

LOST DAYS: MODERN AMERICAN SONG CYCLES
FOR BARITONE AND PIANO

by

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ABSTRACT

This project consists of two parts. The first part of this project is a professional-level recording of three song cycles, each by American composers, performed by pianist Scott Santoro and me. The song cycles selected for this project are by composers Richard Burke (1947-2014), Libby Larsen (b. 1951), and Debra Kaye (b. 1956). The second part of this project describes each work, presents biographical information about each composer and poet, and discusses each work's historical context and compositional inspirations.

Two of the song cycles are written by composers whose works have not been widely recorded. The third is by a well-known composer with an established discography. *The Lost Hours* by Richard Burke and *Slants of Light* by Debra Kaye are both written for baritone and piano, and neither has been commercially recorded. Libby Larsen, on the other hand, is one of America's most performed living composers and is widely celebrated in vocal music for her contributions to American art song and operatic literature. *The Peculiar Case of Dr. H. H. Holmes* for baritone and prepared piano was commissioned in 2009 by Dickson College for the Florestan Recital Project, and received its premiere on March 5, 2010. Recording this piece presented an invaluable opportunity to learn about and experience the process of preparing and performing with a prepared piano.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

New works, even those by lesser-known composers, are an increasingly important focus of the art music recording industry. The three song cycles discussed here provide excellent examples of new music for baritone, which is relatively rare. The limited available repertoire emphasizes the need to record, document, and distribute works such as these.

Slants of Light by Debra Kaye and *The Lost Hours* by Richard Burke are both song cycles for baritone and piano. *Slants of Light* was previously recorded as a personal demo pressing with limited distribution by composer and bass-baritone Paul Houghtaling shortly after the work's premiere, but has not been recorded commercially. This project provides the first recording of Richard Burke's *The Lost Days*.

The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes by Libby Larsen was commissioned in 2009 for the Florestan Recital Project and received its premiere on March 5, 2010. The piece, written for baritone and prepared piano, follows the life of Herman Webster Mudgett (1861–1896), better known as the 1893 Chicago World's Fair serial killer, Dr. H.H. Holmes. This project is the second professional audio recording of this work, the first being recorded by *The Florestan Project* on May 11 and 12, 2012.¹

Debra Kaye's cycle, *Slants of Light*, sets poems by Emily Dickinson. Dickinson's poetry is heavily influenced by her experiences with death and loss, strains of which suffuse the entire

¹ Libby Larsen, Program notes for *The Strange Case of Dr. H. H. Holmes*, accessed August 17, 2019, http://www.florestanproject.org/florestan_new_site/projects/hhholmes/Holmes%20texts%20102512.pdf.

cycle. In Richard Burke's *The Lost Hours*, the sonnets of Dante Gabriel Rossetti conjure dream sequences and moments of *déjà vu* that Burke exploits throughout his work. Burke's second song, *The Lost Days*, examines lost time, what could have been, and coping. In Libby Larsen's *The Peculiar Case of Dr. H. H. Holmes*, the murders committed by Dr. H. H. Holmes literally robbed his victims of their days. This, mixed with the themes of death and loss reflected in the other two song cycles, inspired the title and theme of this project.

CHAPTER 2: DEBRA KAYE – *SLANTS OF LIGHT*

American poet Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) was prolific, writing nearly 1,800 poems in her lifetime. She was the middle of three children born to Edward and Emily Norcross Dickinson in Amherst, Massachusetts. During her childhood, Dickinson would experience death and loss through the passing of close friends and family. Dickinson’s first significant experience of loss occurred in April of 1844 when Dickinson’s close friend and second cousin, Sophie Holland, died of typhus.² This early experience with death was immensely influential to Dickinson and provoked questions regarding death and immortality.

As she aged, she began to “reveal a growing sense of ‘difference’ between herself and others.”³ In a letter addressed to her brother from April 1853, Dickinson wrote, “What makes a few of us so different from others? It’s a question I often ask myself.”⁴ As her poetic style matured, Dickinson’s sense of personal difference became more prominent.⁵ The years 1858–1865, which include the American Civil War, brought great change and an “intense period of creativity that resulted in her composing, revising, and saving hundreds of poems.”⁶

² Emily Dickinson, “Letters from Dickinson to Abiah Root.” *Emily Dickinson Archive*, 1850. <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/aroot/jnl11.html>.

³ “Emily Dickinson Museum,” *Emily Dickinson Museum*, accessed July 17, 2019, <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/>.

⁴ Emily Dickinson, “Letters from Dickinson to Austin Dickinson,” *Emily Dickinson Archive*, 1853, <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/austin/1118.html>.

⁵ “Emily Dickinson Museum.”

⁶ “1855–1865: The Writing Years,” *Emily Dickinson Museum*, accessed September 30, 2019, <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/emily-dickinson/biography/emily-dickinson-the-writing-years-1855-1865/>.

During Dickinson's late thirties, she began to withdraw from public life. She spoke to callers only through her door and rejected all face to face contact, eventually refusing external contact entirely. As Dickinson reclused, her creativity evolved and matured.

The final decade of Dickinson's life was scarred by death. Her father died in Boston in 1874, her mother died in 1882, and her beloved nephew Gilbert died in 1883. In 1884, Dickinson's close friend and Massachusetts supreme court judge Otis Phillips Lord died. Some scholars believe that Dickinson may have been romantically involved with Judge Lord, but this speculation is not confirmed as Dickinson's sister, Lavinia, burned her letters after her death at Dickinson's request.⁷ On May 15, 1886, Dickinson died after battling chronic kidney inflammation. Becoming ill shortly after Gilbert's death, Dickinson wrote, "The Crisis of the sorrow of so many years is all that tires me."⁸

Emily Dickinson is regarded as one of America's greatest poets. Her poetry questions the nature of immortality and death, reflecting the pain, simplicity, and seclusion that suffused her life. "Within short, compact phrases she expressed far-reaching ideas; amidst paradox and uncertainty her poetry has an undeniable capacity to move and provoke."⁹ Dickinson's poetry has been set to music by many prominent composers, including Aaron Copland, Ernst Bacon, Jake Heggie, Libby Larsen, John Duke, John Adams, Lori Laitman, and others.

Debra Kaye (b. 1956) is an American composer and pianist. She received her Bachelor of Music degree from Mannes College and her Master of Music degree from New York University. Raised in a musical home, Kaye studied piano as a child, but it wasn't until she was 16 that she

⁷ Emily Dickinson, "Lavinia Norcross Dickinson (1833-1899), sister," *Emily Dickinson Museum*, <https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/lavinia-norcross-dickinson-1833-1899-sister/>

⁸ Emily Dickinson, "Letters from Dickinson to Elizabeth Holland," *Emily Dickinson Archive*, 1883, <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/correspondence/holland/1873.html>

⁹ "Emily Dickinson," *The Westport Library*, 2019, <https://westportlibrary.libguides.com/EmilyDickinson>.

became serious about music. Kaye states that her affinity for the voice came from her mother, who “had a beautiful speaking and singing voice.” Kaye eventually expanded beyond her classical music background and began studying Jazz, the harmonies of which became an important part of her compositional vocabulary. She also studied Dalcroze eurythmics, which focuses on musical expression through movement while teaching the concepts of rhythm and musical structure.¹⁰¹¹ This greatly influenced Kaye’s conceptualization of musical flow.

Examples can be found in “Slants of Light” and “This—is the land—the Sunset washes—.”

As Kaye’s studies continued, she grew frustrated with her limitations as a pianist and began to explore composition. Kaye credits Schubert’s lyricism, Beethoven’s use of motives, and eastern European composers such as Bartók as her classical influences.¹²

Slants of Light was commissioned in 2003 by bass-baritone Paul Houghtaling to be a setting of Dickinson’s *There’s a certain Slant of light*. During the compositional process, Kaye decided to expand the song into a cycle based on several Dickinson poems. This was her first setting of Dickinson’s work, and she immersed herself in Dickinson’s poetry. According to Kaye, the “challenge with Emily Dickinson is to really live up to the text. There is so much within the poetry and the imagery blooms, so that is the main challenge.”¹³ Around the same time, Kaye had been reading Persichetti’s *Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice*. She was struck by Persichetti’s discussion of large and small forms, of climax as a crescendo of various musical elements (harmony, rhythm, timbre, register, etc.), and of working towards gradations within a spectrum.¹⁴

¹⁰ Debra Kaye (composer) in discussion with the author, September 2019.

