soprano/contralto, actress and author, who is known for her time both as an opera/musical theater singer and classical actor. She started with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera in 1977 and since then has worked with all the major British opera companies, along with debuting in

Covent Garden in 1986. Her international career spans throughout Europe to Canada and the United States. She also has worked in musical and classical theatre, showing her diversity in acting and singing. She met Jonathan Dove in 1994 through a production of Euripides' *Medea*, for which he wrote incidental music. Since then, he has specifically written *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, the "Old Woman" in *Flight* (1998), "Doris" in *When She Died* (2002) (which is a TV-opera related to the death of Princess Diana), and various roles in *The Enchanted Pig* (2006) for Willis. She also had her own touring cabaret program and is now known as a children's book author. This change in career is a natural one for her as it is a continuation of human study and the "keen observation necessary to be a performer."¹⁴ With learning more about Nuala Willis, I gleaned more of an understanding of the purpose of these songs. With her talents as an actress, musical theatre and cabaret singer, along with her focus on storylines, *All You Who Sleep Tonight* becomes more of an amalgamation of styles instead of just "classical music". Such versatility of performer is needed to perform these songs well. Through Dove's focus on an individual voice, we see the specific intention of the music and the character presented.

The Process

The second grouping of questions deals with the musical process when composing. I wanted to know if there were specific motives or styles that influenced Dove while he wrote these songs. In past interviews, Dove attributes his stylistic affinities to American composers such as John Adams, Philip Glass and Steve Reich.¹⁵ They share the minimalist techniques in their music, which focus on small, repetitive phrases or notes. These motives can have dramatic effects to raise tension and drive the story or conversely, to make the music fade into the background. Whatever the intent, it is an effective tool when used properly. Such motives appear in all the songs of *All You Who Sleep Tonight* and will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. I asked Dove if his conception of these motives was intentional and followed a certain pattern.

¹⁴ "Nuala Willis," Home, Accessed on January 27, 2020, <http://www.nualawillis.com/>.

¹⁵ Palmer, *Encounters*, 151-152.

JD: “There is no specific technique: I imagine the scene that each song depicts, and gradually the mood calls forth a certain kind of harmony, a certain rhythmic energy. Sometimes the vocal line is included in the gesture that defines the scene; other times, it floats above it.”

Such textural weaving in-and-out of the voice follows the extensive lineage of Western-influenced art song throughout Europe. Text-painting is a popular tool to create an aural painting of the text and has been used for centuries by composers. Dove is a pianist by training and is familiar with this history of song in both Germany and England. His music, while distinctly his, is also reminiscent of Benjamin Britten. Britten is known as the quintessential British composer because he married the old tradition of song with new musical and tonal advances. When listening to Britten’s orchestral interludes in his opera *Peter Grimes*, for example, I hear a connection to Dove’s own operatic interludes in *Flight*. While Britten’s music is texturally layered with hints of traditional counterpoint, Dove’s orchestrations stretch the range and melodic commentary of the orchestra. Both are instinctually dramatic and emotionally powerful in their presentations in the respective operas. With this in mind, I asked Dove if he feels the influence of Britten in his songs.

JD: “This is really for others to say. Much as I love Britten, I’m not thinking of him when I write songs, with the possible exception of *Out of Winter*, where Robert Tear’s poems refer to the Britten/Hardy *Winter Words*. As an accompanist, I played some of Britten’s folk-song arrangements, and was very taken with the way he could find a single accompanying figure that would illuminate the whole song; but in this respect, I am probably at least as much influenced by Schubert and Schumann.”

Next, I was curious about the idea of space in his songs. The manipulation of aural space (through textures, range of instruments and rests) is a fascinating idea to me. So many of Dove’s songs have silences, either through rests or fermatas. When I was performing this set, it was tricky coordinating how long to hold these silences and how to interpret them dramatically. It gave me a chance to study the music

and text to come to a viable solution. I asked Dove if he had specific inspiration for writing these silences.

JD: “I suspect much of this comes from my experience of writing opera, where it is essential to conjure up the right atmosphere, and create clear contrasts between moods; and where silences are part of communication between characters onstage, or between an onstage character and someone in their imagination.”

Communication through silence is a great tip for performers. It needs to be part of the story, rather than a pause from the action. This idea will be discussed more in the final chapter but makes me realize that these songs are not monologues. Instead, they are parts of conversations with others in a larger story.

The Performance

The idea of process leads into performance. Do we, as performers, have a responsibility to express the composer’s thoughts or our own? Is it a choice each performer needs to make on their own or through the composer’s lens? I believe that there should be a partnership between author/composer and performer. Art is best with collaboration. In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, we see a collection of poems dealing with love found and lost. When performing this in 2019, my instinct was to connect all the songs by viewing them as the perspective of one person. This idea of a narrative, or cycle, is a common tool of German composers in the 19th century. Composers like Schubert, Schumann and Beethoven are remembered for their contribution to the song cycle. Song cycles usually have poetry by one poet and have a continuity in the music or musical ideas. Other song cycles, such as *Winterreise* or *Die schöne Müllerin*, have a distinctive narrative that follow an individual. *All You Who Sleep Tonight* is not an obvious narrative, if one at all. With those thoughts, I was curious to see if Dove had conceived of these thirteen songs as a cycle or a set of small stories.

JD: “Perhaps it is more like a collection of short stories – although they could certainly all be happening to the same person, at different times. In a recent conservatoire

performance, the songs were shared among several different students. It was very effective.”

His answer surprised me since I leaned towards the idea of it being a cycle of a single person. It is arranged in a linear way that could be connected to a singular person. The poetry is chosen from various sections of Seth’s collection *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, which oscillates between personal monologues and third-person narratives, which leads me to think of a singular narrator. Some are historic accounts; others are personal memories. However, I enjoy the idea of multiple singers performing the piece because it gives the feeling of community instead of isolation. This reflects the sentiment of the last song perfectly: “Know that you’re not alone/The whole world shares your tears.”¹⁶ This sense of community is also felt in the partnership of the piano and voice.

CJ: *“When listening to and singing this set, I hear the piano as an active partner with the vocalist. Even during accompanimental figures, there is still a clear viewpoint in the piano. How do you view the piano/voice partnership, and do you see the piano as an active character in each song? (For example, the piano is more virtuosic than the voice in songs #1, 11, 12 and has a long introduction in #9).”*

JD: “In those songs, the piano reveals various kinds of agitation or disturbance in the narrator (singer). So the piano is as much a part of the character as the voice in each song. There is thus always a duet happening: the storytelling is equally shared. The piano is never simply in the background.”

This partnership is essential in any well-written piece. It is one of the most compelling parts of Dove’s music too. Instead of isolating importance to one part, both musicians are needed to complete a work of art. This partnership can also be felt on stage. Dove’s opera *Flight* (1998) is an example of dramatic connection through the voices and orchestra. The orchestra works directly with the voices, contributing feelings and commentary on the dramatic action. However, in opera, the drama is aided

¹⁶ Vikram Seth, “All You Who Sleep Tonight” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 62.

through visual additions (i.e. costumes, sets, props) and the grand scale of the orchestra and stage.

Performing song is a much more intimate setting. I wanted to know if Dove thought if the preparation and performance was different in each form.

CJ: “...*Is there a different approach to an operatic scene versus a song (such as song #12, “Soon”)? What are the keys to preparing an aria versus a song?*”

JD: “Arias and songs are both dramas: both involve storytelling, truthfully conveying feelings and conjuring up a scene. I think the difference is really in context: a song is performed in the relative intimacy of a chamber music space, where detail and nuance is easier to catch, and quieter dynamics can be explored. In the opera house, with an orchestra, everything is scaled up somewhat; and I use the extremes of range and dynamics accordingly.”

Finally, I wanted to see if Dove had any advice for singers and pianists learning this set of songs. It is unique to have the ideas of the composer available to the performer. As a student of art song and opera, I have studied music that is hundreds of years old, relying only on other’s study and knowledge for compositional style and performance. Getting the time to communicate with the composer directly gives a unique opportunity for performers who are studying Dove’s work to either present an honest representation of his songs or a newly conceived approach.

JD: “Having accompanied Nuala Willis in cabaret in Pizza on the Park, I liked the idea of writing something for her that lay somewhere between the informality of cabaret and the formality of the concert-hall. So it’s good to allow the jazzy rhythms here and there to be jazzy. And to inhabit the different character of each song to the full – the playfulness and the darkness – embracing elements of theatricality.”

This combination of “informality” and “formality” is another characteristic of Dove’s music. There is a familiarity in the informal that connects to the majesty of the formal. It gives a realistic feeling to the character while maintaining a high quality of music.

Having performed *All You Who Sleep Tonight* before, I gained new insight to performance and collaboration practices for this set. Through his music, Jonathan Dove provides a dramatically rich canvas from which the musicians can draw. However, he provides space for the singer to share their own emotional connection to the narrative. Through understanding Dove's purpose, process and performance ideas for *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, we can gain a better understanding of how to interpret Dove's music and share it with others.

Chapter 2: Vikram Seth

“Music to me is dearer even than speech.”¹

What poet admits to holding something closer to themselves than words? In the story of *An Equal Music*, Vikram Seth focuses on the effect of music through a tumultuous romantic relationship. Seth’s love of music spills into his writing unabashedly. As one critic writes, “One of the most impressive aspects of this novel is the way in which it manages to convey music through language”.² This ability to convey music through words is evident in all of Seth’s writing and makes his poems especially suitable for songs. His words are concise yet conjure clear images to those who read them. By understanding his personal history, studying his style of writing (especially the poems in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*), and observing the personal themes in his writing, we will see how Seth distills experience into evocative poetry.

The Novelist and Musician

A world traveler and storyteller, Vikram Seth was born in Calcutta, India into a wealthy family. His father was a business executive and his mother, a lawyer, became the first woman to become Chief Justice of a state High Court in India. Family is an essential part of Seth’s life. To him, “[F]amily has been the biggest thing in my life...You never gain independence. In your imagination, you are always someone's child, long dead though they may be”.³ Growing up, he attended local private schools and eventually moved to the United Kingdom to complete his schooling. He studied philosophy, politics and economics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford and graduated in 1975. He moved to the United States in

¹ Vikram Seth, *An Equal Music* (London: Phoenix House, 1999), Author’s Note.

² James Proctor, “Vikram Seth,” *Literature: British Council*, 2003, <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/vikram-seth>.

³ Tim Adams, “Togetherness, once Removed,” *The Observer*, September 11, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/sep/11/fiction.biography>.

