

FROM THE APPLE TO THE OVEN

Controversial Women in Classical Music



TURTLE BAY MUSIC SCHOOL ARTIST SERIES

Artwork by Kimberly Crick

EVE SONG

Jake Heggie (1961 -)

1. My Name

Eve, Eve, must be the sound I made
as I was being made.
Eve, Eve, Eve.
Out I came, made up by a couple of men.
Old man made me out of Adam's rib...
Oh, did he?
God made Adam, God made Adam,
God, Adam, God...damn it!
My children are going to know who their
mother is
Eve, Mad bad Eve, the amnesiac,
Eve, Eve the nymphomaniac, ME!
Was young man Adam completely
unconscious,
as I was manufactured?
Did he groan and whimper EVE as I slipped
out?
Did God mutter EVE as he slapped me into
shape?
Did I scream EVE at the inevitable rape?
Or was EVE the last breath shaped into a
sound
by my mother's mouth as I came out?
I was too little to save her or remember
anything about her...Eve.
What are they trying to tell me with their stories?
I am allowed no clothing.
I am allowed no shame.
I have nothing to wear but my beautiful hair,
my body, my face, and MY NAME. Eve.

2. Even

in the evening I am at peace.
in the evening I hear ev'rything more clearly
everything
to the hearer all the world does sing
with a ringing and a quickening
overhead the birds wheel and turn
overhead the setting sun reddening
no longer burns
at the water's edge a wind brushes by me
with a sursurruration:
grass and leaves flowers glow against the
dark'ning trees
eveysight and the light both go
ev'ry evening the forest darkens
In the evening my senses sharpen
I have no peace at night
I have no peace at night.

3. Good

Good Morning Whoever you are.
Good morning. Do you have a name yet?
Let me name you.
It must be the right name so I don't forget.
What shall I name you? What *is* your
name?
I have not eaten yet.
Are you slow? Are you fleet? Are you
obedient?
Are you good to eat?
Almost ev'rything is good to eat. Good
morning.
If I could I would eat the world, because
it's good.

Philip Littell (1950 -)

4. Listen

Its entire body ripples back and forth like a
sentence, fascinating.
Do you want to be like God?
How do you mean? Be old and have a penis?
I don't think so. No.
Do you want to be like God?
You know what I mean.
Oh...yes. I do.
My entire body ripples up and down like a
story.
I am listening.

5. Snake

Snake, is it true about the fruit?
My intuition tells me what you say about this
fruit is true.
I'd like to find out, snake. I'd love to know.
Go ahead in front of me where I can see you.
I will follow you. Oh!
The snake is in the tree.
Where I cannot see him.
He is now the color of shadows.
Very few things are as visible as I am when
I'm clean.
When a thing is visible, it always means that
the thing,
The tree frog, or that fruit, means to be seen.
Visibility's a warning, or an invitation
And it never tells you which.
What's visible will either feed you, mate with
you, or kill you.
Either way you gain experience. Here goes.
Sweet. Sour. Salty. Bitter.
And the taste of air, of rotteness,
Earth, and water.
Now I know.

6. Woe to Man

Woe to man.
What can a man expect?
Think of all the riches, gifts,
Woman brings in her train,
Oh, besides her obvious diff'rences
(Inside-out below the waist,
Bigger breasts, smaller brain)...
Can you think of any? Anything?
Ah, she is nothing but trouble.
Oh, nothing but trouble. Nothing. Nothing.
She is no thing.
You haven't lived until a man has said that
you.
Woman, because she was born of man.
Woe to man, because he is born of woman.

7. The Wound

The wound reopened opens the tomb
Her womb quickens, the woman sickens
And hungers hugely
The world in her belly, the sky in her head
Limbs heavy, she swells
A drop of water will not hold, let it go. Not yet...
The new formed baby will not let me let it go just
yet.
What is already in that head? Forget.

8. The Farm

As I recollect, it was more like a
farm than a garden.
We all worked.
It was a nice farm.
Trees. Ev'rything grew.
Good soil and plenty of water.
No, it didn't rain,
We lived by the rivers.
The Tigris and the Euphrates.
You might say
That's where it all started.