¹¹ “Émile Jaques-Dalcroze,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2019), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Emile-Jaques-Dalcroze>.

¹² Debra Kaye (composer) in discussion with the author, September 2019.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Before she began composing *Slants of Light*, Kaye analyzed Aaron Copland’s *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Kaye examined Copland’s settings to see how he employed text-music relationships and created effective musical climaxes. She strove to “understand how to create the feeling of satiety, that you understood the poetry more having heard the music. That quality, I’d like to emulate.” Kaye immersed herself in the poetry with the intent of creating music that arose naturally from the text. Kaye copied the poems, took them on walks with her, she laid on the couch with them, and even sang the words as she felt her way through the possibilities. Kaye was studying jazz piano when she composed *Slants of Light*, and jazz contributed to the composition’s modal, pan-diatonic, and sometimes bi-tonal harmonic vocabulary. Regarding the piece’s modality, she writes:

“I’ve always been interested in musical color as energy in its varying qualities and intensities. I began this study with *Slants of Light*, settings of four Emily Dickinson poems for baritone & piano. I worked with modes, to see if the way we typically think of them, from darkest Locrian to brightest Lydian would prove itself right and bear fruit to express my interpretation of Dickinson’s words, and the blooming quality of their imagery.”¹⁵

The first song in the cycle, “Not Knowing,” begins with dense, low piano chords.

Figure 1.1. Debra Kaye, “Not Knowing,” mm. 1-4

music by DEBRA KAYE
poem by EMILY DICKINSON

Adagio

Baritone

Piano

portamento

R.H. L.H.

p

5

* * *

¹⁵ Debra Kaye (composer) in discussion with the author, September 2019.

Her use of rich, evocative, closely-packed chords calls to mind Henry Cowell’s 1916 *Adventures in Harmony* with its primitive “tone clusters” (a term Cowell would later popularize).^{16,17} After the dense chords of the opening, the texture of measures 15-32 consists of a clustery, flowing left hand decorated with short, ascending fragments in the right hand that prefigure the second song of the cycle.

Figure 1.2. Debra Kaye, “Not Knowing,” mm. 13-19

The musical score for Debra Kaye's "Not Knowing" (measures 13-19) is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 13-15) shows a bass line with a whole note chord in measure 13, followed by rests. The right hand begins in measure 13 with a series of chords, marked *mf*. A *poco cresc* instruction spans measures 13-15. In measure 15, the right hand has a melodic fragment marked *mf*. The left hand has a triplet of chords marked *pp indistinct*. The second system (measures 17-19) shows the bass line with a whole note chord in measure 17, followed by rests. The right hand has a melodic fragment in measure 17, marked *pp indistinct*. The left hand has a triplet of chords in measure 17, marked *pp indistinct*. The score concludes with a triplet of chords in the left hand in measure 19, marked *pp indistinct*.

In a nod to the song’s title, Kaye intentionally avoids settling on a key until the very end. Kay describes this as living with a question and getting comfortable in a world with a question.

¹⁶ David Nicholls, *American Experimental Music, 1890–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), 155-7.

¹⁷ Michael Hicks, *Henry Cowell, Bohemian* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 106-8.

“Slants of Light” begins with a chromatic, almost violent *marcato* passage in the piano. Widely spaced chords converge in contrary motion, ending with octaves on Bb and Eb. This prefigures the voice’s initial gesture, which ascends from Eb to Bb.

Figure 2.1. Debra Kaye, “Slants of Light,” mm. 1-3

Baritone

Piano

mp

f marcato

There's a cer-tain Slant of

A descending melodic line in the piano contrasts with the opening vocal melody and segues back to dense chords that recall the opening measures.

Figure 2.2. Debra Kaye, “Slants of Light,” mm. 4-7

4

Baritone

Piano

mf

a tempo

8va

light, Win-ter Af-ter-noons That op-

Shimmering eighth-notes in the piano stand out from the underlying texture like points of light, vividly expressing the poetry.

Figure 2.3. Debra Kaye, “Slants of Light,” mm. 31-33

31

*

In Dickinson’s poem, the final stanza rhymes “breath” with “Death,” resulting in a chilling conclusion. Kaye ends her setting with a return to the previously-heard shimmering eighth-notes.

Figure 2.4. Debra Kaye, “Slants of Light,” mm. 58-65

58

62

pp *rit.*

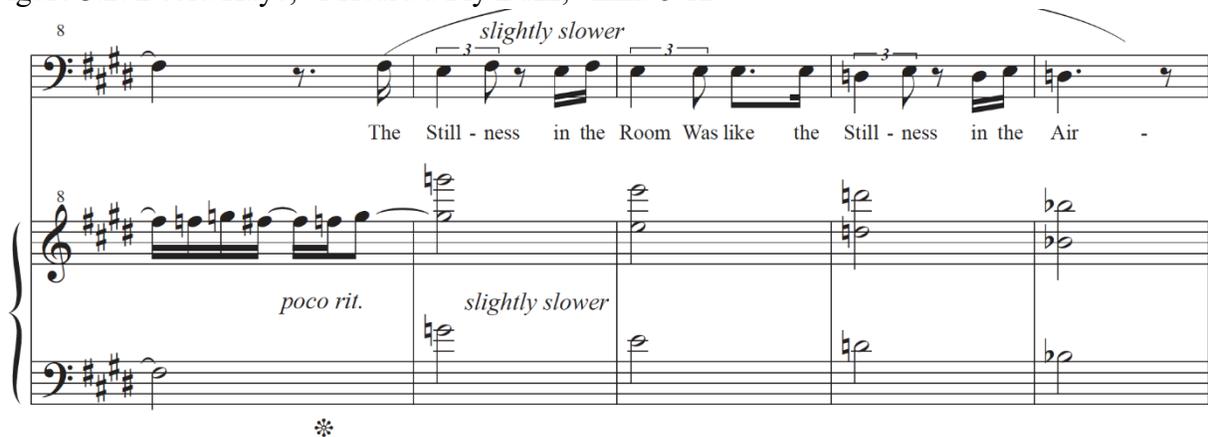
“I Heard a Fly Buzz” begins with a repeating chromatic line of narrow compass that delightfully depicts the buzzing of the eponymous fly.

Figure 3.1. Debra Kaye, “I Heard a Fly Buzz,” mm. 1-3



This is contrasted by measure nine, when Kaye replaces the “fly theme” with a descending line doubled at the octave.

Figure 3.2. Debra Kaye, “I Heard a Fly Buzz,” mm. 8-12



In Dickinson’s poem, the speaker is on her deathbed and surrounded by a crowd of people. As the speaker signs her final will, a fly appears and the speaker dies. Kaye depicts the stillness of the scene with the slow, descending half-note motive. When the fly appears, she reintroduces the chromatic theme from the introduction. The theme gradually falls in register as if drawing nearer to the listener. When the speaker dies, this “fly theme” gradually ascends, as if the human spirit and fly simultaneously depart.

Figure 3.3. Debra Kaye, “I Heard a Fly Buzz,” mm. 50-54

The image displays a musical score for the piece "I Heard a Fly Buzz" by Debra Kaye, covering measures 50 to 54. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staves. The lyrics are: "Be - tween the light - - and me - - - -". The piano part includes markings for *poco rit.* and *a tempo*. The score shows a melodic line in the voice and a complex piano accompaniment with various chordal textures and rhythmic patterns. The piano part features a prominent parallel ascent and descent of chords in the right hand, which is noted in the text below as evoking the image of waves washing against the shoreline.

“This—is the land—the Sunset washes—” is the final song in Kaye’s cycle. In Kaye’s music, she sometimes endeavors to create both aural and visual experiences.¹⁸ For example, the parallel ascent and descent of chords in the piano evokes the image of waves washing against the shoreline.

¹⁸Debra Kaye (composer) in discussion with the author, September 2019.

Figure 4.1. Debra Kaye, "This—is the land—the Sunset washes—," mm. 1-3

Baritone

Piano

mp

with pedal, l.v.

A cursory glance at the notation reveals the gentle ebb and flow of chords that wash over the page. The staccato note on “Dip” contrasts with the previous legato passage and emphasizes the motion and disappearance of the merchant men. The end of the vocal line extends to the top of the singer’s range, suggesting birdsong as the text describes the merchant men vanishing like “Orioles.”