1975 to pursue his PhD in Economics at Stanford University, but never completed this degree. Inspired by receiving a creative writing scholarship at Stanford, Seth wrote his first collection of poetry, *Mappings* (1980). Initially, this collection did not receive much attention and it was not until his second publication, *From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet* (1983), when he received public accolades. This book is memorable because of the intimate personal stories Seth shares and is written in a less formal prose form. It contains two of the themes for which Seth is now known—individual emotions and travel. *From Heaven Lake* gives a personal account of Seth’s time at Nanjing University in the province of Jiangsu in the People’s Republic of China. He studied there from 1980-1982 researching for his degree at Stanford and hitchhiked back to India, recording the stories of his journey along the way. *From Heaven Lake* explores the “personal transnationalism” of Seth in his journeys through China, Tibet and India and presents a self-presentation of boundaryless performances⁴. This lack of boundaries is seen in the forms Seth uses when he writes. As Sam Knowles writes in his book about traveling writers, *Travel Writing and the Transnational Author*, Seth’s writings “feature use of particular devices to indicate space, silence, and generic or temporal shifts, from ellipses and white space to formal structures connected with both prose and poetry”⁵. This ability to shift form is also seen in his poetry. Ironically, Seth’s poetry is more formal and prosaic in style, while his prose seems more like poetry. Thus, by manipulating space and silence through words (much like composers do with music), he creates an individual style which emanates through all his work.

Seth is more famously known for his novels both in prose and verse. Through the larger medium, Seth continues to use the themes of travel and personal stories from his life. *The Golden Gate* (1986), inspired by the Golden Gate Bridge in California, shook the literary scene because of its unique form. Seth wrote this novel in verse in iambic tetrameter with an *AbAbCCddEffEgg* rhyming pattern, a direct reference to Pushkin’s novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. *A Suitable Boy* (1993) is one of the longest novels

⁴ Sam Knowles, *Travel Writing and the Transnational Author* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 22.

⁵ *Ibid*, 72.

written in the English language. With over 1300 pages, the novel describes the life of a young Indian girl (and her family) searching for a proper husband during the time of the first post-Independence election in India, hinting at Seth's own upbringing and relationship with his family. (The BBC just announced casting for the first screen adaptation of the book; they start production soon.) *Two Lives* (2005) describes the relationship of Seth's own great-uncle and German-Jewish great-aunt, based on love letters they wrote to each other. Seth lived with them while studying in England at age 17 and was inspired by his great aunt's escape from Nazi-occupied Germany to England in 1939. His most musically inclined novel, *An Equal Music* (1999), describes the lives of two classical musicians, who, in a perfect world, would have been ideal for each other. But life, like a winding fugue, had other surprising and ironic plans. As an amateur musician, Seth is known to sing Schubert *Lieder* to himself at home and displays a thorough knowledge of instrumental music in *An Equal Music*.⁶ He had little formal training, but explains his reverence for music when talking about his own work:

I have always loved music...but I've tried not to write about it because I loved it so much. I've always kept it as a kind of preserve. I was trained in Indian classical singing and I learned the tabla and a bit of Indian flute. But I turned to Western music somewhat late. I did a bit of piano and cello but it's pointless coming to it at the age I came to it. I have friends who are musicians. I probably have more friends who are musicians than literary people, especially in London.⁷

How fitting, then, that Jonathan Dove would then take Seth's poetry and set it to music.

The Poet

All You Who Sleep Tonight (1990) is the third book of poetry written by Vikram Seth. The preceding collections, *Mappings* (1980) and *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), have similar

⁶ "A Suitable Joy," *The Guardian*, March 26, 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/1999/mar/27/books.guardianreview1>.

⁷ Seemita Mohanty, *A Critical Analysis of Vikram Seth's Poetry and Fiction* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2007), 226.

threads of internationally inspired writing combined with Seth's style and humor. However, *All You Who Sleep Tonight* captures a certain personal nostalgia not found in the other collections. In each section, Seth describes love that is found, lost, and remembered through life, death, loneliness and memories. Love is not an uncommon inspiration for art. Yet, Seth writes with a "directness, [and with] razor-sharp images which achieve cohesion and coherence"⁸ and aids the reader in feeling the exact emotion recalled by the author. The collection contains themes usually associated with Seth's writing: memory, detachment, and exile (which will be discussed later).⁹ It is divided into five sections—"Romantic Residues", "In Other Voices", "In Other Places", "Quatrains", "Meditations of the Heart"—culminating with the final poem of the same title of the collection.

"Romantic Residues" focuses on the multi-faceted design of "love lost, remembered, pondered on, dissected and analyzed, and finally laid to rest."¹⁰ Through the structure of rhyme and the twist of irony, Seth presents love through relationships past and present. These relationships, though particularly personal, are described at a certain distance from the narrator. Whether through memory, emotional detachment or physical distance, each poem in this section is holding on to a remnant of love, rather than the real thing. For example, in the first poem "Round and Round", a man is waiting at an airport baggage claim when he spies a piece of luggage he seems to remember. As the memories flood back, the narrator is taken back to the happy feelings they bring.

And as the steel places squealed and clattered

My happy memories chimed and chattered.

An old man pulled it off the Claim.

My bags appeared: I did the same.¹¹

⁸ Devesh Patel, "Poetry of an Exile," *Contemporary Poetry Review*, July 15, 2010. <http://www.cprw.com/vikram-seth-poetry-of-an-exile>

⁹ Roopali Gupta, *Vikram Seth's Art: An Appraisal* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2005), 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Vikram Seth, "Round and Round" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 3.

This sudden twist of irony is felt in many of Seth's poems. While the narrator is taken back to happier times, they are suddenly brought back to the present when the suitcase is taken by its rightful owner. He also uses imagery of nature to represent time or love passing. In "A Style of Loving", a sunset is described not only to set the scene, but to describe the fading intimacy of two people. By using this imagery, Seth succeeds in creating a detachment between the narrator and their feelings.

"In Other Voices" is a distinctively historical portion that includes a translation of ancient Chinese poetry, a rabbi coming to a religious ruling in Hitler-invaded Lithuania, thoughts from a commandant of Auschwitz in World War II, an account from the Urdu/Persian poet Ghalib, a journal entry of a doctor in Hiroshima after the devastation of the atomic bomb, and a soliloquy of one dying. These socio-political references are told in a third-person narrative, where the poetry is "based on a situation or an occasion and narrated by a person other than the poet and the content and conclusion grow out of those narrations."¹² Seth uses juxtaposition in these poems to highlight the historical instances. In "Work and Freedom", a commandant talks about feeling trapped like the prisoners, even though he can leave and be with family. At the end of the poem, he is asked to relocate and leave Auschwitz. At first, he is sad to leave, "But in the end I was glad to gain my freedom."¹³ A similar juxtaposition is felt in "A Doctor's Journal Entry for August 6, 1945" as the narrator describes the atomic bomb disaster in terms of sound. While an atomic bomb is irrevocably loud, the narrator notices the silence after the detonation. "Silence was common to us all. I heard / No cries of anguish, or a single word."¹⁴

"In Other Places" takes the audience to China and the United States. These travelling poems resemble Seth's travelogue *From Heaven Lake*, though they lack the narrative of a novel. Most of the poems refer to nature to reflect the narrator's life. Again, Seth approaches these poems in a detached way by describing his surroundings more than his own emotions. In "Night in Jiangning", Seth sets a serene

¹² Mohanty, *A Critical Analysis*, 72.

¹³ Seth, "Work and Freedom" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 24.

scene using sight, sound, and scent words, drawing focus to the physical world. On penultimate line, Seth subtly introduces his emotional state and then, just as quickly, resumes his description of the world.

A glass of tea; the moon;
The frogs croak in the weeds.
A bat wriggles down across
Gold disk to silver reeds.
The distant light of lamps.
The whirr of winnowing grain.
The peace of loneliness.
The scent of imminent rain.¹⁵

Such a nonchalant, under-dramatized point makes Seth's poetry so rich. It's as if he is more interested in the world than his own self—a "self-exiled" style with "no confessional neurosis" to distract from his message.¹⁶

The largest portion of *All You Who Sleep Tonight* is the group of "Quatrains" or 4-line poetry. These quatrains are succinct, yet poignant, "little gems, crystallizing Seth's wit, humor, eye for picturesque detail, and his emotions— love, pain, and an impalpable reaching out to grasp something he is not sure is even there."¹⁷ Dove chooses the most poetry for his *All You Who Sleep Tonight* from this section. One of Seth's strengths is his ability to write in traditional and stylized forms (which focus on rhyme and structure). In "Quatrains", Seth structures his writing to fit rhyme schemes and meter. He varies his writing between *ABAB* and *AABB* rhyme scheme. Seth references poets such as Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence, Robert Frost, and Timothy Steele as influences for this orderly style. When Seth started to write poetry at Stanford, most of his poetry was free verse. However, after being exposed to these

¹⁵ Seth, "Night in Jiangning" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 31.

¹⁶ Patel, *Poetry of an Exile*.

¹⁷ Gupta, *Vikram Seth's Art*, 31.

poets, Seth realized his affinity for verse in form. Afraid of being marked as a “fuddy-duddy”, Seth explains, “I learned that you could write in form and still be very much of your time, using patterns that had been used for centuries.”¹⁸ “Quatrains” are an exquisite example of Seth’s talent because they present clear messages in a traditional (and possibly restraining) form.

The final section, “Meditations of the Heart” reflects various attitudes, like the “In Other Voices” section. These poems, however, have less of the socio-political drive as the previous section and instead focus on sorrow and how to survive it. This “strength to live”¹⁹ is highlighted in his poem “Poet”, which is dedicated to Irina Ratushinskaya, a Russian poet who was arrested in 1982 for the circulation of anti-Soviet writing. She was imprisoned for three and a half years and continued to write poetry on soap (since paper was not a privilege given to her). Other poems focus on personal communication problems (“The Stray Cat”), loss of childhood (“Adagio”), death of family (“How Rarely These Few Years”) and struggling for inner peace (“Voices” and “Heart”). The last poem of the book focuses on Seth’s most personal theme: exile. “All You Who Sleep Tonight” is the culmination of this whole collection—combining the intimate theme of love lost with the vast distance of the entire earth. Here, Seth points out the isolating feeling of loneliness with the reminder that truly, no one is alone.

All You Who Sleep Tonight presents the clear and uninhibited vision of Vikram Seth. Some of the poems presented in this collection are of great emotional depth and historical and political importance. Others are simple in their content and presentation, while still containing Seth’s poignant messages. According to author Roopali Gupta, “[t]hese poems are also the most representative of Seth’s oeuvre because all of his characteristic themes—memory, detachment, exile— and styles, from translations to epigrams are present here.”²⁰ These three characteristic themes are all pulled from Seth’s own life. He has a rare ability to present memories with a transparency of emotions. Yet at the same time, he acts as a commentator of his own emotions which allows the reader to step into his shoes and make a personal

¹⁸ Gupta, *Vikram Seth’s Art*, 14.

¹⁹ Mohanty, *A Critical Analysis*, 84.