Eve



The woman

To Christians, Eve is the mother of all humankind. According to the Bible, Eve was created by God to serve as a companion to Adam, his first human creation. She was created by removing a rib from Adam's rib cage, which served as the first parts of her skeleton. Adam and Eve lived together in the Garden of Eden, and were instructed by God not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, which grew in the Garden. Out of earshot of Adam, a serpent convinced Eve to eat an apple from the tree, which Eve then offered to Adam. After they'd eaten the apple, God demanded an explanation from Adam, who blamed Eve; Eve blamed the serpent. All three were punished for their insolence, and humankind was meant to suffer not only expulsion from the Garden of Eden, but also a mortal lifespan, disease and sickness, the responsibility of killing and preparing their own food, and the eternal struggle away from sin. In addition to these things, Eve was punished with the burden of painful childbirth.

The controversy

For centuries, different Christian cultures have recognized and used Eve in a variety of roles, from explanation to scapegoat, to describe the differences between men and women, as well as woman's role in society. Centuries of civilizations have interpreted the Bible to mean that humankind would still today be lounging in the Garden of Eden had it not been for Eve's stupidity and naivety. As women have become more ambitious and their roles have changed around the world, the text has been disputed, and Eve's description now goes from silly, selfish nuisance to unfortunate pawn to daring and curious adventurer and back again.

The music

Jake Heggie sets Philip Littell's poetry describing several facets of Eve's life in "Evesong," almost entirely from the point of view of Eve. Throughout the set, Eve offers her opinions to controversies seemingly unknown to her: from her feelings on being created from an unneeded body part of a seemingly-more important human creature ("My Name"), to her questions leading up to eating the apple ("Snake"), to her recognition that she is not viewed as an equal to Adam ("Woe to Man") and her memories of the Garden of Eden ("The Farm"), Eve is given the unique chance to defend her position in the infamous situations that have cursed women for centuries - if she cannot make up for the consequences women have faced, she is at least given a third dimension perhaps not seen before.

PIANGERÒ LA SORTE MIA

FROM GIULIO CESARE

Georg Frediric Handel (1685 - 1759)

Piangerò la sorte mia

E pur così un giorni
perdo fasti e grandezze? Ahi, fato rio!
Cesare, il mio bel nume, è forse estinto;
Cornelia e Sesto inermi son, nè sanno
darmi soccorso. Oh Dio!
Non resta alcuna speme al viver mio.

Piangerò la store mia,
sì crudele e tanto ria,
finché vita in petto avrò.

Ma poi morta d'ogn'intorno
il tiranno e notte e giorno
fatta spettro agiterò.

I will lament my destiny

Therefore in one day
I lose fame and greatness? Oh, treacherous fate!
Caesar, my protector, is perhaps no more;
Cornelia and Sesto are powerless,
they cannot assist me. O God!
No hope remains in my life.

I will lament my destiny,
so cruel and merciless,
as long as there is life in my body.

But once dead, everywhere,
the tyrant, night and day,
my spirit will torment.

Cleopatra (69 BC - 30BC)



The woman

One of the first and most famous examples of female monarchial rule, Cleopatra served as Queen of Egypt for nearly 20 years. After marrying her brothers as tradition dictated, she caused controversy by entering into a relationship not only with Julius Caesar, but with Marc Antony, in opposition to Julius Caesar's legal heir. Her beauty and intelligence have earned her a reputation of cunning and intrigue throughout history.

The controversy

Cleopatra's wit, intelligence, charm and beauty gave her a unique advantage in her attempts at rising in the ranks of Roman and Egyptian monarchies, and most historical accounts of the major events of her rule reference her seductions over most men she met, as well as her conspiracies to kill those who posed a threat to her. As women's roles in society have changed over the years, so has its reaction to Cleopatra's most defining characteristics: what were seen as overly emotional, desperate, self-centered displays of female weakness have become examples of intelligence and ambition as women play a more integral role in society.

The music

In Handel's 1724 opera *Giulio Cesare*, Cleopatra's life with Caesar and her ascension to the throne over her brother is brought to light. In the 3rd Act, Cleopatra has learned that her brother Tolomeo has defeated her army, and that her beloved Caesar has died, having jumped from a window to escape Tolomeo. Realizing that her comrade Sesto and his mother Cornelia are probably captured, and that with Caesar gone, she vows to lament her fate until her dying breath and to haunt Tolomeo in death.