Figure 4.2. Debra Kaye, "This—is the land—the Sunset washes—," mm. 27-31

27

ritard

Mer-chant-men-poise_up - on___ Hor-i-zons - Dip - and van-ish like Or-i-oles!

ritard

a tempo

To end the song, Kaye returns to the parallel piano chords of the introduction. Contrary motion in the last two bars slows the momentum of the music as the cycle comes to a close with a full, rolled chord.

Figure 4.3. Debra Kaye, "This—is the land—the Sunset washes—," mm. 32-36

32

poco rit.

CHAPTER 3: RICHARD BURKE - *THE LOST DAYS*

Poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82), born Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti, was a British poet, painter and illustrator. Rossetti famously co-founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, “a group of painters treating religious, moral, and medieval subjects in a nonacademic manner.”¹⁹ From a young age, Rossetti explored both poetry and painting as potential points of focus. In 1841 he entered Sass’s Academy, an important art school, and then the Royal Academy schools in 1845. Rossetti began his time at the Royal Academy as a probationer, but became a full-time student within a year. Consumed with a fascination for literature, Rossetti read as much as he could, including “romantic and poetic literature, William Shakespeare, J.W. von Goethe, Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Gothic tales of horror. He was fascinated by the work of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe.”²⁰ He was also influenced by the English poet William Blake.²¹

By his twentieth birthday, he had completed several translations of Italian poetry. As a short-term pupil of painter Ford Madox Brown (1821–93), Rossetti was influenced by Brown’s affinity for the German “Nazarene” movement, which emphasized pre-Renaissance art.²² “In

¹⁹ John Bryson and William Gaunt, “Dante Gabriel Rossetti,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2019), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dante-Gabriel-Rossetti>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Dombowsky, Philip. “Pre-Raphaelite Illustration: A Selection from the NGC Library Archives.” *National Gallery of Canada*. December 1, 2015. accessed August 24, 2019. <https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/exhibitions/pre-raphaelite-illustration-a-selection-from-the-ngc-library-and-archives>.

1848 he founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood with six other young men, mostly painters, who shared an interest in contemporary poetry and an opposition to certain stale conventions of contemporary academy art.”²³ A group that was composed of mostly English painters, the Brotherhood also included poets and critics.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood “sought to introduce new forms of thematic seriousness, high coloration, and attention to detail into contemporary British art.”²⁴ In 1870, Rossetti traveled with Jane Morris, an English embroiderer, model, and Rossetti’s muse. During his travels, he continued to write poems, including sonnets for the collection *The House of Life*.

The best-known version of Rossetti’s *The House of Life* is contained in the 1881 collection *Ballads and Sonnets*. *The House of Life* began in 1868 as a set of four poems titled *Willowwood Sonnets*. The sonnets emphasize “the arbitrary clarity of a dream sequence, but they are presented as wakeful experiences.”²⁵ The use of dream motifs is typical of Rossetti’s work.²⁶

Some prominent composers who have set Rossetti’s poems include Claude Debussy, Seymour Barab, John Ireland, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Charles Ives, whom Richard Burke admired. Ralph Vaughan Williams’ setting of six sonnets from *The House of Life* is especially well known.

Richard Burke (1947-2014) was a prolific composer, author, historian, and educator born and raised in New York City. His compositional catalog includes opera, concert works, television scores, cabaret songs, orchestral and chamber music, and a ballet score. Burke

²³ “Dante Gabriel Rossetti,” *Poetry Foundation*, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/dante-gabriel-rossetti>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “Willowwood,” *Rossetti Archive*, accessed August 25, 2019, <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/14-1869.raw.html>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

received his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Music degrees from Hunter College in New York. He earned his doctorate in musicology from the City University of New York, focusing on music of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was a professor at Hunter College for over 29 years, where he was instrumental to the school's opera program. One of Burke's best-known collaborative projects was the 2012 ballet *The Princess and the Goblin*. The work was conceived, directed and choreographed by renowned dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp, featuring music by Franz Schubert arranged and orchestrated by Burke. Original music by Burke was also featured in the production. Burke is also known for his research on the "Gershwin piano," a piano donated to Hunter College in 1947 by George and Ira Gershwin's mother, Rose, and featured in the 2014 *New York Times* article titled "Layers of Mystery for a Steinway Grand."²⁷

With Burke's vast knowledge of music, composers, and texts, he was surely aware of Vaughan Williams' setting of Rossetti's sonnet, "Silent Noon," as well as many other settings of Rossetti's works. Burke's own setting of Rossetti's sonnets, titled *The Lost Hours*, consists of a loosely-ordered collection of songs which, like memories, "come and go uninvited and, perhaps, unwelcome."²⁸ Musically, the cycle alludes to a wide variety of styles from nearly every period of music history, including "popular song, medieval music, fugue, lied, hymns, baroque sequences, and other styles and genres." The cycle is internally connected through the use of motives between songs. Burke strives to maintain a tonal context despite the enormous variety of influences.²⁹

²⁷ Barron, James, "Layers of Mystery for a Steinway Grand," *New York Times*, April 10, 2014.

²⁸ Burke, Richard. Program notes for *The Lost Hours*. Accessed July 16, 2019.
<http://www.richardburkemusic.com/the-lost-hours.html>.

²⁹ Ibid.

Despite Burke's early experience as a cabaret musician, *The Lost Hours* falls firmly within the classical art song tradition. *The Lost Hours* maintains a tonal context, but its nine songs incorporate an incredible variety of historical styles and influences.

"Ardor and Memory" begins with a simple melodic line in the piano that consists of unaccented, descending thirds. This pattern recurs in measure 12 and frequently thereafter.

Figure 5.1. Richard Burke, "Ardor and Memory," mm. 1-5

The musical score for "Ardor and Memory" by Richard Burke, measures 1-5, is presented in G minor. The tempo is marked "Moderately fast" with a quarter note equal to 136 beats per minute. The score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part is marked "mf unaccented, mechanically" and "rhythmically". The vocal line has lyrics: "The cuc-koo - throb, the". The score shows a complex meter change from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4.

Burke's constant meter changes obscure the pulse throughout the first song. In measures 33-34, Burke introduces a twelve-tone row in the right hand of the piano. This quickly returns to a diatonic, descending passage which recalls the opening melody.

Figure 5.2. Richard Burke, “Ardor and Memory,” mm. 31-38

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Ardor and Memory" by Richard Burke, covering measures 31 to 38. The score is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 31-34) features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "set - ting;" and "The". The piano accompaniment starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a *ped.* (pedal) marking. The second system (measures 35-38) continues the vocal line with the lyrics "fur - tive flick - er - ing streams to light re - born 'mid airs new - fledged and". The piano accompaniment in this system includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*. The score is written in a key signature of two flats and a 4/4 time signature.

The song ends with a final statement of the opening melody, which reappears motivically throughout the cycle.

Figure 5.3. Richard Burke, “Ardor and Memory,” mm. 105-117

105

110

f *ff*

* Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. (8^{vb})

attacca *

In “The Lost Days,” Burke emphasizes the duality between the vocal and piano lines. He once again starts the piano as an “unaccented, mechanically” played dirge, while the singer begins “conversationally.” The singer’s opening line is reminiscent of a plainchant psalm tone.

Figure 6.1. Richard Burke, “The Lost Days,” mm. 1-2

Slowly ♩ = 68

mf unaccented, mechanically

conversationally

The lost days of my life un-til to-day, what

In Burke’s description of the song cycle, he writes, “A cheerful march materializes as a dirge plays.” This refers to the passage beginning in measure 13 and continuing through the end of the song. The melody in the right hand (the “cheerful march”) is played “as if from a distance,” contrasting sharply with the slow-moving triads in the left hand.