²⁰ Gupta, *Vikram Seth’s Art*, 27

connection. Memories explore a powerful way to find those emotional pressure points while Seth remains the patient bystander. As explained by Gupta, “The strength of [Seth’s] style is that it is lucid without being simplistic, emotional without being cloying”.²¹ As a traveler in China, the UK, and the USA, Seth understands the feeling of being a wanderer or exile from another land. He pens a memorable story in his travelogue *From Heaven Lake*. While traveling in China, he kept overhearing a popular Bollywood song being sung by citizens of Nanjing. In a smaller town, Seth was actually asked to sing that song, “Awarahoon” (meaning, “I am a wanderer”), to obtain a travel permit through Tibet.²² Seth also references this “wanderer” feeling in a poem from *Mappings* entitled “Diwali”: “The whole world means exile for our breed/ Who are not at home at home/ And are not abroad abroad”.²³

Seth’s personal feelings in his poetry are written simply. Instead of overtly nostalgic writing, Seth uses few words. This gives the reader the opportunity to connect with real emotions. While having strong family connections, he maintains the idea that art is for those who need it, rather than the artist. In an article in the *Hindustan Times*, Seth says, “...[i]f I write a short poem, say, ‘All You Who Sleep Tonight’, it may have an effect on people. It moves me when I hear that that poem was posted on the wall of a hospital somewhere or it was read out by someone to someone at a time of grief or trouble, but that was not my point as such in writing it. It just emerged.”²⁴

²¹ Gupta, *Vikram Seth’s Art*, 15.

²² Bhaskar Sarkar, “Tracking ‘Global Media’ in the Outposts of Globalization,” in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Nataša Durovicová and Kathleen E. Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 50-51.

²³ Rita Joshi, “The Writer as Traveler: The World of Vikram Seth,” *World Literature Today* 82, no.3 (May-June 2008): 47-50, www.jstor.org/stable/40159738.

²⁴ “‘Obsession kept me going’: Writer Vikram Seth on 25 years of *A Suitable Boy*,” *Hindustan Times*, October 22, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/books/what-kept-me-going-was-obsession/story-y2rTlzLUZBUmIJX22CmxiP.html>.

Chapter 3: Musical Patterns in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*

“Undoubtedly, behind the work there stand the influences of American musical theatre and the contemporary minimalist gestures of Adams and Glass - but suffused with a personal and powerful lyricism that goes beyond what Adams achieved in Nixon in China.”¹

The strength of Jonathan Dove’s music is the distinctive blend of styles that flow from various sources of inspiration combined with Dove’s personal musical preference. This review of Jonathan Dove’s comic opera, *Flight*, highlights the connection of Dove’s music with American minimalist composers. However, later in this review, the critic praises Dove for creating recognizable form (like that of Mozart’s operas) with intense Wagnerian orchestral coloring. Dove achieves what most contemporary composers cannot: a modern, minimalist style of music which is infused with lyricism and believable drama, thereby letting the audience enjoy and listen with ease and understanding. Such patterns are seen in all of Dove’s music, especially his songs. *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1996) is the first vocal set written by Dove. Since then, he has completed more than 15 song sets and solo songs with differing instrumental combinations ranging from piano to string quartet to acapella voice. A complete list of Dove’s vocal works is in the Appendix. In this chapter, I will explain three basic patterns of Dove’s music (with regards to *All You Who Sleep Tonight*): the use of harmony through key centers, rhythmic and melodic minimalism, and the presence of idiomatic vocal music with fantastic instrumental writing. This will lead to an in-depth analysis of each song in Chapter 4.

Harmonic Language

First, there is a harmonically free, yet tethered language Dove uses in all his music. Dove gives credit to Benjamin Britten, John Adams, Phillip Glass and Steve Reich as examples of this musical

¹ Head, “Oxford,” 37.

freedom — composers who use tonality as a framework in a time where such formality has been tossed aside.² However, Dove categorizes himself as a composer who writes diatonic music which, in the traditional sense, follows strict rules of a harmonic hierarchy.³ Such a hierarchy of pitches leads to natural ends or closure, known as a cadence. I immediately noticed the lack of cadences in Dove’s songs. The only possible traditional cadence is found in “Prandial Plaint”, although it stretches the idea of a Perfect Authentic Cadence since the final chord, E-major, also includes non-chord tones. While there is a lack of traditional harmonic function, Dove conceives of his tonal music through key centers. Each song revolves around a pitch that serves as a “home base”, much like traditional diatonic/tonal music. Yet, he strips away the functionality of the pitch relationships to create a collection of pitches that generally relate to the key center. Such “extended tonality [is]...used by composers like Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett” and is able to serve the desire to move music ahead while sticking to “tuneful music.”⁴ While many present-day composers write through the use of chromaticism and serialism, Dove is drawn to the idea of key centers to express himself.

I write music that is largely diatonic and certainly modal, usually using only seven notes at any one time rather than all twelve. I didn’t find it possible to express myself satisfactorily in a fully chromatic harmonic palette, and it was when I started using fewer notes that I realized that I would write more articulately because I was able to achieve contrast simply by changing mode. And contrast is the essence of drama.⁵

Using all twelve tones, or serialism, is the 20th-century compositional practice inspired by the work of Arnold Schoenberg and his students, Anton Webern and Alban Berg. Serialism, also known as

² Palmer, *Encounters with British Composers*, 151-152.

³ Marshall, “Telling Stories.”

⁴ Jean-Philippe Heberlé, “Transgeneric and Transcultural Recycling in Jonathan Dove’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (2007),” In *The Déjà-vu and the Authentic: Reprise, Recycling, Recuperating in Anglophone Literature and Culture*, edited by Jean-Jacques Chardin, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), Google Books, 14.

⁵ Palmer, *Encounters*, 152.

chromaticism, 12-tone technique or atonality, is creating a collection of all 12 pitches and ordering them in various forms, or tone rows, so that one pitch (or harmony) was not favored over another. This idea, tied to Schoenberg, sparked a new era of composing that is still seen today. While academically intriguing, I find it hard to understand the dramatic intention and storyline through serialism. By sticking to a more traditional form, Dove uses a diatonic palette of seven notes. His music lacks the formal end of cadences (like 18th century music) and flows from one idea to the next. However, it allows for contrast in the harmonic language to aid the storytelling.

Dove contrasts his diatonic base by using intentional chromatic interruptions. As stated above, Dove looks to create drama in his music, since “contrast is the essence of drama”. His use of chromatic or “non-key” tones are part of his harmonic language by inspiring change in color or emotion. He also fluidly moves between key centers to help change the mood or emotion of the singer. One of the most dramatic moments in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, both harmonically and theatrically, comes from the song “Soon”. The song starts with in G-minor key center and even includes the correct key signature for G-minor (2 flats). However, in a moment of questioning their declining physical health, the narrator asks, “How am I to go on?”⁶. Dove interrupts himself and suddenly moves the key center up a step to A-minor, heightening the anxiety and uncertainty of the singer. The singer remains on the same note, but the mood is immediately switched with the new key center.

60
eyes. How am I to go on?

Example 3-1. “Soon”, mm. 60-62.

⁶ Seth, “Soon” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 25.

The next line “How will I bear this taste?”⁷ adds even more emotional despair and Dove starts to add Ab to the harmony (a chromatic tone), changing the key center to F-minor. More chromatic tones (Bb, Cb, and Eb) are added in the next 3 measures with no real key center. The pitch Eb is heard in both hands of the piano and the voice, creating more tension in the half-step relationship between the added D \sharp . As the singer and pianist wait anxiously for a resolution, they land in the stable key center of G-major which juxtaposes the despairing cries of the narrator to their lover, “Stay by my steel ward bed/ And hold me where I lie/ Love me when I am dead/ And do not let me die.”⁸ Dove creates moments of stability amid chaos. These stable harmonic moments enhance and mirror the drama of this moment, where the narrator is desperately trying to hold onto life, yet it keeps flying away from them.

Motivic Language

Dove’s use of key centers and dramatically inspired chromatic flavors show his sense of restraint and clarity. While describing *Flight*, Dove says “it’s harmonically quite transparent...which is also useful in telling a comic story.”⁹ This transparency is present in *All You Who Sleep Tonight* through minimalism. Minimalism derives from the practice of ostinato (translated from Italian as “obstinate”), in which “any melodic, rhythmic or chordal phrase, usually short, [is] repeated continuously through a section of a work, or through the whole piece.”¹⁰ One of the oldest examples of ostinato is from “Sumer is icumen in”, a 13th-century rota (or round) discovered in Reading Abbey which was founded by King Henry I of England in 1121.¹¹ Ironically, this same round was used by Benjamin Britten in the final movement of his *Spring Symphony*. Minimalism is a counter-reaction of the Modern-era practice of serialism by distilling

⁷ Seth, “Soon” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 25.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Marshall, “Telling Stories”.

¹⁰ Stephen Johnson, “What is an...Ostinato?,” *Classical-music.com*, June 9, 2016, <http://www.classical-music.com/article/what-ostinato>.

¹¹ Lisa Colton, "Sumer is icumen in," *Grove Music Online*, January 21, 2001, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027110>.

the “intellectual abstraction”¹² of atonality to more basic parts. The practice of minimalism began in the 1960s and 70s, inspired by (as some music is) the minimalistic art of Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin and Robert Morris.¹³ American composers such as Philip Glass, John Adams, Steve Reich, Terry Riley and La Monte Young led the movement of minimalism by using ostinatos to rub up against ideas that change and develop, therefore, creating tension and subsequent release.¹⁴ While there are many uses of the ostinato, Dove uses these minimalistic techniques by repeating small rhythmic and melodic figures in the songs of *All You Who Sleep Tonight*.

Dove is a frequent user of rhythmic motives, composing “rhythms you can dance to.”¹⁵ Some motives drive the song, like in “Condition”, where Dove uses a combination of syncopations in the piano to create forward momentum. Others create a specific atmosphere, as in “Night Watch”, where the relentless quarter notes in 5/4 time seem to never stop like a ticking clock. By using these small rhythmic gestures, Dove tells the story through the internal pulse of each song. He also uses melodic and piano motives in his music to enhance the story. In “Across”, the poetry speaks of a distance between two people, either physically and/or emotionally. To achieve this idea of distance, Dove uses the range of the piano by writing eighth note chords that jump to higher range held notes.



Example 3-2. “Across”, mm. 1-4a.

¹² Keith Potter, “Minimalism (USA),” *Grove Music Online*, January 31, 2014, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002257002>.

¹³ “Minimalism,” *Tate*, Accessed February 10, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/minimalism>.

¹⁴ Johnson, “Ostinato”.

¹⁵ Simeonov, “Talking with Composers.”

As the introduction continues, the left hand's notes start to descend, creating an even larger distance between the hands. This figure is repeated every time the voice is not present to remind us of the great distance that is between the two characters. Almost every time, a D \sharp is on top of the right-hand chord. This is also the same pitch on which the voice enters. The voice answers this spacious introduction with descending stepwise motion, an attempt to hide or reconcile their emotions. If the voice were written with sweeping lines, it would convey a more unbridled idea. Dove uses this repeating melodic motive to show the restraint of the character. Conversely, in "Mistaken", Dove combines swinging rhythms against steady eighth notes to denote mood changes of the narrator. When the narrator realizes that they could be in love, the rhythm switches from even eighth notes to a quarter note and eighth note pattern, as shown below



Example 3-3. "Mistaken", Rhythmic patterns.

I hear the swinging rhythms to be more casual, as used in a cabaret or jazz style of singing. When the narrator mentions the word "love", straight eighth notes are used to show growing confidence, which is soon lost. Consistent use of these rhythmic and melodic motives creates an effective palette of aural colors from which the composer can choose.