Here we see a prime example of Cleopatra depicted as a product of Handel's time - upon learning of her defeat, Cleopatra crumbles, laments and vows hasty post-mortem revenge. Handel's Cleopatra is crippled by the constraints of her sex at the time this opera was written, and admits defeat at the first real conflict she encounters in the opera. Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra, a modern '60's woman, certainly had other plans.

PRISON (VISIONS IV)

SEVEN TEARS

FROM JEANNE D'ARC

Steven Jobe (1955 -)

Seven Tears

The stained glass angels of my heart dance of
hearts

The rainbow hymn of my love perfect love

The rainbow fire of my love perfect love

Brings all, all in all,

all and all in you.

I've got seven tears raining silver blue

Lachrimosa lavender all in all,

all and all in you.

The bell rung angels of my prayer whispered
prayer

The sunlit hymn of my bliss perfect bliss

The sunlit fire of my bliss perfect bliss

Brings all, all in all, all and all in you

I've got seven tears raining silver blue

Lachrimosa lavender all in all,

all and all in you.

Prison (Visions IV)

Wheeling heartspan

this bird of me, in me,

fears the soft crush,

the quickening shiver

of peace come too soon.

This bird of me, in me,

shocks against the cage

but soon to circle wider

within the wheels

of wilder wind

wingborne, salt sweet consumed.

Joan of Arc (1412 - 1431)



The woman

Joan of Arc has gone down in history as one of the strangest cases of female bravery. While just a teenager, Joan claimed to have been delivered a message from God that sent her on a mission to save France against the English during the Hundred Years' War in the early 1400's. She was captured by the English after a short military career and burned at the stake for witchcraft when she was only 19 years old.

The controversy

Despite having risen to fame at a time well-known not to value the opinions of women, Joan of Arc's fame is not due solely to her overcoming prejudices over women. Joan claimed to have been visited by two saints and an archangel when delivered her instructions to retrieve the King of France from British prison, a fact that has sustained religious arguments for centuries and led scientists to speculate over chemical imbalances, weather patterns and indigestion. Even her success has been subject to scrutiny, as the "vision" that started her career has been blamed on insanity and witchcraft (both believed to be common among women in Joan's time).

The music

In these two short pieces from Steven Jobe's 1993 opera *Joan of Arc*, we meet Joan at two very different moments in her life. *Seven Tears*, which occurs in the first act, is Joan's hymn of gratitude for her great victory at the siege on Orleans; *Visions IV*, in the third act, we see her as she faces execution. From the composer: "both of these arias are consistent with her deeply felt religious convictions, a mystical devotion expressed through her line, 'All and all in you...!' It would appear that such a strong devotion sustained her to the end and, as she entered history, characterized her life as a woman who challenged and upended the mores of her culture and accomplished things that were ultimately unclassifiable in nature and we're little or nothing short of miraculous."

Jobe uses chordal structures and techniques such as droning to capture the musical essence of the time in which Joan lived. The piece is originally scored to include exotic instruments such as "Cloud Chamber Bells" (unhitched glass bells) and the "Drone Machine", a 7-foot hurdy-gurdy type instrument developed by Jobe himself.

FROM THE APPLE TO THE OVEN: CONTROVERSIAL WOMEN IN CLASSICAL MUSIC
IF I AM TO BE REMEMBERED

FROM POCAHONTAS

Linda Tutas Haugen

Joan Vail Thorne

If I Am To Be Remembered

If I am to be remembered
in the many moons to come,
how will they know me?
I am the daughter of one king,
and the subject of another,
I am Indian, I am Christian,
I am wife, I am mother.
This body that now wears these fancy clothes,
is of two hearts, two minds,
and two souls.
I ask myself who I am, and I do not know the answer.

If I am to be remembered
in the many moons to come,
how will they know me?
I ask myself who I am, and I do not know the answer.
There will never be an answer,
I will always be a question.
This body that now wears these fancy clothes,
is of two hearts, two minds,
two souls.
I ask myself who I am, and I do not know the answer.
There will never be an answer.
I will always be a question.