Figure 6.2. Richard Burke, “The Lost Days,” mm. 13-14

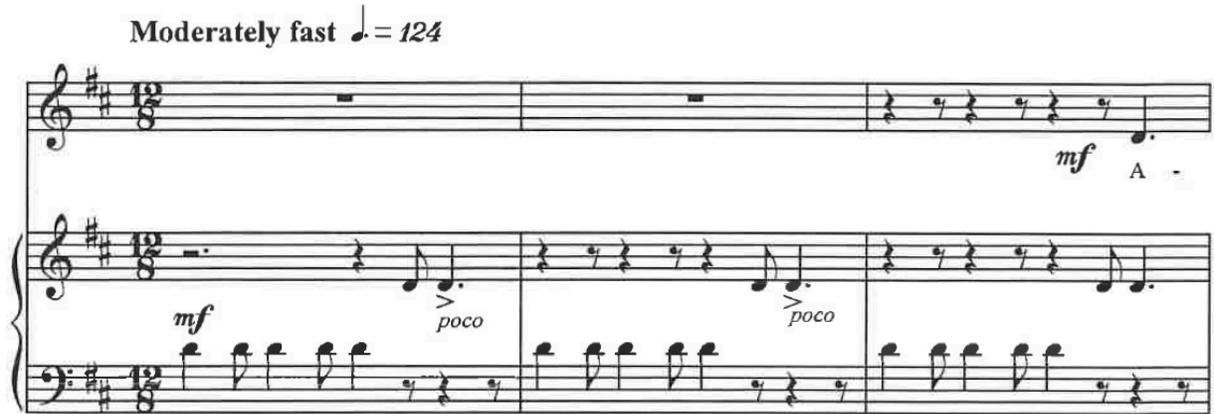
Note: the passage in the upper staff should be played as if it were a march in 4/4 time. It should begin almost inaudibly and grow louder, as if coming closer. The chords in the left hand should be played strictly and always forcefully.

Burke’s former students and colleagues recall his affinity for the music of Charles Ives; the cacophonous combination of keys and styles heard here may be influenced by Ives’ frequent usage of bitonality. The march intensifies and grows louder, finally disappearing for the last three measures and allowing the piece to end as it began, with slow-moving, dirge-like triads in the left hand.

Figure 6.3. Richard Burke, “The Lost Days,” mm. 17-20

“A New Year’s Burden” starts with single repeated note in the piano. Burke uses 12/8 time to evoke a folk-dance style.

Figure 7.1. Richard Burke, *A New Year’s Burden*, mm. 1-3



“A New Year’s Burden” may be inspired by the folk tune “Die elfjährige Markgräfin,” with which it shares a melody.³⁰

Figure 7.2. “Die elfjährige Markgräfin” melody



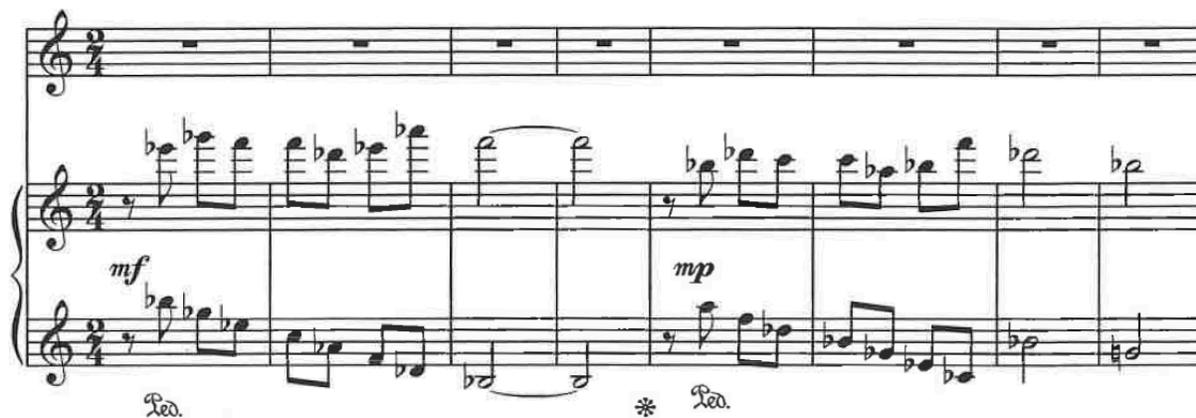
The song’s title does not refer to a “burden” in the modern sense of a heavy object. Rather, it is an archaic term that referred to a repeated refrain in a song or hymn, popular in England during the 15th and 16th centuries.³¹

“The Woodspurge” is simple and lyrical. The opening four measures of piano music introduce a new theme, which Burke uses throughout the rest of the cycle.

³⁰ “Die Elfjaehrige Markgraefin,” (The eleven-year-old margravine) *Folk Tune Finder*, accessed August 29, 2019, <https://www.folktunefinder.com/tunes/151658>.

³¹ David Fallows, “Burden,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.04346>.

Figure 8.1. Richard Burke, “The Woodspurge,” mm. 1-8



While the right hand plays the new melody, the left hand plays descending thirds, recalling the opening piano melody of “Ardor and Memory.” The light accompaniment leaves the vocal line exposed. In measures 36-39, a short piano interlude restates melodic content from the opening measures, but with a thickened texture.

Figure 8.2. Richard Burke, “The Woodspurge,” mm. 36-40



In the fifth song of the cycle, “Autumn Idleness,” Burke uses a variety of textures. After a dramatic introduction, he moves to “una corda” cluster chords in the piano.

Figure 9.1. Richard Burke, “Autumn Idleness,” mm. 1-4

Moderately ♩ = 110

This sun-light

una corda

f *pp* *f*

Beginning with the pickup to measure 35, Burke introduces an imitative texture. The melody heard here appears in modified form in both piano and vocal lines throughout the remainder of the song.

Figure 9.2. Richard Burke, “Autumn Idleness,” mm. 31-40

22

31

Slightly Slower ♩ = 100

mf The deer gaze call - ing

36

poco rit. *a tempo*

dap-pled white and dun, as if be - ing fo-rest-ers of

p *poco rit.* *p* *semplice*

In “The Woodspurge (continued),” Burke returns to material from “The Woodspurge,” restating its final melody as the new song’s introduction.

Figure 10.1. Richard Burke, “The Woodspurge (continued),” mm. 1-8

As before, the descending thirds in the piano line recall the opening material from “Ardor and Memory.” In measures 12-16 and 26-30, Burke introduces thematic material that reappears in “Silent Noon”. A more developed example of the same material can be found in measures 43-62.

Figure 10.2. Richard Burke, “The Woodspurge (continued),” mm. 41-47

The seventh song, “. . . the daughters of the daybreak sing,” is a waltz for solo piano with a hummed vocal obligato. Compared with the prior songs, its thick texture and broad range provides a welcome contrast.

Figure 11.1. Richard Burke, “. . . the daughters of the daybreak sing,” mm. 1-6

Moderate waltz ♩ = 128

The musical score for Figure 11.1 consists of six measures. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The middle and bottom staves are a grand staff with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The piece is marked "Moderate waltz" with a tempo of ♩ = 128. The first measure has a dynamic of *mf*. The second measure has a dynamic of *mp*. The third measure has a dynamic of *mf*. The fourth measure has a dynamic of *mf*. The fifth measure has a dynamic of *mf*. The sixth measure has a dynamic of *mf*. The tempo marking *rit.* is above the fourth measure, and *a tempo* is above the fifth measure. The piece ends with a fermata over the final note.

Burke moves to a simpler texture in measures 20-24, where the chords in the right hand give way to a single line that ascends in octaves. At its peak, the right-hand line descends in thirds, once again stating the opening melody from “Ardor and Memory.”

Figure 11.2. Richard Burke, “. . . the daughters of the daybreak sing,” mm. 19-26

The musical score for Figure 11.2 consists of eight measures. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The middle and bottom staves are a grand staff with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The piece is marked "Moderate waltz" with a tempo of ♩ = 128. The first measure has a dynamic of *p*. The second measure has a dynamic of *p*. The third measure has a dynamic of *p*. The fourth measure has a dynamic of *p*. The fifth measure has a dynamic of *p*. The sixth measure has a dynamic of *f*. The seventh measure has a dynamic of *f*. The eighth measure has a dynamic of *f*. The tempo marking *rit.* is above the fourth measure, and *a tempo* is above the fifth measure. The piece ends with a fermata over the final note.

After a moment of silence, the piano quietly re-emerges, followed by the voice. This melody is based on the opening measures of “The Woodspurge.”

Figure 11.3. Richard Burke, “. . . the daughters of the daybreak sing,” mm. 27-42

The musical score for Figure 11.3 consists of two systems. The first system (measures 27-34) features a vocal line in the upper staff with the instruction "(sung on 'la' or hummed)". The piano accompaniment is in the lower staves, marked with a *rit.* (ritardando) and *p* (piano) dynamic. The second system (measures 35-42) continues the piano accompaniment, marked with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

Burke’s use of material from “Ardor and Memory” and “The Woodspurge” helps create a broad sense of cohesiveness.

“Sudden Light” opens with a fast, descending line harmonized in thirds, recalling measures 29-32 of “Autumn Idleness.”