The Instruments

Dove is primarily a pianist. He admits to playing and singing through all his music when composing. His impressive skill is seen in his piano parts and orchestrations and how they work with (not against) the vocal line. He writes singable melodies that give the singer space to emote and connect with the texts. His accompanimental music is dramatic and interesting to listen to while working with the main melody. The piano music he writes interacts with the singer in three main ways: supportive, collaborative and responsive. This can also be seen on small and large scales (chamber and operatic music,

respectively). In *Flight*, his orchestrations are “unlike most contemporary scores, support[ing] the vocal lines, which were grateful for the singers in themselves.”¹⁶ Dove lets the voice do what voices do best: sing. With the intense pressure of creating something new, many compositions I have sung by living composers usually have little to no regard for the voice’s range and abilities. Therefore, I was amazed upon hearing Dove’s music. He was able to write beautiful and idiomatic music for the voice, using the best feature of the voice (legato) to his advantage, and still made it sound new and interesting. Dove recognizes this as an asset to the performer and the audience:

Being able to write music that people want to sing is the secret — my music isn’t that easy, but I want the challenges to be fun for the performer and I don’t want the listener to have to work too hard. I write tunes that people can remember, I use pulse and catchy rhythms and they are not things that you associate with the avant garde.¹⁷

By exploring the vocal line and relationship between voice and piano, it is easy to see Dove’s thoughtful care of both instruments and how they work together to create a beautiful story in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*.

The Voice

What is a good melody? Its answer is subjective to each artist, composer, and critic. What constitutes “good”? I look towards European composers during the 18th and 19th century, such as Mozart, Schubert and Verdi, for their vocal music. Each composer, either through song or opera, understood the ability of the voice and how to use it in a satisfying way for the artist and audience. In my interview with Jonathan Dove in response to his connection with Benjamin Britten, Dove notes a connection to Schubert and Schumann as inspirations, both of whom are known for their Lieder, or German art songs. A short study of these songs shows three basic techniques of vocal writing of that are

¹⁶ Head, “Oxford,” 37.

¹⁷ Marshall, “Telling Stories.”

also found in Dove’s music: a rise-and-fall of melodic line, variation of short and long phrases, and an understanding of vocal tessitura. All three work together to create a “good” melody.

Contour of the melodic line is an art that is rarely used in contemporary music. Instead of shape, some composers search for drama, extending the voice to its extremes in range and abilities. However, the most pedagogically useful and vocally satisfying melodic lines come from composers like Franz Schubert. In his song “Ganymed”, Schubert uses a rise-and-fall motion (and its inversion) in pitch to heighten drama. This creates a sense of tension and release in the phrase while allowing the voice the same tension and release.



Example 3-4. Franz Schubert, “Ganymed” D. 544, mm. 12-21.

Another technique for good melody is through the variation of long and short phrases. Unlike a stringed or percussion instrument, through which sound is entirely produced with muscle, the voice is produced with breath and muscle. Unlike the unending production that can be used by fingers or hands, breath has a limited supply. I have sung many pieces of new music where breath is ignored or underappreciated by writing phrases that are too long or all the same length. Variation of phrase length allows the singer the time to react artistically and physically. One such example is found in Robert Schumann’s “Waldesgespräch” from his Op. 39 *Liederkreis*. Here we see phrases lasting from 3½ beats to 7½ beats, providing a contrast of phrase lengths (with rests for breath).



Example 3-5. Robert Schumann, “Waldesgespräch” *Liederkreis* Op. 39, No. 3, mm. 5-11.

Tessitura refers to a few notes in the vocal range that are used the most in a certain piece of music.¹⁸ Tessitura is an important factor of vocal music because it directly affects the physical vocal mechanism and musculature. A singer singing in an inappropriate tessitura, either too high or too low, could experience vocal fatigue, pain or even injury. Since the vocal folds are made up of tissue and muscle, fatigue is a natural part of the voice and often goes unnoticed by inexperienced composers. Conversely, the composer who is aware of vocal tessitura knows how to write music appropriate for the voice type for which they are writing and how to efficiently use the range of the voice. Higher notes, being more physically taxing because of the increased amplitude of vocal fold vibration, should be accounted for and used sparingly. If the tessitura is too high, such efficiency of the voice will be lost due to the increase of vocal fold vibration. In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, Dove is aware of the mezzo-soprano range being contained mostly on the treble clef staff. His tessituras are generally between G4 and B4, which is a comfortable mid-range point for mezzo-sopranos. Conversely, when writing a monotone phrase in “Door”, Dove uses C5⁴, a comfortable note for mezzo-sopranos that does not stretch into the passaggio. The highest notes of the set, E5 and Eb5, sit at the passaggio of the mezzo-soprano which is a difficult transition spot for some young singers. It could create some difficulties for singers who are inexperienced, but the range is also small enough that it could present them with a wonderful challenge. The range and tessitura also allow the singer to stay in a mixed genre of classical and musical theater style rather than choosing one style over the other. These three traditional techniques (rise-and-fall, short and

¹⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica, “Tessitura,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 7, 2018.

long phrases, and tessitura) when combined can create memorable melodies that inspire performers and listeners alike.

The Piano

Another strength of Dove's writing is found in the piano. He uses the same techniques of his instrumental operatic writing in his piano writing, or vice versa. In our interview, Dove said how he views the piano to be a duet partner throughout the whole set. He accomplishes this by writing music for the pianist to be a Supporter, Collaborator and Responder. It takes a talented pianist to bring out all these unspoken nuances in this music and a practiced singer to listen for these subtle changes.

First, the piano is used as a supporter of the vocal line, setting the scene in which the character lives. In "Prandial Plaint", the piano begins with a lively introduction with snappy rhythms and many sforzandos. Such an introduction foreshadows the lighthearted emotion of the narrator and the joking manner in which it should be sung. These figures continue when the voice enters and provides a general cheeriness through the whole piece. As a Supporter, the piano line is reactive to the vocal line while not interfering with it.

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of "Prandial Plaint". It consists of three staves: a vocal line at the top, a right-hand piano line in the middle, and a left-hand piano line at the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The vocal line begins with a whole note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The word "My" is written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment starts with a series of chords and eighth notes. The right hand has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, and the left hand has a similar pattern. Dynamic markings include *ffz*, *p*, and *sf*. The score ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to two sharps (F# and C#).

Example 3-6. "Prandial Plaint", mm. 1-4.

As a Collaborator, the pianist starts to have a direct impact on the vocalist's line. An example of this kind of writing can be found in "Interpretation", where the piano line highlights the vocal line

through its rhythmic ostinato. It is often anticipatory, introducing new pitches of the key center before the voice sings them.

Gently moving ♩ = 76 linger a tempo

Some - where with - in your lov - ing look I

mp *pp*

Example 3-7. “Interpretation”, mm. 1-5.

Measure 1 in the piano anticipates the vocal line. It directly illustrates through music the theme of the poetry: the unintentional miscommunication of two people who never seem to line up. Such is also with the music. It is through this technique that Dove begins to weave the voice and piano in and out of each other, creating a line of cohesive music rather than two independent voices.

The last technique Dove uses for the piano is as an independent voice or Responder. The most obvious implementation is in “Door”, where the piano has its longest introduction (12 measures) before the voice enters. In this introduction, the listeners are drawn into a world of uncertainty as the piano oscillates between different rhythmic ostinatos in each hand. The first two rolled chords also act as knocks on a door, again giving narration to the piano. When the voice enters, its melody is monotonous and with little direction, a complete contrast to Dove’s usual flowing melodies. At times, this song seems like incidental piano music with accompanying voice, where the piano has the narrative and the voice adds harmonic color. By writing in this way, Dove highlights the mysterious nature of the poetry.

Example 3-8. “Door”, mm. 11-14.

As I continue to break down each song in the following chapter, it will be clear that the piano rarely sticks to one form of writing. Usually, there is a combination of piano writing in each song, sometimes at the same time! Because of his respect for both piano and voice, Dove’s music becomes provocative and inspiring to performers and audiences alike.

By studying Dove’s musical language, it is clear why his work is attractive to performers and audiences today. He has the technical ability to make his music new and interesting with the use of extended tonality and motivic usage (through minimalism), while paying homage to traditional melody and idiomatic vocal music. The diversity and virtuosity of his piano music adds to the spectacular picture he creates through his unique aural world, making *All You Who Sleep Tonight* an important contribution to contemporary classical song.

Chapter 4: The Songs

With the information presented in this document, the final step is to investigate each song. I will do an initial theoretical analysis, focusing on the patterns of Dove's music, and how the music interacts with Seth's poetry. I will provide the key centers for each song and the tempi listed in the music. This will provide the general structure of each song. With these tools, I will also break down the use of the voice and piano using the terms I outlined in Chapter 3.

Next, I will add any pertinent performance ideas for the singer and pianist as they prepare these songs. These ideas are through my own performance experience and have changed due to this dissertation. It was able to open my eyes to the original intent of Seth's poetry along with the patterns found in Dove's music. With the title of each song, I include the section of Seth's *All You Who Sleep Tonight* from which the poem is taken. The sections, as described in Chapter 2, are collections of specific genres and influence the narrative of each poem. Each song is unique to the amount of theory, performance and collaboration aspects, so each review will feature different important parts of the song. Through this culmination of information about the composer, poet, and general musical traits in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, I hope to inspire other singers and pianists to include Dove's music in more recitals, study, and public performances.

All You Who Sleep Tonight

I. "Condition" (from *Quatrains*)

Key Centers: A minor (mm. 1-10), A major (mm. 11-25), A \flat major (mm. 26-34)

Tempo: Driving, $\text{♩} = 126$

Dove wastes no time diving into the harmonic and motivic language in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*. “Condition” begins with a tumultuous piano introduction with changing tempi, dynamics and harmonies, the most drastic being when the voice enters. The introduction is full of accents and forte pianos along with a driving rhythmic motive of sixteenth notes that start in the bass clef. The initial time signature is in 2/4, but switches surprisingly to 9/8 in measure seven only, which foreshadows the contrast of the text once the voice enters. The moving sixteenth notes denote a strong current of unspoken feeling, like the technique Mozart used in the orchestration of “Smanie Implacabili” in *Così fan tutte*. The final part of the introduction includes eighth notes in the left hand and syncopated sixteenth notes in the right hand that give an unsteady feeling.



Example 4-1. “Condition”, m. 9, Syncopated piano introduction.

These ideas are the general motives of the song. There are not any clear motives, but rather rhythmic groupings of sixteenth notes and syncopations that inspire the drama. As the piano introduction concludes, there is a sudden rest with a fermata. The voice jumps out of the silence with the first line of the set: “I have to speak—”.¹ Dove’s awareness of punctuation is reflected in the music as rests (or silences), “I have to speak—I must—I should—I ought . . .”² These rests should add much to the singer’s narrative. The opening line of this song should feel like an outburst followed by continuous thought. Seth’s punctuation with dashes and ellipses highlights the uncertainty of the narrator. After this outburst, the piano and voice start to move together. The piano continues with the sixteenth note groupings and syncopations while the voice joins with a legato line, indicative of the passion that the singer is feeling.

¹ Seth, “Condition” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 47.

² Ibid.