Pocahontas (1595 - 1617)



The woman

Pocahontas was born a princess in the Tsenacommacah tribe in present-day Virginia, and has risen to fame as the young woman who, at about 13 years old, was rumored to have saved the life of English explorer John Smith when he was captured by her father, the chief of the tribe. She later moved to England, married John Rolfe, and served as an ambassador of sorts between England and Native Americans in the new colonies. She died at age 22 of what is believed to have been smallpox.

The controversy

The controversies surrounding Pocahontas are unique in that they are less about her actions than about the events that may or may not have transpired. Pocahontas's relationship with John Smith is often represented in a romantic light, which historians all agree is not supported by fact - Pocahontas's name was first noticed by modern America for a misrepresented relationship.

Still, Pocahontas straddled two worlds and faced much controversy during her life. She is, many historians believe, the first Native American to enter into English society outside of slavery, and by choice. In an attempt to unite the two worlds with which she came to be familiar, she often alienated herself from both, and speculation that her involvement with English society and her lack of exposure to such diseases earlier in her life ultimately led to her demise.

The music

In Linda Tutas Haugen's 2007 opera *Pocahontas*, the audience experiences Pocahontas's introduction to English life and her relationship with John Smith, her relationship with John Rolfe, and her move to England. *If I Am to Be Remembered* finds Pocahontas at British court, as she first comes to terms with her feeling of transiency in belonging to more than one world.

Tutas Haugen's score mimics the chordal structures of Native American music, and in this moment takes Pocahontas out of her surroundings and gives her mind a voice. A strong and unfaltering character is given the chance to express her feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty as she faces a new chapter in her life.

I'M TOLD I'M A CITIZEN

FROM MRS. PRESIDENT

Victoria Bond (1945 -)

I'm Told I'm a Citizen

I'm told I'm a citizen by right of birth.
We pay taxes, we obey the same laws.
We supply you with citizens.
We give them up for war.
Yet we're poor, powerless, the property of men.

Does he become her chattel?
May she beat him and rape him, the law on her side?

"Man and woman are one, and that one is the man!"

As long as women cannot vote, we are ignored.
Fear not, I don't want anarchy,
I want equality! Justice...

I want a world where all are free.
And who will lead us there?
Where is the evangel?
Here! Now!

I am she! The spirits have ordained me.
Raise your heart and voice to cry:
"Victoria for President!"

Victoria Claflin Woodhull (1838 - 1927)



The woman

Victoria Claflin was born to a family of con artists in Homer, Ohio in 1838. As a child and teenager, she and her sister made a name for themselves as “child mediums,” a popular phenomenon of the time. As an adult, she was a stock broker, politician, and became a volatile member of the women’s rights movement. She was married three times in her life, and was an advocate for “free love” and believed that true affection was stronger than the law that tied people into matrimony, though her views were often mistaken to advocate promiscuity. In a gesture to gain power for women’s right to vote, she announced her presidential candidacy, with Frederick Douglass as her running mate, in 1872 at the Apollo Hall in New York City. Due to a series of arrests, she was prevented from attempting to vote in the primaries, and her nomination was swept under the historical rug.

The controversy

Victoria Claflin Woodhull’s entire life was shrouded in controversy - the scandal of her actions is hardly what makes her a controversial figure today. Most Americans, if asked, would say that there has never been a female presidential candidate, and while Victoria Woodhull’s candidacy was complicated, unsupported and short, it was a huge step for women who, at the time, weren’t even allowed to vote for a candidate, let alone represent the country.

Woodhull was so reviled at the time of her fame for her views and unorthodox tactics, she was erased from history books and has remained a no-name even today. Her colleagues Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton have carried the torch in the name of women’s right to vote, when in reality, Victoria Woodhull worked closely with them at that time.

The music

Victoria Bond’s 2001 opera, *Mrs. Satan* (later renamed *Mrs. President*), comprehensively covers Victoria Woodhull’s interesting upbringing, her unusual marriages and her relationship with the popular and hot-headed Baptist preacher Henry Ward Beecher. In this scene of the opera, Victoria has taken the podium at a women’s rights rally, and announces that she has decided to turn her support for the vote one step further in an attempt at the presidency. In the following scene, a riot ensues, and her former lover, set on revenge, turns the crowd against her; she is run out of the hall as the crowd chants “Mrs. Satan for president” in her wake.