Figure 12.1. Richard Burke, “Sudden Light,” mm. 1-2

The musical score for Figure 12.1 shows the piano accompaniment for measures 1-2 of “Sudden Light.” The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The upper staff is empty, while the lower staves contain a fast, descending line of chords, primarily triads, marked with a *f* (forte) dynamic. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final chord.

The rapid pace of this song is lively and exciting as the poetry describes a moment of *déjà vu*. As the scene develops, Burke alternates between staccato sixteenth-notes and rolling sextuplets in the piano, depicting the uncertainty described by the poem.

Figure 12.2. Richard Burke, “Sudden Light,” mm. 22-25

The image shows a musical score for the song "Sudden Light" by Richard Burke, measures 22-25. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a soprano clef, and the piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "may not know, but just when at that swal low's soar your neck turned so, Some". The piano part features a prominent sextuplet in the right hand, which is a series of six sixteenth notes. The tempo is indicated as "f" (forte). The score includes dynamic markings such as "f" and "mf".

“Silent Noon” is the final song in *The Lost Days*. The opening tempo is slow and strict, and the piano part begins with simple, ascending triads in close position.

Figure 13.1. Richard Burke, “Silent Noon,” mm. 1-4

Very broadly ♩ = 56

sotto voce

8va - Your

f in strict time

ff

As “Silent Noon” progresses, it becomes more dramatic, eventually reaching an ending featuring complex meters and intense, driving accompaniment.

Figure 13.2. Richard Burke, “Silent Noon,” mm. 47

47

close com - pa - nioned in - ar - ti - cu - late

ff

Burke repeats the last line of the poem repeatedly, stripping away text with each iteration to express the “twofold silence” described by the poem.

Figure 13.3. Richard Burke, “Silent Noon,” mm. 51-56

The image displays a musical score for three systems of music, numbered 51, 53, and 55. Each system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is written in grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "two - fold si - lence was the song of love," "si - lence was the song of love," and "was the song of love,". The piano accompaniment features a complex, rhythmic pattern of chords and arpeggios, with some measures containing a fermata. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is marked with a piano (p) dynamic.

Burke ends the song cycle with a hymn-like chorale played by the piano. This chorale is reminiscent of the *Ode to Joy* from Beethoven’s 9th Symphony.

Figure 13.4. Richard Burke, "Silent Noon," mm. 63-68

Andante ♩ = 100

65

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is mostly empty, with a measure rest indicated by a horizontal line above the staff for measures 63 through 68. The lower staff contains the musical notation. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The melody in the lower staff consists of quarter notes and eighth notes, while the upper staff provides harmonic support with chords. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final chord in the upper staff.

CHAPTER 4: LIBBY LARSEN – *THE PECULIAR CASE OF DR. H. H. HOLMES*

Herman Webster Mudgett (1861-1896), better known as Dr. Henry Howard Holmes, was one of America's first famous serial killers. Holmes confessed to killing twenty-seven victims before his death in 1896.³² Of the twenty-seven confessed killings, only nine were plausibly confirmed; several victims who were listed in Holmes confession were found to still be alive.³³

Holmes was born in Gilmanton, New Hampshire, the third of five children. Holmes' parents, Levi and Theodate Mudgett, were devout Methodists. His father was a strict disciplinarian; Holmes and his siblings were frequently beaten or exposed to kerosene vapor in an attempt to silence them.³⁴ Holmes spent much of his childhood alone, indulging in his hobbies, which included inventing a device to scare birds away from the family farm.³⁵ As a child, Holmes' only friend was an older boy named Tom who died from a fall while the two were exploring an abandoned house.³⁶ In light of Holmes' eventual murder spree, there is some speculation as to whether Tom's death was truly accidental.³⁷

³² J. D. Crichton and Herman Mudgett, *Holmes' Own Story: Confessed 27 Murders, Lied Then Died* (Murrieta, CA: Aerobear Classics, 2016), 191.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Phill Jones, "The Crimes of the Mysterious Mr. Mudgett," *History Magazine* 12, no. 1 (October 2010): 33-36.

³⁵ "H.H. Holmes and the Mysteries of Murder Castle, Part 1," Stuff Media LLC, 2012, <https://www.missedinhistory.com/podcasts/h-h-holmes-and-the-mysteries-of-murder-castle-part-1.htm>.

³⁶ Harold Schechter, *The Serial Killer Files: The Who, What, Where, How, and Why of the World's Most Terrifying Murderers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 180.

³⁷ Ibid.

After graduating from high school, Holmes briefly taught in New Hampshire before marrying his first wife, Clara Lovering. The next year, he enrolled at the University of Vermont, where he attended for one year before transferring to the University of Michigan's Department of Medicine and Surgery, which was known for specializing in dissection.³⁸ During college in Michigan, Holmes would steal cadavers from the anatomy lab and mutilate them beyond the point of recognition. He used these cadavers to stage accidental deaths and commit insurance fraud.³⁹ After graduating, Holmes began to travel from town to town, including a short stint in Mooers Fork, New York. There he was said to have been seen with a little boy, who later disappeared.⁴⁰ Holmes claimed the boy had returned to his home in Massachusetts. Holmes, however, disappeared shortly thereafter, resurfacing in Philadelphia where he took a position at a drugstore.⁴¹ During his employment there, a young boy died after taking medicine purchased from Holmes.⁴² Holmes denied any involvement and fled the city. Before relocating to Chicago, he adopted his alias, Henry Howard Holmes, in an attempt to distance himself from previous scams perpetrated under his birth name.⁴³

³⁸ J. D. Crighton, *Detective in the White City: The Real Story of Frank Geyer* (Murrieta, CA: RW Publishing House, 2017), 136-208.

³⁹ "The Victims of Chicago's First Serial Murderer, H.H. Holmes," *Biography.com*, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/news/hh-holmes-victims>.

⁴⁰ The Plattsburgh Sentinel, "America's First Documented Serial Killer Lived in Mooers Forks," *The Plattsburgh Sentinel*, W. Lansing & Son Publishers, August 2, 1895. Vol. 41, No. 12, Whole No. 2093, 8.

⁴¹ Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2003), 44.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ "H. H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer," *H.H. Holmes: America's First Serial Killer*, 2008, <http://www.hhholmesthefilm.com>.

In 1887, Holmes married Myrta B. Belknap and filed for divorce from Clara Lovering.⁴⁴ The divorce was never finalized, in part due to Clara never receiving paperwork.⁴⁵ In 1894, he married Georgiana Yoke in Denver, despite still being legally married to both Clara and Myrta.⁴⁶

By 1886, Holmes had relocated to the Chicago suburb of Englewood. He offered his services to drugstore owner Elizabeth S. Holton and was offered a job at the drugstore he would eventually purchase.⁴⁷ Two years later, Holmes purchased an empty lot that was directly across the street from the pharmacy and devised a plan for a mixed-use building.⁴⁸ He designed the structure himself to avoid working with an architect and thereby revealing the building's sinister secrets. The first floor was to contain retail shops, including a new drug store, and the second and third floors were to be filled with apartments, Holmes' own flat, and his office. Holmes' additional plans were kept secret from investors and included secret wooden chutes that would lead from the second-floor bedrooms to the basement.⁴⁹ He also designed windowless rooms fitted with gas jets and an air-tight, walk-in vault with iron walls. The building would feature hidden passages, staircases, trap doors and a subbasement. Over the next few years, Holmes' dream took shape. Attempting to save money, Holmes would hide unpaid-for furniture in hidden rooms and secret passages throughout the house. Short-term laborers were hired to build small parts of the building but were fired before being paid as Holmes claimed to be angered by their

⁴⁴ Rebecca Kerns, Tiffany Lewis, and Caitlin McClure, "Herman Webster Mudgett," *Radford University Department of Psychology*, Accessed October 1, 2019, http://maamodt.asp.radford.edu/Psyc%20405/serial%20killers/Mudgett,%20Herman%20_2012_.pdf.

⁴⁵ Harold Schechter, *Depraved: The Definitive True Story of H.H. Holmes, Whose Grotesque Crimes Shattered Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (Google Play Ebook, 2017), 37.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Erik Larson, *The Devil In The White City*, 46.

⁴⁸ Adam Selzer, *H. H. Holmes: The True History of the White City Devil* (New York: Skyhorse, 2019), 27.