The sixteenth notes continue as the singer regains emotional control, but only for a while. Soon, the narrator loses energy and conviction and we hear only the echo of the sixteenth note pattern, as seen below. The voice follows this emotional turn and ends at a higher pitch from which it started, making it feel like a question rather than a statement.

32

short of that... Well, it might be too soon

pp

p

Example 4-2. “Condition”, mm. 32-34.

Again, Dove uses rests to indicate uncertainty in the voice. The singer must be aware of these changes and use various shades of their vocal color to enhance the storyline. This text moves from certainty to doubt quickly and this should directly affect the color of the voice. Harmonically, there is a change too. As previously stated, the initial key center is A \flat major. In the final measures, there is an echo of this key with an E \flat extended chord starting in measure 31. Essentially, the song ends on the dominant, adding to the growing uncertainty of the character.

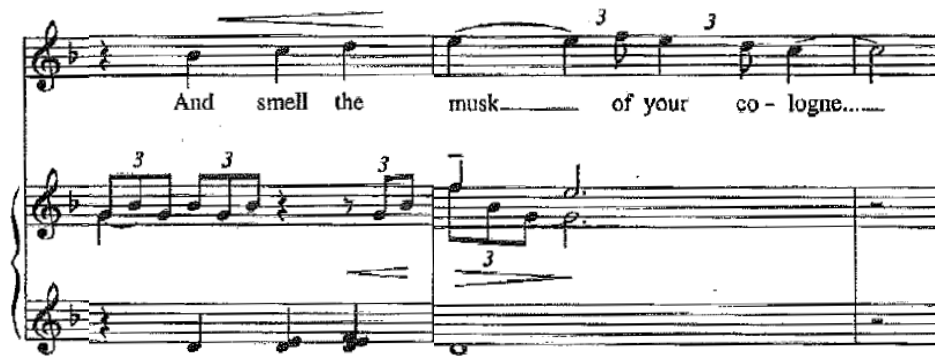
II. “Telephone” (from *Quatrains*)

Key Center: G Dorian

Tempo: Spacious, $\text{♩} = 56$

In this quatrain, Dove uses the rise-and-fall motion for both voice and piano. The most present motive is in the piano and is featured in 2-bar phrases. The piano motive is repeated in the right hand as a singular commentator in a combination of eighth note triplets (on G and B \flat) in the first measure and then

adding an F and E \sharp on top. This is the only modal key center that is in *All You Who Sleep Tonight*. It gives an unsettled feeling to the music since the E \sharp is used quite often in the voice and piano and makes the harmonic language more uncertain. Being in G Dorian mode, the E \sharp in the motive adds to the mystery and melancholy of the song. Dove uses the left hand of the piano to introduce stronger harmonic movement. The basic harmonic movement of “Telephone” is only highlighted by two moments: in measure 3 and measure 12. In both instances, there are leaps up in the left hand from G to D and then D up to G. Both act as pedal tones for the surrounding movement. In measure 8, there is a lovely moment of moving parallel 6ths between the voice and piano, a moment of collaboration between the parts that leads to the melodic high point of the song.



Example 4-3. “Telephone”, mm. 8-10.

The voice, while independent, always lands with longer notes on the second half of the piano motive, creating moments of harmony and dissonance with the resounding F in the right hand of the piano. The vocal line from measures 1-9 following the rise-and-fall motion, gives this melody a wave-like feeling as if in a dream. Or perhaps it is an inverted smile from the first line of the poem: “I see you smile across the phone.”³ This dream is suddenly interrupted with the piano’s persistent ringing of what can be assumed is an actual telephone. Dove focuses on the punctuation throughout the poem to help move the story along. After the third line, “And smell the musk of your cologne...”⁴, the ellipses signify an event

³ Seth, “Telephone” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 45.

⁴ Ibid.

that changes the narrator's emotional state. For this poem, it is a telephone. From there the singer's mood changes to a more clipped way of singing for the last line of poetry. The last phrase, "Is anybody there?"⁵, ends with the pitch going up, which follows the inflection of one asking a question. The piano continues to play the motive one last time, as if to signify that nothing has changed and that, in fact, no one is there. This gives the performer room to decide what the ending is for their character. Is there a real person they are thinking of or is it all in their imagination? Answering such questions will help the singer decide overall presentation and color of tone.

III. "Across" (from *Romantic Residues*)

Key Center: C major

Tempo: Gently moving, ♩. = 42

From its opening line, "Across these miles I wish you well."⁶, space is indicated through the piano's range, while keeping a delicate vocal line on top. The poetry is a bittersweet plea of a broken relationship. The speaker cares for this other individual and wishes them well. This delicate approach is conveyed through the descending melodic line in the voice and the pianissimo dynamics in the piano. These basic ideas, when put together, create an effective atmosphere for the text. Dove also uses a variety of time signatures to match the pacing of the text. He constantly moves between 7/8 and 9/8 for measures 1-23 and then moves between 5/4, 4/4, 3/4 and 7/8 to stay true to the text emphasis, much like the vocal works of American composers Stephen Sondheim and Leonard Bernstein. The two major sections of music are divided at the stanza break and contain different musical ideas. However, there are distinct textures used throughout the whole song. The pianist has the unique responsibility of playing in these two textures, which could be the two characters in this narrative. First, it is homophonic. The homophonic

⁵ Seth, "Telephone" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 45.

⁶ Seth, "Across" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 6.

texture of voice and piano dominate while the text is being sung. However, there are moments when the piano is reminiscent of the opening motive. This *Space* motive varies in pitch but juxtaposes the singer's pleas and acts as an echo. Below is an example of the original motive in the introduction and two of its Echo variations.



Example 4-4. "Across", mm. 1-4, *Space* motive.



Example 4-5. "Across", mm. 14-15 & 17-18, Echo variations of *Space* motive.

This motive and its variation mirror the title of the song, as if the narrator is needing to speak through a great physical or emotional distance. The voice also enters on a D5, a relatively high note that is close to or in the passaggio. This may be difficult to tune with the piano, and as it descends in stepwise motion, it keeps a vulnerable sound in the voice. The piano moves in harmony with the voice, adding support to the descending line.

In between the stanzas, another Echo variation of the *Space* motive is added but with greater contrast in the range and dynamics of the piano. Three variations are presented with first inversion C major chords in the right-hand. The left-hand notes descend and grow in intervals: first a perfect fourth, a perfect fifth and then an octave. Added to the increased range are terraced dynamics growing from *pp* to

mp and then *mf*, the loudest dynamic in the song. This transition leads to the second stanza of the poem, an impassioned plea of the narrator. To notate this change of tone, Dove inverts the melody and accompaniment. Now, the voice starts on middle C and the piano is octaves higher as they move in contrary motion. The vocal part is interesting during this section of text because the melody suddenly becomes heavy and struggles to rise, the opposite problem in the first half of the song. Each pitch in this new melody is repeated so the line seems stubborn or difficult when it rises. The piano also has a descending line (B-A-G-F#-F#) to enhance the drama of the text. The contrary motion of voice and piano along with the dynamics climax at measure 28 with the anticipation of the narrator's goal: to be free of guilt. However, this anticipation is defeated through a small return of an Echo variation of the *Space* motive, which has not been heard in the second section. It seems to pull the singer and pianist back to the vulnerable feeling of the first section due to the sudden shift of melody and texture. Such suggestive musical language influences the text and how the singer should present it. It is a cyclical return with no growth of the character.

The key center for this piece is C major and contains diatonic tones in the first section. In the second section, when the melody grows more impassioned, F# is introduced first in the piano and then the voice. The small rise in pitch slightly tonicizes G major and makes one hear progress of character through the seeming key change. However, this tonicization (if it can be called that) is immediately lost in measure 28 when the F# in the left-hand drops to the F#b, as if the piano has already resigned itself. As the key center is solidified back to C major, the piano ends in a cluster of pitches while the voice ends on C5, again, showing the confusion and unresolved feelings of the narrator.

IV. "Prandial Plaint" (from *Quatrains*)

Key Centers: G major (mm. 1-4), E major (mm.5-26)

Tempo: Lively and playful, half note= 88

This cheery song elicits the most laughs in any performance. Seth's ability to end his poems with an ironic twist offer Dove a playground of aural opportunity. This meal-time poem ranges in tone from specific compliments of their lover's body and accent to passionate cries of obedience and loyalty to them. To convey the slight change of tone, Dove utilizes the voice's abilities of short and long phrases. The song is split up into measure-long phrases for the first two lines of poetry as the narrator lists qualities they love. The third line turns quasi bel canto as the phrases grow in length and range which help express the singer's passion. A glissando is even added in measure 21 to show their outpouring of affection. Throughout these lines, the piano weaves in and out of the vocal responses, first as a soloist and then with the voice as a supporter. On the last line of text, the voice and piano shift to a new texture. Instead of long lines and weaving of sound, the voice and piano join in a homophonic moment. The sudden change of texture highlights Seth's ironic twist of text, "But please don't slurp your coffee in that way."⁷

One of the strangest moments of this song happens between measure four and five when the key center changes from G major to E major. As the piano begins, it seems as if the key center of G major is strong. G is heard at the beginning of measures 1 through 3, and there are dominant relationships in measure 4. However, with the pattern that Dove uses, an E is heard as the last pitch in the left-hand of the piano. The pattern he uses in measure 3 is a combination of even eighth notes for two beats, which is interrupted with an eighth rest, thus moving the strong beat to the last eighth note.

⁷ Seth, "Prandial Complaint" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 47.



Example 4-6. “Prandial Plaint”, mm. 3-4, Change from G major to E major.

Because it was the last pitch heard on a strong beat, the voice and piano shift its tonality moving into measure five. Instead of D (V) moving to G (I), E is now heard as tonic with B (the pickup note) as the dominant.

Moving into the new key, Dove starts to consistently use groups of three notes as his rhythmic motive. It is most noticeable in the left-hand of the piano starting in measure 5. These groupings continue



Example 4-7. “Prandial Plaint”, mm. 5-6; 14-15, Groups of three.

in both staccato and legato forms and through the bel canto style of the third line, growing in range and texture and adding to the excited tone of the singer. I was not sure to what these figures corresponded until I looked at the vocal line. The phrases “I love your breasts”, “I love your nose”, “I love your accent”, and “I love your toes”⁸ in lines 1 and 2 all have the three word grouping, “I love your...”. This could be where the rhythmic pattern originates, either intentionally or not. While the vocal line changes for the

⁸Seth, “Prandial Plaint” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 47.

third line of poetry, the piano continues with the grouping of three eighth notes until measure 23. When the ironic last line of poetry begins in measure 23, the groups of three are gone and there is now a strong emphasis on every other beat, indicating two. Dove uses rhythm to show the change of tone in the narrator directly with this subtle change of meter.

Such a charming and light-hearted piece requires the singer to adapt to the text and feature a less classical approach to the music at first. Each time they list off another part they love, there needs to be an attitude change with a spontaneous energy. When the music changes for the bel canto middle section, the singer and pianist then need to draw on long, legato lines that hearken to a more classical sound. However, on the last line of the song, the text must be the most important thing so that the ironic twist is clearly heard by the audience. This song feels like a cabaret style piece and could be performed in that setting.