Much of the speech in this aria is directly quoted from Victoria’s actual speech at the Apollo Hall in 1872.

I WANT MAGIC!

I CAN SMELL THE SEA AIR

FROM A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

André Previn (1929 -)

Philip Littell (1950 -)

I want magic!

Real! Who wants real?
I know I don't want it!
I want magic!
Magic! Yes! That's what I want!
That's what I try to give to people.
I do misrepresent things.
I don't tell the truth.
But I tell what ought to be the truth.
What it ought to be.
Yes, magic. Magic's what I try to give to people.
If that's a sin, if that is such a sin,
then let me be damned for it!
Don't turn on that light!
It'll all look so ugly in that light.
Why not see by candle light...or moonlight,
or by starlight?
They are bright enough to see by.
Sometimes too bright.

I can smell the sea air

I can smell the sea air.
Ah, the sea...
The blessedest thing that God created
In the seven days.
The rest of my days I'm going to spend on the sea.
And when I die, I'm going to die there, on the sea,
that sea.
One day out on the ocean I will die.
I will die with my hand in the hand
of some good-looking nice ship's doctor
with a small blonde moustache.
And he'll have a silver watch
And he'll look at me
And he'll look at his silver watch,
and sadly say, "Poor lady."
I'll be buried at sea, dropped overboard,
sewn up in a clean white shroud.
At the stroke of noon in the blaze of summer
into an ocean as blue
as my first love's eyes.

Blanche DuBois



The woman

The only fictional woman to make the program, Tennessee Williams created Blanche DuBois in his 1947 play *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In the play, Blanche visits her sister in New Orleans on the brink of a breakdown when she loses the family estate and suffers scandal after engaging in an affair with a 17-year-old student at the school where she teaches. Blanche has been delicate since her marriage ended when she discovered her husband was having a homosexual affair, after which he commits suicide. The play delves into the complicated relationship between Blanche and her sister Stella, as well as Stella's husband, Stanley, who alienates and eventually rapes Blanche during the visit.

The controversy

Blanche's character has been a difficult one for actresses to tackle since its debut. A classic southern belle, Blanche has spent her entire life playing the victim, pining and swooning at every obstacle she faces. Though her brief encounter with Stanley is a complicated one, and Stanley's character comes with baggage of its own, by the time in the plot where he rapes her, the audience is often left feeling conflicted as to whether or not Blanche could have avoided her fate: the circumstances leading to her arrival in New Orleans (clearly an escape from the scandal and near-poverty she left at home) seem to be direct effects of the mistakes she made along the way. Each actress who takes on the role of Blanche is faced with creating the delicate balance of offering the facts (Blanche has made several mistakes along the way) while trying to create a character the audience can relate and sympathize with.

The music

The two arias in tonight's program come from André Previn's 1995 opera adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. "I want magic!" happens in the third act, when Mitch, Stanley's poker buddy who has shown interest in Blanche since her arrival in New Orleans, visits her drunk. He moves to turn on the light in order to see her better, but Blanche, self-conscious about her age and appearance, asks him to leave the light off. When Mitch says he'd like to get a "realistic" look at her, she responds, "Real? Who wants real?"

Later in the action, after Stanley has raped Blanche, she has completely unraveled and confesses Stanley's actions to her sister. Stanley denies them outright and convinces Stella to send Blanche away to a mental hospital. Telling Blanche she is to visit a fictitious lover, Blanche packs her bags and fantasizes that she'll go away on a ship, where she'll die a respectable and plain death. Shortly after, the doctors arrive to take her away and force her to leave.

ARIEL

Ned Rorem (1923 -)

1. Words

Axes after whose stroke the wood rings,
And the echoes!
Echoes travelling
Off from the centre like horses.
The sap
Wells like tears, like the
Water striving
To re-establish its mirror
Over the rock
That drops and turns,
A white skull,
Eaten by weedy greens.
Years later I
Encounter them on the road _____
Words dry and riderless,
The indefatigable hoof-taps.
While
From the bottom of the pool, fixed stars
Govern a life.