⁴⁹ "Murder Castle," *History.com*, 2017, <https://www.history.com/topics/crime/murder-castle>.

work. “The basement was a macabre facility of acid vats, pits of quicklime (often used on decaying corpses) and a crematorium, which the killer used to finish off his victims.”⁵⁰

While working at a chemical bank, Holmes met a local carpenter, Benjamin Pitezel, with whom Holmes soon became friends. Pitezel, who had a criminal past, became Holmes’ right-hand man.⁵¹ Two other men also joined Holmes’ circle: a skeleton articulator named Myron G Chappell and the future caretaker of Holmes’ building, Patrick Quinlan.^{52,53}

Two of Holmes’ early victims were Julia Connor and her daughter Pearl. Julia’s husband, Ned Connor, had purchased Holmes’ first pharmacy to impress Julia, but after being overburdened by the resulting debt, Ned began to crumble. Shortly after, Ned discovered that his wife was having an affair with Holmes and fled, abandoning his wife and daughter. In late 1891, Julia told Holmes that she was pregnant and expected Holmes to marry her. Holmes agreed, but conditionally required that Julia have an abortion before he would marry her; she agreed. He planned to perform the operation himself on Christmas Eve, which was the last day Julia and Pearl were seen.⁵⁴

The next few years saw a series of murders for Holmes. Former actress, Minnie Williams, was an heiress to a Texas real estate fortune and had been previously courted by Holmes. In 1893, Minnie moved to Chicago. Holmes, who Minnie knew as Henry H. Gordon, asked her to work for him as his personal stenographer. He convinced Minnie to transfer her property deed to a man named Alexander Bond, which was yet another of his aliases. In the summer of 1893, Minnie’s sister Nannie came to visit. Holmes told the sisters that he would

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Adam Selzer. *H. H. Holmes*, 27.

⁵² Erik Larson, *The Devil In The White City*, 218.

⁵³ Erik Larson, *The Devil In The White City*, 47.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 146-47.

escort them to Europe, but the two women were not seen alive after July 5.⁵⁵ Another victim, Emeline Cigrande, knew Holmes through Pitezel. They began a relationship, and she moved into Holmes' building in 1892. In December of the same year, Emeline disappeared. Shortly thereafter, Edna Van Tassel also disappeared.⁵⁶ Holmes would continue to seduce and murder victims, later hiring Charles Chappell to strip the flesh off the bodies.⁵⁷ Holmes would then sell the skeletons to schools and medical labs.⁵⁸

In July of 1894, Holmes left Chicago and traveled to Fort Worth, Texas, the location of his properties inherited from the Williams sisters. Here, Holmes intended to build another "castle."⁵⁹ This plan never came to fruition; he was arrested later that month for illegal business in St. Louis, Missouri. During his incarceration, he and his cell-mate Marion Hedgepeth devised a new insurance fraud scheme. After release, Holmes planned to take out a \$10,000 life insurance policy and fake his own death.⁶⁰ Holmes paid Hedgepeth \$500 for information on a trustworthy lawyer who could help him with his schemes. Holmes attempted the plan after his release, but the insurance company grew suspicious and refused to pay. Instead of pursuing the matter, Holmes regrouped with Pitezel and attempted the plan again in Philadelphia. Pitezel agreed to fake his own death so that his wife could collect on his \$10,000 policy. Pitezel's wife agreed, planning to split the money between herself, Holmes, and Jephtha Howe, the lawyer

⁵⁵ Adam Selzer, *H. H. Holmes*, 75,163.

⁵⁶ "Murders by Doctors," *The Anaconda Standard*, May 1, 1896, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84036012/1896-05-01/ed-1/seq-12/>.

⁵⁷ Erik Larson, *The Devil In The White City*, 150.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁵⁹ "Locating the Site of H. H. Holmes's 'Murder Castle' in Fort Worth, Texas," *Nodal Bits*, 2012, <http://www.nodalbits.com/bits/locating-h-h-holmes-murder-castle-fort-worth-tx/>.

⁶⁰ "H.H. Holmes," *Crime Museum*, 2017, <https://www.crimemuseum.org/crime-library/serial-killers/hh-holmes/>.

recommended by Marion Hedgepeth. The plan derailed when Holmes, in lieu of finding a cadaver, actually murdered Pitezel.⁶¹

After collecting Pitezel's insurance money, Holmes convinced his wife to allow three of her children to travel with him throughout the northern United States and Canada. In Toronto, Holmes murder Nellie and Alice Pitezel, suffocating them in a trunk.⁶² In Indianapolis, he rented a cottage and was spotted visiting a local pharmacy where he purchased drugs to kill Howard, the last Pitezel child in his custody. Holmes was also witnessed having the knives used for dismembering his victims sharpened.⁶³ Bone fragments and teeth belonging to Howard Pitezel were found in the house's chimney.⁶⁴

On November 17, 1894, Holmes was arrested and detained in Boston on an outstanding warrant for horse theft from his time in Texas. An investigation followed and led to the discovery of Alice and Nellie Pitezel's remains. In 1895, Chicago police began to investigate Holmes' building in Englewood. Holmes was tried and convicted for the murder of Howard Pitezel, and sentenced to death in October of 1895. While awaiting his demise, the Hearst newspapers paid Holmes \$7,500 for a written confession.⁶⁵ The confession he produced included many contradictions.

⁶¹ J. D. Crighton. *Detective in the White City*, 136-208.

⁶² Frank P. Geyer, *The Holmes-Pitezel Case* (London: Publishers' Union, 1896), 231.

⁶³ Christopher Lloyd, "Dr. H.H. Holmes House," *The Indianapolis Star* (Indianapolis, IN), October 24, 2008.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ J. D. Crighton, *Holmes' Own Story*, 87-90.

On May 7, 1896, he was hanged at the Moyamensing prison in Philadelphia.⁶⁶ Before his death, Holmes requested that his body be encased in cement and buried ten feet below ground as he was worried grave robbers would steal his body.⁶⁷

There exist at least two versions of Holmes' confessions. One was written for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the other ostensibly for the *Journal of N. Y.* The *Journal of N. Y.* edition may have been a version distributed to regional papers.⁶⁸ On April 11, 1896, Holmes wrote to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* regarding the multiple confessions:

"I formally & emphatically deny the assertions that any confession has been made by me except one & which is the only one that will be made[.] This original confession is the one given to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*[.] It alone is genuine, all others are untrue."⁶⁹

In Holmes' confession, he describes the heavy personal impact of his imprisonment. He then describes how he murdered each of his victims, beginning in 1886 with Dr. Robert Leacock, a classmate of his. Although he claims Dr. Robert Leacock as his first murder victim,⁷⁰ it should be noted that this is one of many contradictions within Holmes' confession and that Leacock was later discovered to have died three years later in 1889.⁷¹

Libby Larsen (b. 1951) "is one of America's most prolific and most performed living composers."⁷² Her compositional output includes a catalogue of over 500 works, including 15 operas, orchestral works, chamber music, art songs, and more. Larsen's extensive contributions

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Adam Selzer and William Griffith, *The Confession of H. H. Holmes* (Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2012). Kindle edition.

⁶⁹ J. D. Crighton and Herman Mudgett, *Holmes' Own Story: Confessed 27 Murders, Lied Then Died* (Murrieta, CA: Aerobear Classics, 2016), 192.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ University of Michigan, *Catalogue of graduates, non-graduates, officers, and members ... University of Michigan*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1923), 420.

⁷² Libby Larsen, "Libby Larsen," *Oxford University Press*, 2019.

to classical vocal music has made her one of America's foremost art song composers. Author Charles Fowler describes Larsen's music as "dramatic and direct in its communication, evoking picturesque images and a wide range of feelings."⁷³ Her music is known for its "keen sense of drama and strong interest in American popular music influences."⁷⁴ Larsen received her Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and PhD in Composition from the University of Minnesota.⁷⁵ While attending college, Larsen studied with Paul Fetler, Eric Stokes, and Dominick Argento.⁷⁶

Argento, an American composer known for his art song and operatic output, dramatically influenced the way many American composers perceive and compose for the human voice. One of Argento's many strengths was his skill at text setting. Unlike most prior composers, Argento was interested in setting prose to music. In 1975, he received the Pulitzer prize for his eight-part song cycle *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, composed for English mezzo-soprano Janet Baker.⁷⁷ The text for this work was drawn directly from excerpts of Virginia Woolf's diary. Other works in which he set prose rather than poetry include *Letters from Composers* (1968), *The Andrée Expedition* (1980) and *Casa Guidi* (1983).