V. “Interpretation” (from *Quatrains*).

Key Center: D major (possibly ending in B minor)

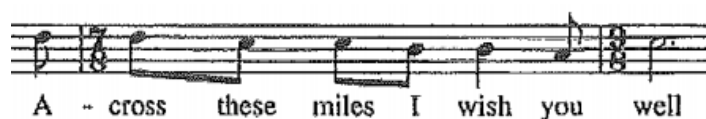
Tempo: Gently moving, ♩ = 76

“Interpretation” is one of my favorite songs from this set. Its simplicity of texture leaves room for imagination to run wild, and it provides a challenge to sing and tune with the piano. The singer and pianist must be aware of each other to coordinate tuning and collaborative challenges. The singer must have complete freedom in the second bar but should move with forward motion with the piano in measure 3. If not, the song could turn into a slow, self-pitying dirge instead of a moment of self-discovery. Though a short song, “Interpretation” echoes parts of “Across”—specifically in the beginning melodic lines of each song that start on the same pitch, descend with repeated notes, and end the phrases by leaping up a third. The melodic inspiration is connected to the uniting theme of both songs. Each song focuses on communication barriers between people. The dropping melodic line at a high tessitura seems to indicate

the careful nature of the speaker. They wish not to harm the other individual with over emotional thoughts. These musical gestures echo the words of Vikram Seth, who places each word carefully with a sense of restraint as though he wishes to examine the moment with care.



Example 4-8. “Interpretation”, mm. 8-11.



Example 4-9. “Across”, mm. 9-11.

However, in this song, this voice is more independent and does not rely on the piano’s support as much as “Across”. The piano is more of a responder in this sense—it provides general harmonic support but has its own destination and ideas. The rhythmic motive in the piano recurs every measure with little regard for the voice. The vocal line starts at the lowest pitch of the set, A3, and the marking “linger” gives the singer a chance to really enjoy the lower range of the voice. It is as if the narrator is creating this idea from nothing, and they are unsure what to say. Dove uses this idea in an unconventional way too. For the first time, he creates pauses in the poetry that are not Seth’s writing. Dove breaks the first two lines in half with added rests: Instead of continuous lines, “Somewhere within your loving look I sense/Without the least intention to deceive,”⁹ Dove breaks up the phrases: “Somewhere within your loving look...I sense” and “Without the least intention...to deceive”. This adds a sense of uncertainty that is not present in Seth’s original poem. Dove may have wanted to break the line so that it would not land on the downbeat of the next measure, but it can also add a new emotional undercurrent for the narrator.

⁹ Seth, “Interpretation” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 48.

The harmonic language of this song is ambiguous and seems to move between D major and B minor, which both share the same key signature. There are no definitive cadences in the piece and the harmonic focus seems to be on the major second interval relationship. The first two pitches in the piano, A3 and B3, are held until the voice comes in on the same pitches. This relationship of seconds continues throughout the whole song in the piano and the stepwise motion of the descending melodic line. These pitches also directly relate to the uncertain key center of this song. The pitch A can be the dominant for D major or could be a weak leading tone to B minor. It is never made clear what the function of A is. The center is blurred even more at the end of the piece when the voice sings a C#3 to B3, leaving a question if the C# is a leading tone to D major or a supertonic leading to B minor. Either way, Dove still uses the interval of a second to express the slow separation of those who are misunderstood.

VI. "Mistaken" (from *Romantic Residues*)

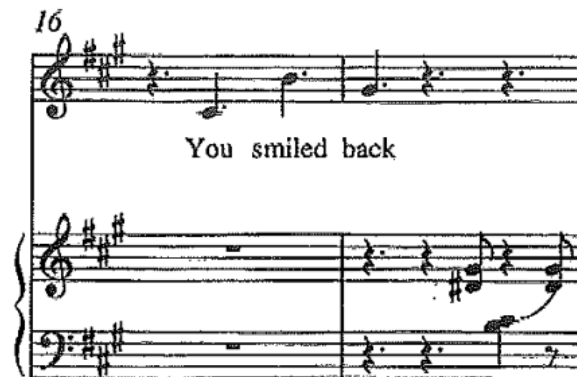
Key Center: F# minor (with some E major)

Tempo: With movement, ♩. = 132

"Mistaken" is a unique combination of styles, much like the artistic talent of Nuala Willis. Since she was the inspiration for this song set, her strengths of cabaret-type music were intentionally used. There is a conversational aspect to the singing. The many syncopations and swinging rhythms add to this feeling. The time signatures vary between 9/8, 12/8 and 6/8, all the while keeping the jazzy triplet feeling in the pulse of the song (as seen in Example 3-3). Like "Condition", Dove uses rests to signify emotions. The first three measures of the song could be the moment when the two characters meet. The added hesitancy in the rests adds to the narrator's character. We now know how this person feels about the situation: they do not jump into things quickly, but rather take time to understand and imagine

possibilities. Dove also repeats the line “Something that seemed like love”¹⁰ three times, each one growing in intensity. Between each, though, are rests. As mentioned in my interview with Dove, he sees all parts of the music adding to the drama. Therefore, these rests need to be used by singer and pianist alike. Each repeat of the phrase should be different. The first could be a surprised reaction to the admittance of being in love, the second gaining courage and the third, an outpouring of emotion. In any case, the rests need to influence the singing and playing of both performers.

The piano is used both as a collaborator and supporter in this song. As a supporter, the piano provides the general harmonic outline along with the lighthearted feeling of the mood. It helps drive the drama forward as the singer discovers the possibility of falling in love. The piano is also a collaborator through its use of a small motive. In the first 17 measures, the piano provides cheeky commentary on the singer’s romantic discovery. A small *Smile* motive is played in the piano every time the singer mentions the word “smile” or remembers the initial encounter.



Example 4-10. “Mistaken”, mm. 16-17, *Smile* motive.

These special moments add to the cherished encounter shared by the two characters. The *Smile* motive plays on the swinging rhythms in the piano due to the quarter note and eighth note connection. As the narrator realizes these feelings are growing into love, the piano grows in range and for a moment has even eighth notes, propelling the emotion with more energy. However, as the poetry continues, the energy is

¹⁰ Seth, “Mistaken” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 8.

lost due to the narrator's realization that this is not the love they were seeking. Similarly, the smile becomes a symbol of something lost rather than gained. As it is played in the last measure, the *Smile* motive is a regretful sound with its slowed tempo and *ppp* dynamic.

VII. "God's Love" (from *Quatrains*)

Key Center: C major

Tempo: Steady, half note = 66

This one-page song travels through many emotions of the narrator. In the four lines, Seth conveys the growing uncertainty of the speaker through the conjunction "or" and the em dash (—). Each line grows less and less sure by adding more caveats to what seems like a straightforward thought. The punctuation adds to the unsettled feeling. In the first two lines, the em dashes present an unfinished thought from one line to the next. "God loves us all I'm pleased to say—/Or those who love him anyway—/"¹¹. The third line also uses "or" to show their uncertainty. Then, Seth divides the last line into two parts: the first is aimed towards the mysterious "they" character and the second being directed at "he" or God. Dove reflects this punctuation in the music with rests after each line. This gives the singer the opportunity to express the text as if it were spoken, leading to more and more uncertainty.

The texture of this piece is relative to its poetry with its religious content. Dove grew up playing organ at his local church and the opening of "God's Love" is reminiscent of the instrument. He starts the piece with a forte chord revolving around C major. Then a pedal C chord in 1st inversion is played in the left hand of the piano every two beats, which recalls the continuous sound of the organ.

¹¹ Seth, "God's Love" In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 45.

Example 4-11. “God’s Love”, mm. 1-3.

The voice is accompanied by the piano homophonically, as if it were a hymn. As the narrator grows less certain, so does the music. More nonchord tones are added in additional phrases and provide instability. The dynamics shift from forte to mezzo forte, mezzo piano and finally pianississimo. The rests between phrases gain fermatas (also typical of a chorale setting), which makes the pauses even longer. The texture also thins in the piano, both in range and number of voices. Eventually, it is just the voice with single notes in each hand of the piano. The third line features a vocal line that goes up in pitch, as if to question the information they thought they knew. Such dramatic contrasts in texture make for an exciting piece, even though it is the shortest song in the collection. The performers have the responsibility to show this contrast, mainly using color change and silence. The beginning should be a confident show of faith which deteriorates into doubt. As the song continues, the bold color should change to one that is unsure and less full. Silences should be stretched to highlight the narrator’s questioning thoughts. The last moment of this song ends in a half cadence that supports this emotional turmoil and leaves the audience wanting more.

Example 4-12. “God’s Love”, mm. 10-13.

VIII. “Dark Road” (from *Quatrains*)

Key Centers: C major and C minor

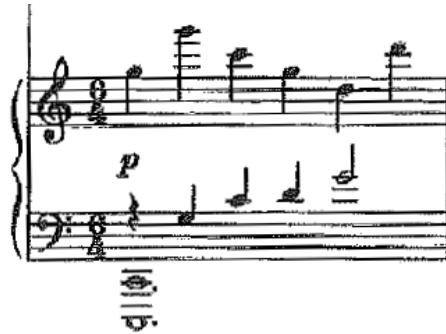
Tempo: Steadily moving, ♩ = 84

“Dark Road” is a constant modal battle between C major and C minor. Chromatic notes in this song highlight the melodic and rhythmic motives that Dove uses. The one bar motive that opens the song contains only the pitches C, D and G, leaving room for chromatic coloring. In a steady flow of quarter notes, the motive seems like an endlessly winding road. This fits perfectly with Seth’s poetry— “The road is dark, and home is far.”¹²—which speaks of being a wanderer or immigrant in an unknown land. Seth is an avid traveler and many of his novels and poems speak of various cultures. However, the final lines of the poem highlight the emotional toll of being far from home. “Tonight be dreamless, and tomorrow/Wake free from fear, half-free of sorrow.”¹³

There is a constant C pedal in the bass that is heard in all but one measure of music. (Even then, middle C is part of the figure.) This constant grounding of pitch is an oxymoron to the idea of a road, a construct to aid travel. The music does not go anywhere harmonically because of this pedal note and matches the sentiment of the sorrowful text. It is almost like a lullaby in its meter and does have a rocking motion. However, this unrelenting rocking and inability to travel home makes this lullaby less than comforting. Instead, it is a mournful dirge through which the narrator tries to find home.

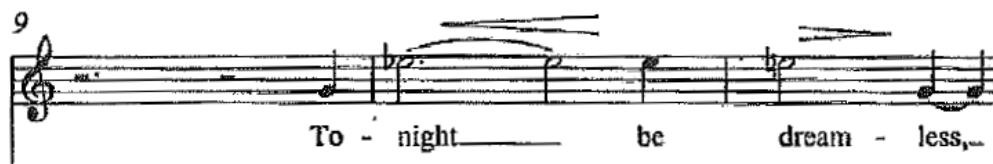
¹² Seth, “Dark Road” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 45.

¹³ Ibid.



Example 4-13. “Dark Road”, m. 1, *Road* motive.

