



Sharon Mabry

Music By Contemporary Women Composers Part II

Victoria Bond and Jean Eichelberger Ivey are two well-established American composers who have contributed greatly to the contemporary vocal repertoire. The two works by these composers discussed in this article will bring a sense of experimentation and theatricality to an otherwise traditional art song recital or could be pivotal works within a festival of music by women.

Victoria Bond has created both an aurally and visually unique work in her 1978 composition, *Peter Quince at the Clavier*. The Wallace Stevens text is set for voice and piano, with the singer playing various percussion instruments (triangle, tambourine, wind chimes, suspended gong, and hi-hat cymbal). Bond has drawn a diagram of the stage set-up and has designated specific letters for each of five positions assumed by the singer during the performance. The singer moves at specified times in order to play particular percussion instruments while singing or during interludes. Though the tessitura of the work is mostly medium to medium high, there are a number of pitches below middle C. This work would probably suit the lyric mezzo voice best, though it could easily be sung by a lyric soprano who has an excellent low register. This work is fascinating in its use of the voice.

Bond moves quickly from cantabile to whispering in the first few bars. There are occasional large skips leading to dramatic high notes, while at other times the voice is

asked to project a half-spoken tone, but on pitch, in the low register. The considerable use of *sprechstimme* and whispered tones is contrasted in the middle section by a long-spun cadenza showing flexibility in the lower range of the voice. There is also a great deal of dramatic and dynamic contrast in the vocal line which is enhanced by the use of the aforementioned percussion instruments played by the singer. *Peter Quince at the Clavier* is rhythmically complex for both performers and has frequent meter changes. The clever use of vocal and percussive effects creates a phantasmagorical work, difficult to interpret but well worth the effort. The singer and pianist need to be rhythmically flexible and secure and have an enthusiasm for sudden and dramatic contrast within the overall context of the piece. *Peter Quince at the Clavier* is published by Seesaw Music Corporation.

The other work for mezzo-soprano, *Terminus* by Jean Eichelberger Ivey, contains elements of contrast in texture and sound which are unique. This ten-minute piece is written for mezzo and two-channel electronic tape. The composer adapted the Ralph Waldo Emerson text and inserted a short quotation from Andrew Marvell. Ivey's score is easily readable and understandable. She has taken care to explain all symbols and tape cues in the preface. The tape requires no adjustment during the performance and is provided with the score by Carl Fischer, Inc. The voice part is in four extended sections which must be timed accurately to cues on the tape. Since these cues are easily followed in the score, realization of the work

is quite easy as well.

The vocal line moves rather traditionally in a deliberate fashion throughout, with an occasional use of glissandi, humming, grace notes, or the prolongation of consonant sounds. Pitch references do occur on the tape; however, the singer must have a secure feeling for intervals since the vocal line has unexpected and often difficult melodic movement. This piece would be an excellent aural contrast within a more traditional program context.

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