As a student of Argento, composing with prose was natural for Larsen. When discussing her approach to setting poetry and prose within music, Larsen wrote:

"Each poem I work with must be considered on its own terms. Great poetry already has its meticulously crafted music – strong and intact. I feel that I have a

⁷³ Charles B. Fowler, Timothy Gerber, and Vincent P. Lawrence, *Music!: It's Role and Importance in Our Lives*, vol. 1 (New York: Glencoe, 1994), 345.

⁷⁴ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2006), 331.

⁷⁵ Libby Larsen, "AN INTERVIEW WITH LIBBY," *Libby Larsen*, 2019.
<https://libbylarsen.com/index.php?contentID=280>

⁷⁶ Julie Anne Sadie and Rhian Samuel, *The Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 266-268.

⁷⁷ Rovi staff, program notes for *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, accessed October 1, 2019, <https://www.allmusic.com/composition/from-the-diary-of-virginia-woolf-for-voice-piano-mc0002378934>.

serious responsibility to work as diligently as I can to discover the music of the poem (or prose) as the first part of my process. If I do that work well, I move through the discovery of poetic devices to discover the melodic contour, meter (usually polymeter), syntax, counterpoint, and musical form of the poem.”⁷⁸

Andrea J. Mitternacht described Larsen’s method of setting a text, as revealed in an interview:

“She sees her process as a sort of pruning or chipping away of the unnecessary words to reveal a text that wants to be highlighted through intonation. As she looks at each paragraph of prose, she underlines or circles words and eliminates everything else, so that the resulting text reveals only the essential words needed for the singer and audience. Her process seems very deliberate and calculated because of the details and explanations for certain word functions. Finding nouns and verbs to be more important than adjective and adverb phrases, Larsen handles the verbs with the utmost importance because that is where she finds the tempo and progression of the song. In the interview, Larsen states that ‘the nouns and the verbs will rise up off the page, and the adjectives and the adverbs will ask whether or not they really need to be set.’”⁷⁹

In 2009, Larsen was commissioned by Dickson College to write a piece for the Florestan Recital Project. The resulting work was *The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes*. The libretto was written by Larsen and adapted from Holmes’ confessions and Detective Robert Corbitt’s investigations, which eventually led to Holmes’ arrest.⁸⁰

The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes is Larsen’s only song cycle that features a prepared piano. The term “prepared piano” refers to a piano which is altered in some way prior to performance, often by having items placed inside the piano on the strings or hammers. This concept was pioneered by American composer John Cage, a leading figure in the post-war avant-garde.⁸¹ Cage was first exposed to non-traditional piano techniques through his teacher, Henry

⁷⁸ Libby Larsen, “On Setting Text,” *Libby Larsen*, 2019, <https://libbylarsen.com/index.php?contentID=231>.

⁷⁹ Andrea J. Mitternacht, "An original work: ‘Brothers and Sisters’ and Songs from Letters by Libby Larsen: an analysis," (DMA diss., Louisiana State University, 2004).

⁸⁰ Libby Larsen, program notes for *The Strange Case of Dr. H. H. Holmes*.

⁸¹ John Von Rhein, “John Cage, Avant-Garde Music Titan,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1992, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1992-08-13-9203120832-story.html>.

Cowell, who would reach into the piano to pluck or mute the strings. In *The Banshee*, for example, Cowell depressed the pedals on the piano with a wooden wedge and, while standing at the back of the piano, engaged the strings.⁸² Cage's early experiments with prepared piano involved the insertion into the piano of various objects, including nails and a pie tin; in his later works, he favors screws and bolts.^{83, 84}

The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes calls for 1" woodscrews, brass bolts, a rusty wood screw, two blue silicone hair curlers commonly known as spoolies, 3" carriage bolts, and a wooden peg to be inserted into the piano. Larsen provides instructions for preparing the piano in the score, and provides more detail in a YouTube video meticulously demonstrating the process.⁸⁵ The prepared piano brings a unique color to the music and its unearthly timbres emphasize the sinister nature of Dr. H.H. Holmes.

Larsen presents the cycle as an autobiography. Holmes' confessions were written chronologically, and Larsen's cycle reflects that. The work begins with a moment of foreboding and reflection as Holmes recounts several items within the basement of his "Murder Castle." Larsen guides the audience through Holmes' journey from fraudster to depraved murderer, leading eventually to his discovery and arrest.

The first piece in the five-work cycle, "I State my Case," begins with an unaccompanied, highly chromatic vocal melody. It describes, in retrospect, the location where Holmes committed many of his murders. Larsen instructs the singer to "savor the words."

⁸² John Cage, "How the Piano Came to Be Prepared*," *John Cage Official Website*, The John Cage Trust, 2012, https://johncage.org/prepared_piano_essay.html.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Libby Larsen, "The Strange Case of Dr. H. H. Holmes – Preparing the Piano," YouTube video, 7:21, posted May 6, 2011, <https://youtu.be/p-YBV1POsAI>.

Figure 14.1. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” mm. 1-6

Not too fast. Savor the words. Highly ambiguous.

A room, un-used since I ceased to re-side there. In it a stove that still bears the trac-es of
 fire. - a lit-tle spin - ning top and a tin man - a top-coat - a

When the piano enters in measure 15, a gradually thickening texture creates a sense of urgency.

Figure 14.2. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” mm. 15-18

The texture continues to thicken as the singer describes Holmes in first-person. Larsen guides the singer through the pseudo-manic shifts in Holmes' writing by providing instructions like “upstanding,” “charismatic,” and “seductive.”

Figure 14.3. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” mm. 19-21

19 **Subito** ♩ = c. 60+, flexible
warm, seductive

A gent - le - man - I am - the kind you want for your com -

Three times in “I State my Case,” Larsen writes “gossimer” above quick, ascending runs in the piano. These delicate runs create the impression of short gasps of air between Holmes’ character shifts.

Figure 14.4. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” mm. 22-23

22 *upstanding, charismatic*

pan - ion A civ - ic mind - ed man -

gossimer

After the third “gossimer” in measure 32, Larsen introduces an almost pointillistic texture in the piano. Above, the singer speaks three faux-Latin words styled in all-caps: “HUMANUS INTELLIGENCIUS ARACHNOIDUS.” The use of the faux-Latin text emphasizes Holmes’ narcissistic personality and the capitalization draws attention to the intensity of Holmes’ own inner dialogue.

Figure 14.5. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” m. 32

32

(spoken) HUMANUS INTELLIGENCIUS ARACHNOIDUS

skim and skitter Sua-

The sporadic dots of sound “skittering” in the piano morph into quick bursts of thirty-second notes, as if the piano depicts a spider’s footsteps and clicking chelicerae.

In measures 39-42, Larsen reveals another glimpse into Holmes’ cruelty. Her performance indication reads “*another glimmer of his darkness as he savors - - - prey - - in the throes - - - - - of struggle - - - - - for breath - - .*” In the voice, short melismatic passages declaim the text “ANIMA ANIMUS ANIMATO.” Sustained notes on “My products” segue in the next section.

Figure 14.6. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” mm. 39-44

push ahead - but not too far
another glimmer of his darkness as he savors --- prey -- in the throes ----- of struggle ----- for breath---

39 AN - I - MA, AN - I - MUS, A - NI -

42 MA - TO, My pro - ducts - a

These short melismatic bursts are jolting, as if depicting Holmes’ smothering a struggling victim as the frequently utilized chloroform overcomes them. Larsen places the “prepared” pitches of the piano at the extremities of the instrument’s range. In so doing, she relegates the piano’s midrange to the portrayal of Holmes in moments of normalcy and its outer octaves to moments of instability. After a brief pause, Larsen repeats portions of the opening, this time accompanied. The “prepared” pitches remain prominent through the rest of the song.

Figure 14.7. Libby Larsen, “I State my Case,” mm. 45-46

45 Subito ♩ = c. 40, very freely to the end

lit - tle spin-ning top and a tin man — — — — — a

mf

p

“As a Young Man” begins with a four-note repeating chromatic pattern in the piano.

Figure 15.1. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 1-2

♩ = 100 - 108

calm, cool, clinical

Sep - tem-ber of my twen-ti-eth year

insidious, menacing

p

Larsen draws attention to Holmes’ inner thoughts by inserting disjunct, single-measure asides that reveal his conscious obsession with money and his sordid means of obtaining it. The music alternates between free and strict time, creating instability and drawing attention to Holmes’ schizophrenic and manic behavior. The metrically free measures draw attention to Holmes’ conscious thought and are delivered in English. The metrically strict measures draw attention to the more devious undertones of his psyche, delivered in faux-Latin by recycling text from “I State my Case.”