As previously mentioned, Dove uses chromatic notes to color this song. These colors show up in the voice and require the singer to be exactly in tune. His framework of his *Road* motive gives him space to play with $E\flat/\sharp$ and $A\flat/\sharp$, both of which correspond with C minor and C major keys, respectively. The first entrance of $A\flat$ is in measure 4 on the word “home”. This descent to $A\flat$ through $B\flat$ (which is not in the key signature oddly enough) hints at the minor mode of C. In measure 5 and 6, there is a sudden shift back to C major when $A\sharp$ and $E\sharp$ appear. The voice has the most difficult job of navigating these tones, especially in measures 10 and 11, when the melodic line ascends into the passaggio with $E\flat$ and then $E\sharp$. The constant modal shifts also highlight the character’s restlessness—questioning the security of a place to lay their head to sleep.



Example 4-14. “Dark Road”, mm. 9-11, Vocal line.

Such precision from the singer is essential in this song. There cannot be any question of the quality of the note. It may be important for the singer and pianist to decide on how much vibrato to use in particularly expressive moments. Other performance decisions take place at the end of this song, where silence can be used to create dramatic tension. Dove separates the last line of text into two parts at the comma and places a rest in the piano and vocal parts. A moment of rest always presents the performers

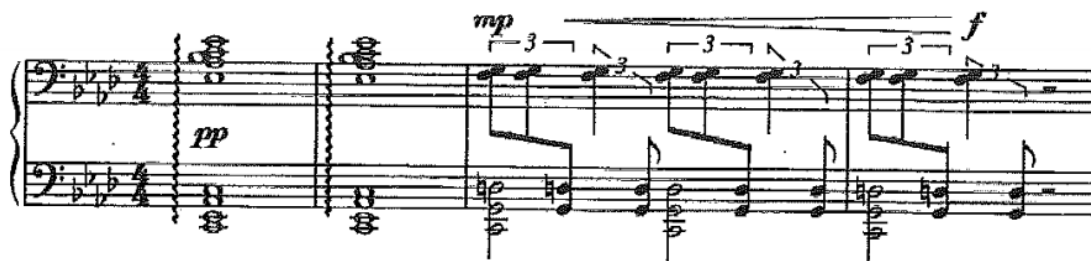
with the opportunity to be artistic. It should make the performers consider how to interpret each line, focusing on the unspoken fears of the character and their desire for freedom. Could it be emotional freedom? Or, related to Seth’s experience, could it be freedom from a place or people? Each idea relates to intensely personal subjects that inspire the narrative.

IX. “Door” (from *Quatrains*)

Key Centers: A \flat major/F minor

Tempo: Dark, mysterious, $\text{♩} = 84$

With the longest introduction, “Door” sets a dream-like scene. As the A \flat major chord rolls in, it is heard in its first inversion, creating the feeling that we are joining a narrative that has already started. The low, rolled chords are indicative of a slow knock, which we find out is a memory of the mysterious “he”. As the introduction continues, triplets are introduced, but do not lead anywhere. The chords and triplets oscillate back and forth, wanting to lead to a new idea instead of cycling around.



Example 4-15. “Door”, mm. 1-3, Piano introduction.

There is a restart at measure 11 with a new combination of triplets that lead to the voice entrance. (See Example 3-8). Here, Dove juxtaposes the chant-like vocal line with the pulsing, rising piano line. The voice is indicative of the man’s exhaustion, yet the piano continues the triplet figure throughout the whole song. The left hand of the piano has a rising ostinato that is repeated three times in the song. After the sounding pedal note on the first beat of every measure, the left hand moves up as if to indicate

impending doom. This atmosphere is used in the first half of the music (the first two lines of poetry) and is hypnotic in its effect. The voice then propels the ostinato into a new harmonic landscape in measure 26 through one pitch: B \flat . This note was used in previous melodies, but now the function of the note changes subtly as it becomes the dominant of E \flat . The pedal of the ostinato now changes to E \flat which influences the triplet figure as well. The vocal line then moves in stepwise motion, leaving the monotonous style of the opening.

The text of this poem never defines the character or setting. The opening line, “He dreams beyond exhaustion of a door”¹⁴ sets the mood, but no other information is given. As the poem continues, it is unclear if this door “[a]t which he knocked and entered years before”¹⁵ is real or in his dreams. As the poem closes, “he” has forgotten where this door is and why it is important. It could be a reference to aging or a dream. Either way, Dove puts musical clues of forgetfulness in in the piano. In the final measures, instead of the pulsing triplet figure, the triplets stop as the singer tries to remember for what they were looking.

31

Nor why he knocked,

mp

Example 4-16. “Door”, mm. 31-33.

In response to this, the piano introduction starts again, but now as a postlude—as if the man never started or ended his journey.

¹⁴ Seth, “Door” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 47.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

X. “Night Watch” (from *Quatrains*)

Key Center: C major with focus on ½ steps

Tempo: Still, hypnotic, ♩ = 88

As the tempo marking states, this song is “hypnotic”. Dove does an incredible job of creating an atmosphere in just a few measures. First, we hear the ticking of the clock, a constant quarter-note pulse in 5/4 time. This irregular meter is a perfect way to point out the unsettled feeling in the text. Most people can relate to the feeling of lying awake at night and just waiting to fall asleep. Dove captures that feeling through sound. At certain points in the song, he uses large chords in the piano to indicate the chiming of the new hour: first, 2 AM and then 4 AM. With each chime quietly calling in the next hour, the voice grows more and more agitated by expanding the range and then settles down to the same pitch on which it started, as if it has given up.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Night Watch". It consists of three staves. The top staff is for the voice, starting with the word "ceiling" and a measure rest. The middle staff is for the piano right hand, and the bottom staff is for the piano left hand. The piano accompaniment features a steady quarter-note pulse in the right hand and a more complex, rhythmic pattern in the left hand. A large chord is marked with a circled '2' above it, indicating the 2 AM chime. The score is numbered '6' at the beginning.

Example 4-17. “Night Watch”, mm. 6-9, 2AM chimes and return to *Clock* motive.

To highlight this uneasy atmosphere, Dove frequently uses half-steps in the piano and voice. This piece is a prime example of key centers. There is no key signature and no accidentals. Dove uses the palette of C major to write this piece but has no regard to the key itself. He uses the half steps naturally found in C major (E to F and B to C) and explores the relationship in two ways: within the piano and between the voice and piano. The opening measures present the *Clock* motive, the measure long, 5 quarter

note motive, along with a descending bass line in the piano (A-G-F-E-D). In contrast, the voice begins with a half step and then has an ascending-descending arc. The *Clock* motive is present through the entire song. Dove layers these parts together to highlight the hypnotic trance of the narrator and the half-steps between the voice and piano in the opening line, “Awake for hours and staring at the ceiling”.¹⁶



Example 4-18. “Night Watch”, mm. 1-3, *Clock* motive and opening vocal line.

The climax of the song is inspired by the added texture starting in the third line of poetry. Dove brilliantly combines the *Clock* motive and half steps in the piano as the voice starts to rise in pitch. As the man grows more agitated (“He grows possessed of the obsessive feeling”)¹⁷, a modified version of the *Clock* motive is heard in the left hand as the right hand plays the half-step of B-C. This growing tension leads to the fourth line of poetry, “That dawn has come and gone and brought no light.”¹⁸. On the word “dawn” (the highest note for the voice – E5), the original *Clock* motive returns to the right hand of the piano and the left hand starts low and ascends with stepwise motion. The brilliance of the morning is lost quickly, though, as the narrator realizes it has brought no light. As the energy dissipates, the voice and piano end on an octave E.

The one thing missing in this song is dynamics. There is one dynamic marking (*pp*) in measure 1. It gives the performers total freedom in their artistic choices. The natural feeling is to crescendo through the climax and then decrescendo through the end, but each choice should feel natural to the performers. It

¹⁶ Seth, “Night Watch” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 47.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

is also imperative to look at this song in relation to the previous songs. This is the third song in a row that is slow and hypnotic. I found this part of the set especially tricky because each song (“Dark Road”, “Door”, “Night Watch”) shares similar qualities in atmosphere. Because of the lack of dynamics and stability of the *Clock* motive, “Night Watch” can be the most hypnotic and still of the three songs. “Door” has a stronger narrative, even though it leads back to its top. Because of its 6/4-time signature, “Dark Road” can have more of a flow to its phrasing. By distinguishing these three songs, this section of *All You Who Sleep Tonight* can be especially effective and introspective.

XI. “Voices” (from *Meditations of the Heart*)

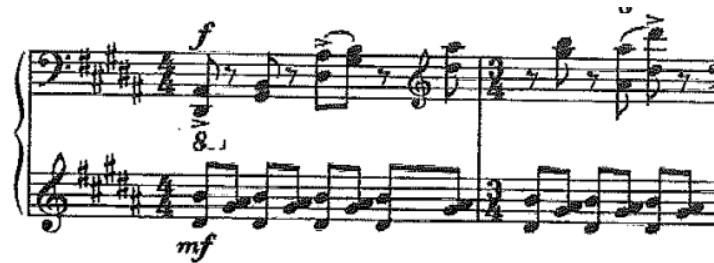
Key Centers: Fragments of G# minor, Db major, D minor and Bb major

Tempo: Fast and driving, ♩ = 160 (mm.1-33); Very calm, dotted half note = 40 (mm. 34-45)

“Voices” breaks the slow pace of the previous three songs. The fast tempo, at 160, includes some of the most difficult piano music with crossed hands and a large range. The eighth note pulse is continuous through most of the song and the key center changes are unpredictable. Rather than a linear connection, Dove uses four motives (and their fragments) and pushes them together for blocks of sudden mood changes. These musical aspects mirror the chanting words in the text, which seem to taunt the narrator. There are three sections in this song: Section 1 (mm. 1-24), Transition (mm. 25-33), and Section 2 (mm. 34-45). Section 1 introduces the main motive (*Voices*) of the piano along with the bipolar reactions of it (*Manic* and *Calm*). Section 2 is a combination of rhythmic and melodic motives (*Peace*) in the piano with the first legato line for the voice. The Transition is a combination of the Section 1 and 2 motives as the tempo slows drastically. The poetry also mirrors these musical changes.

These musical motives drive the entire song. There is no real melody for the voice until Section 2. This song uses contrast to drive the story, rather than the voice. As previously mentioned, there are four main motives in this song. In the *Voices* motive, the piano shows the immense chaos in the narrator’s

head. The virtuosic piano covers a large range as the right hand crosses over the left and then back. The *Manic* and *Calm* motives mirror the poetic commands. The change of mood is found in the piano first, then in the poetry. The piano is a Responder in this song because it is responsible for setting the emotional scene independently. While the poetry remains ready with commands, the music shapes the tone of it. During the transition, it is the piano that foreshadows the *Peace* motive by combining it with the *Voices* motive. The musical motives are presented below in their full form to show the contrast in Dove's writing. It is also imperative to notice the key centers for each motive. In Section 1, the key center is G# minor for the *Voices* motive but is instantly changed to Db for *Calm* and D minor for *Manic*. The *Peace* motive is ironically the least stable key and starts in D major while ending in B minor.



Example 4-19. "Voices", mm. 1-2, *Voices* motive.



Example 4-20. "Voices", mm. 13-14, 15, *Calm* and *Manic* motives.