2. Poppies in July

Little poppies, little hell flames,
Do you do no harm?
You flicker. I cannot touch you.
I put my hands among the flames.
Nothing burns
And it exhausts me to watch you
Flickering like that, wrinkly and clear
red, like the skin of a mouth.
A mouth just bloodied.
Little bloody skirts!
There are fumes I cannot touch.
Where are your opiates, your nauseous
capsules?
If I could bleed, or sleep!
If my mouth could marry a hurt like
that!
Or your liquors seep to me, in this
glass capsule,
Dulling and stilling.
But colorless. Colorless.

Sylvia Plath (1932 - 1963)

4. Poppies in October

Even the sun-clouds this morning cannot
manage such skirts.
Nor the woman in the ambulance
Whose red heart blooms through her coat so
astoundingly –

A gift, a love gift
Utterly unasked for
By a sky

Palely and flamily
Igniting its carbon monoxides, by eyes
Dulled to a halt under bowlers.

Oh my God, what am I
That these late mouths should cry open
In a forest of frosts, in a dawn of
cornflowers.

5. Lady Lazarus

I have done it again.
One year in every ten
I manage it--
A sort of walking miracle, my skin Bright as a
Nazi lampshade,
My right foot
A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.
Peel off the napkin
O my enemy.
Do I terrify?--
The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.
Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me
And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat
I have nine times to die.
This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.
What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see
Them unwrap me hand and foot--
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies
These are my hands
My knees. I may be skin and bone,
Nevertheless, I am the same,
identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.
The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at
all.
I rocked shut
As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like
sticky pearls.
Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.
I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say
I've a call.
It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay
put.
It's the theatrical
Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face,
the same brute
Amused shout: 'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge
For the eyeing of my scars, there is
a charge
For the hearing of my heart--
It really goes.
And there is a charge, a very large
charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood
Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.
I am your opus,
I am your valuable,
The pure gold baby
That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your
great concern.
Ash, ash--
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there--
A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.
Herr God,
Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.
Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

Sylvia Plath (1932 - 1963)



The woman

Poet Sylvia Plath holds a special place in literary history as a revered poet who lived a tortured life. Plath married fellow poet Ted Hughes at the age of 24, and had two children. The marriage was rocky, and her complicated home life combined with a history of depression inspired her haunting, passionate and stunning poetry. Plath wrote over 250 poems, and is perhaps most well-known for her semi-autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*. After her death, Plath truly rose to fame as her husband made it his goal to get Plath's work noticed by the general public. Plath committed suicide in 1963 at the age of 30 by placing her head in her gas oven and sealing off her kitchen, poisoning herself by carbon monoxide.

The controversy

Plath's legacy is an interesting one in the world of literature - widely unknown until after her death, most Sylvia Plath fans are drawn not only to her vivid imagery and feminist themes, but also by constant presence of how she lived and died. Plath balanced a life of crusader for the voices of women through her writing as well as victim of her husband's charm and wandering eye; her demise furthered this reputation as a victim, and Ted Hughes reputation suffered as well. The struggle Plath faced with her own demons and the lack of control she felt in her marriage are present in many of her works, and Plath readers are forced to decide what ratio of warrior to casualty they choose to apply to her memory and body of work.

The music

Ned Rorem's 1971 setting of Plath's collection of poems, *Ariel* takes advantage of many of the haunting emotions of the poetry itself. Rorem employs his commonly-recognized technique of three- to four-note themes in driving repetition throughout the piece, as well as text painting within the vocal and piano lines. "Words" helps the listener understand the tense nature of Plath's relationship with language and the role it played in her life. Both "Poppies in July" and "Poppies in October" capture the trance-like haze caused by opium in very different ways. "Lady Lazarus" allows the three instruments involved to converse in an electrifying way, reminding the listener of Frankenstein's lab and spotlighting the raw nerve his monster finds exposed.

Originally scored for soprano, piano and clarinet, tonight's performance features the clarinet part transposed for cello, which changes the relationship between Plath's voice (the soprano) and her inner dialogue (the cello and piano parts).