Example 4-21. "Voices", m. 34, *Peace* motive.

These motives drive the emotion of the entire song. The piano takes the brunt of the work and the pianist needs to be able to shift style quickly. The best way to show the change of motives is through a table with the text, keys, motives and their corresponding measures. It will show Dove’s overall structure and will direct the performers how to connect each varying section.

Table 4-1. Motives and their Key Centers in “Voices”.

	Measures	Text	Key Center	Motive
Section 1	1-2		G# minor	<i>Voices</i>
	3-4			<i>Voices</i>
	5-6	Voices in my head		<i>Voices - fragmented</i>
	7-8			<i>Voices</i>
	9-10			<i>Voices</i>
	11-12	Chanting, “Kisses. Bread.		<i>Voices - fragmented</i>
	13-14	Prove Yourself.	D \flat major	<i>Calm</i>
	15	Fight.	D minor	<i>Manic</i>
	16-17	Shove.	D \flat major	<i>Calm</i>
	18-19	Learn. Earn.	D minor	<i>Manic - extended</i>
	20	Look for love,”	G# minor	<i>Voices - LH only</i>
	21-22			<i>Voices</i>
	23-24			<i>Voices</i>
Transition	25-29	Drown a lesser voice	D major	<i>Voices - RH</i>
	30-33	Silent now of choice:	B \flat major	<i>Peace - LH</i>
Section 2	34-39	“Breathe in peace, and be	D major/	<i>Peace</i>
	40-45	Still, for once, like me.” ¹⁹	B minor	<i>Peace</i>

The singer then has the responsibility to locate these changes in the music and determine the appropriate affect and coloring of the voice. Almost all the notes in Section 1 are accented—vocal beauty is not needed in this section. Rather, aggression and anxiety should inspire the sudden color changes. Throughout the Transition, the singer must connect this poetry with the previous section. I appreciate Dove’s work with numerous motive changes, however, in this case, it disrupts the poetry. Seth does separate the stanzas, but the line “Drown a lesser voice”²⁰ in Dove’s setting sounds more like a command rather than a continuation of the previous sentence. The singer must be able to connect the transition to

¹⁹ Seth, “Voices” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 59.

²⁰ Ibid.

Section 1 emotionally for it to make sense. In Section 2, the color of the voice should completely change. Here, vibrato can be used sparingly, especially due to the parallel sixths between the voice and piano in measures 34-39. The song ends in a completely different place from which it started. Instead of large loud chords, the voice and piano share an octave B, a pure moment of stillness.

XII. “Soon” (from *In Other Voices*)

Key Centers: G minor (m. 1-29, 51-60), Bb major (m. 30-50), transition (61-71), G major (m.72-89)

Tempo: Quite fast, ♩ = 160

The most emotionally jarring song of *All You Who Sleep Tonight* comes in “Soon”, a monologue of one who is dying from AIDS. When Seth wrote this poem, he was afraid it would be too painful for others to read because of its honest voice. “Did you notice that it was all written in one-syllable words?” Seth asked one interviewer, “Well, it was all in one-syllable words, as AIDS is.”²¹ This was something I had not noticed at first. It is evident, though, when one considers the unrelenting pace of the text. This deteriorating person is struggling with the physical pain and emotional turmoil of dying. They find no peace, even though they have a loving partner at their side. The last stanza is the final plea of the narrator’s life and is a striking moment in the poetry and music. “Stay by my steel ward bed/And hold me where I lie./Love me when I am dead/And do not let me die.”²² Musically, the rhythmic motive is a constant triplet that undulates between right and left-hand. As the piano continuously moves, the voice carries the stepwise motion of the melody.

In examining the key centers, we find the way Dove organizes the structure of this song. Each change of key centers is emotionally charged and inspires the new colors in the voice and piano. The key center of G minor is when the narrator is facing reality. Lines such as “I shall die soon” and “He sees that

²¹ Ameena Meer and Vikram Seth, “Vikram Seth,” *Bomb* 33 (Fall 1990), JSTOR, 19.

²² Seth, “Soon” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 25.

I am dead”²³ are written in this key. The second key center used is B \flat major (the relative major key to G minor) and is used when the narrator is speaking of the person they love. It could also be indicative of possible hope they may still have. The transitional period in measures 61-71 begins with a sudden key change to A minor but is soon lost to a parade of chromatic pitches that swiftly change the tone. As stated in Chapter 3, Dove uses these chromatic tones to reflect the growing panic of the narrator, whose words have now turned to personal feelings of fear and death: “How am I to go on—/How will I bear this taste,”²⁴. The moment of release from all this tension (at measure 72) welcomes G major in an ironic way. While the music sounds stable and finally in a “key”, the text being sung is anything but stable. The last stanza of poetry shows the narrator’s final plea to be remembered and loved even after death, which is repeated three times unlike the poetry’s original form. As the last line of text is repeated, both voice and piano lose momentum and end on a singular B. The remaining whole notes in the piano are like a slowing heartbeat as it transitions into the last song.

The image shows a musical score for measures 83-89. The tempo is marked "Slower". The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "do not let me die." The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a series of whole notes in the right hand and rests in the left hand, creating a heartbeat effect. The dynamics are marked *pp* and *p*.

Example 4-22. “Soon”, mm. 83-89, Ending heartbeat.

²³ Seth, “Soon” In *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 25

²⁴ Ibid.

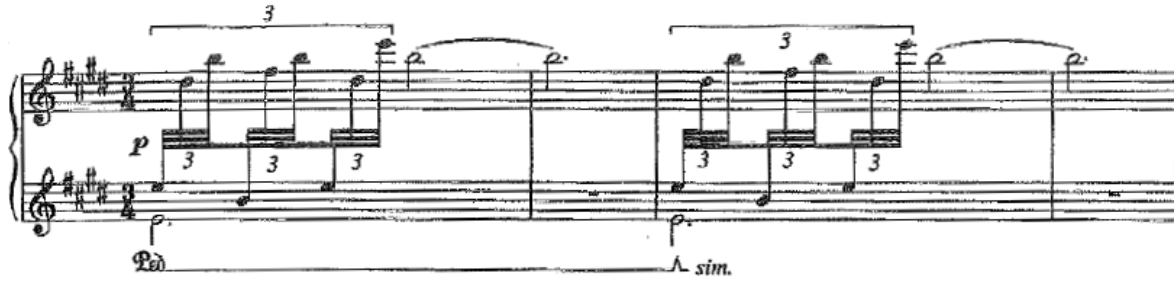
XIII “All You Who Sleep Tonight” (from *Meditations of the Heart*)

Key Center: E major

Tempo: no tempo marking

“All You Who Sleep Tonight” is the culmination of the entire song set. This is the final poem in Seth’s collection of the same name and is a reflection on his time as a traveler, separated from those he loves. As the last song, Dove imbues it with special qualities found only in this song. It is the only song without a tempo marking, giving the performers complete control over the pacing. The piano is also made up of a 2-measure motive that acts as a treble ostinato. Unlike the usual contrasts Dove composes for the piano, the voice is now the contrasting feature. The voice constantly shifts between D \sharp and D \natural in the E-major key center to create modal shifts. The task of the singer becomes to tune those notes with special care because of the higher pitch and proximity to the higher register of the voice. These unique qualities make the thirteenth song especially memorable.

“All You Who Sleep Tonight” segues from the previous song, “Soon”. As “Soon” ends with a single B in the piano, this note becomes the jumping off point for the last song. Instead of being used as an end, it turns into the dominant harmony of E-major, the key center for song 13. This is the only place in the entire set where the songs seem to be connected by a harmonic idea, and it echoes how Schumann (one of Dove’s influences) connects the songs in his cycle *Dichterliebe*. For this song, the harmonic connection launches the piano into what I call the *Star* motive. I named it so because of the ethereal imagery it suggests, which is similar to the other-worldly effect of Schubert’s ostinato in the final song from his cycle, *Winterreise*, which harkens to the sound of a hurdy-gurdy in a funeral dirge.



Example 4-23. “All You Who Sleep Tonight”, mm. 1-4, *Star* motive.



Example 4-24. Franz Schubert, “Der Leiermann” from *Winterreise*, D. 911, mm. 1-8, ostinato.

With a pedal note (usually E), the rest of the figure is made up of thirty-second note triplets that highlight notes of both an E major and B major harmony, making the connection to the previous song even stronger. There is slight variation with regards to harmony as the piece continues; while the rhythmic motive continues, the harmony changes slightly with nods to the subdominant (A major). With its hauntingly thin texture, the voice is used to fill the texture with notes around the piano’s pitches.

There are 2 basic shapes of the vocal line: one which descends and ascends sharply and one which plays around with the D \sharp and D \natural relationship. Dove oscillates between these two shapes for each line of poetry, setting the melody higher in the voice for heightened drama in the middle of the piece

(“Know that you aren’t alone/The whole world shares your tears”).²⁵ The only time the harmony and voice stop this pattern and introduce contrast into the piece is for the last line of poetry, “And some for all their years.”²⁶ Dove suddenly shifts the pedal note from E to D[♯], B, and then back to E. This slight harmonic shift highlights the text and the sudden change of tone. It also provides a surprising moment of cadential closure.

Learning about Vikram Seth’s history changed the entire meaning of this poem to me. At first, I thought it was connected to “Soon” and the idea of losing a loved one to death. However, after learning about Seth’s migrant lifestyle and his affinity for travel, I realized that the feeling of absence may be felt by someone mourning the loss of country, home, or family, rather than a certain individual. This gave a sense of a larger community with regards to the thousands of people today who are not at home or with their families. “All You Who Sleep Tonight” is also a culmination of Seth’s poetry, focusing on ideas of memory, distance, and facing life alone. Each poem leads to this final moment, both in a poetic and musical sense. The simple and uninterrupted musical setting of this poetry shows the care of Dove’s compositional style. As the voice ends its line, the *Star* motive of the piano continues as if it is a never-ending song.

²⁵ Seth, *All You Who Sleep Tonight*, 62.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Appendix: Complete Solo Vocal Works by Jonathan Dove

All the Future Days (2004)

Mezzo-soprano and Piano

All You Who Sleep Tonight (1996)

Mezzo-soprano and Piano

Ariel (1998)

Unaccompanied Soprano

The Beautifull Cassandra (1997)

An Entertainment for Narrator and Piano

Cut My Shadow (2011)

Mezzo-soprano and Piano

The End (2012)

Tenor, Flute, Oboe, String Quartet

Five Am'rous Sighs (1997)

Soprano and Piano

The Immortal Ship (2012)

Tenor and Guitar

In Damascus (2016) 34 minutes

Tenor and String Quartet

Minterne (2007)

Soprano, Violin, Cello

My Love is Mine (1997)

Unaccompanied Mezzo-soprano

Nights Not Spent Alone (2015)

Mezzo-soprano and Piano

Out of Winter (2003)

Tenor and Piano

Three Tennyson Songs (2011)

Bass-baritone and Piano

Under Alter'd Skies (2017)

Tenor and Piano

Who Wrote the Book of Love? (2014)

Bass-baritone and String Quartet

Youth Gone (2019)

Soprano and Piano

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