Figure 15.2. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 7-10

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (measures 7-10) features a vocal line in bass clef and piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs. The vocal line has lyrics: "nine— months of work a-head I need mon-ey—". The piano accompaniment includes a treble clef staff with a triplet of chords and a bass clef staff with a triplet of chords. The tempo marking "freely" is present above the vocal line. The second system (measures 9-10) features a vocal line in bass clef and piano accompaniment in treble and bass clefs. The vocal line has lyrics: "HU-MAN - US And a plan". The piano accompaniment includes a treble clef staff with a triplet of chords and a bass clef staff with a triplet of chords. The tempo marking "strict tempo" is present above the vocal line, and "freely" is present above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment includes the marking "insidious, menacing" above the treble staff and "sub.p" below the bass staff. The tempo marking "sub. ff" is present below the bass staff.

As Holmes grows increasingly discouraged, the accompaniment begins to descend to the lower octaves of the piano. Here, the music changes course. A flourishingly grand introduction in the piano announces the killer’s financial epiphany: insurance fraud.

Figure 15.3. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 24-30

24

Subito $\text{♩} = 60$
molto rallentando

We de-vise a plan for do-ing BUS' - NESS

sub.p

with grand, showy flourish

f

27

freely, recitative $\text{♩} = 60 - 66$

He begins to show himself

Fraud in the form of a lit-tle waltz -

mp

A waltz begins in the piano, as if Holmes is dancing with joy and excitement. Meanwhile, Holmes explain the plot through which he and his classmate intend to solve their financial troubles.

Figure 15.4. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 31-37

He relishes the tale but is deadpan

31 *mf*

A trust - ed friend of mod - est means al -

Larsen interjects small “asides” between sections, subtly filling gaps in the plan.

Figure 15.5. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 45-50

rall.

45 *p.* *(aside)* *short* (*//*)

cy to pro - tect his child and wife. should harm be-fall him. La - ter

Honky-tonk

short (*//*)

The waltz ends as Holmes realizes the complexity of his scheme. Again, Larsen introduces alternating, single-measure asides to illustrate Holmes’ thoughts clashing with each other.

Figure 15.6. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 98-102

98 *fast, freely* *slowly, strict tempo*

We need three bod-ies - RI - GOR - MOR - TUS*

100 *fast, freely* *slowly, strict tempo* *Subito* ♩ = 108

Hid-den in three cit-ies HIDE - US - SEEK - US

sub. ff *menacing* *sub. p* *sim.* *almost a whisper* *pp*

At measure 102, the piano gently enters, resembling a lullaby. Holmes resolves to kill his classmate instead; as he reveals his scheme, prepared piano elements are reintroduced.

Figure 15.7. Libby Larsen, “As a Young Man,” mm. 109-114

109

I kill my class - mate in - stead. I use _____

“I Build My Business” begins with a polka, as indicated in parentheses in the libretto; in the score, Larsen provides a footnote to explain the origins of the opening music.

Figure 16.1. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 1-8

Brightly (♩ = 126)

mf

1 5 8

The opening eight measures are quoted from German composer Anton Wallerstein's 1846 song, *Jenny Lind's Favorite Polka*.⁸⁶ The polka was written as a tribute to Swedish opera singer Jenny Lind.⁸⁷

Figure 16.2. Anton Wallerstein, *Jenny Lind's Favorite Polka*, mm. 1-10



The polka thins in texture, becoming more accompanimental by measure 10; open octaves in the right hand of the piano are occasionally interrupted by brilliant flourishes. The singer enters on a single sustained pitch describes the situation of Doctor Russell, a tenant at Holmes' hotel.

⁸⁶ "'Jenny Lind's Favorite Polka' Sheet Music," *National Museum of American History*, accessed October 1, 2019, https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_670941.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Figure 16.3. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 10-15

10

I - tem: Doc-tor

f *p* *f*

Sforz

The piano lunges back into the extracted music from *Jenny Lind's Favorite Polka* as the singer describes how Holmes killed Dr. Russell.

Figure 16.4. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 22-27

22

on the head with a heav - y chair, I sold his bod -

Another break in the music brings the excitement to a halt as the singer interjects, “forty-five dollars.”

Figure 16.5. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 28-33

28 *out of tempo* *a tempo*

- y— For - ty five dol - lars.

f *p* 8va

With these shifts in the music, Larsen paints a scene of Holmes as an auctioneer discussing the details of each “item” before he sells it to the bidder. Larsen brilliantly emphasizes the insanity of the situation through the juxtaposition of a cheerful polka with a dark, violent text. So far in this song, the prepared piano notes are employed sparsely. A single prepared note is played in the lower octaves of the piano before each victim is announced, as seen in measure 53-54 in the example below.

Figure 16.6. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 52-58

52

I - tem: Charles Cole,

(8va) *f*

In measure 71, we hear a variation on the original polka material. As if signaling an impending threat, Larsen comes to a brief halt at measure 78, emphasizing the upcoming trouble with Robert Latimer, who was Holmes’ janitor at the time.

Figure 16.7. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 71-82

71

77

Ro-bert Lat-i-mer, my jan-i - tor.

Latimer discovered Holmes' sordid business and tried to blackmail him. As it is revealed that Holmes starved him, the music dissipates and, as if the threat has passed, the silence is quickly replaced with the polka from measure 10.

Figure 16.8. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 89-100

89

in the vault of my ho - tel and slow - ly starved him.

This musical system covers measures 89 to 94. It features a vocal line in the bass clef and a piano accompaniment in the grand staff. The piano part includes triplet eighth notes in the right hand and block chords in the left hand. The lyrics are: "in the vault of my ho - tel and slow - ly starved him."

95

I - tem: Ben - ja - min

This musical system covers measures 95 to 100. The vocal line in the bass clef has a rest for the first two measures, followed by the lyrics "I - tem: Ben - ja - min". The piano accompaniment in the grand staff features a melodic line in the right hand with a *sub.p* (subito piano) dynamic marking and a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The left hand continues with block chords. The lyrics are: "I - tem: Ben - ja - min"

When introducing the topic of Benjamin Pitezel and his son, Larsen reintroduces prepared piano elements as if to foreshadow the sinister thoughts growing within Holmes' mind.

Figure 16.9. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 101-106

101

Pite-zel my bus' - ness part-ner And his

This musical system covers measures 101 to 106. The vocal line in the bass clef has a rest for the first two measures, followed by the lyrics "Pite-zel my bus' - ness part-ner And his". The piano accompaniment in the grand staff features a melodic line in the right hand with a *f* (forte) dynamic marking and a *8va* (octave) marking. The left hand continues with block chords. The lyrics are: "Pite-zel my bus' - ness part-ner And his"

The last victim mentioned in this song is Wade Warner, who sold Holmes an expensive glass bending furnace. Holmes killed Warner by locking him inside the furnace during a demonstration. After describing Warner’s demise, the music stops. Three more faux-Latin words are spoken in the silence, eerily drawing attention to the perfect crime...an invisible corpse: “INCINEROUS CORPUS INVISIBILUS.”

Figure 16.10. Libby Larsen, “I Build My Business,” mm. 144-148

144

I locked him in _____ it. INCINEROUS CORPUS INVISIBILUS

f

Larsen labels “Thirteen Ladies and Three Who Got Away” as a “Grand Waltz Macabre.” Larsen provides three separate indications in the piano part of the opening measure, recalling moments from previous songs. It begins with a “grand flourish,” followed by “gossimer,” and finally “skim and skitter.” This measure quickly recaps the moment of Holmes’ epiphany in “As a Young Man” and the fleeting ascensions and skitters of a spider in “I State my Case.”

Figure 17.1. Libby Larsen, “Thirteen Ladies...,” mm. 1-2

IV . THIRTEEN LADIES AND THREE WHO GOT AWAY (Grand Waltz Macabre)

freely, grandly molto rit. ----- slowly

The musical score is written for piano and consists of two measures. The first measure is marked 'freely, grandly' and features a 'grand flourish' in the right hand, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a 'gossimer' section with a triplet of eighth notes, and then a 'skim and skitter' section with a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand has a triplet of eighth notes. The second measure is marked 'molto rit. ----- slowly' and features a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a sixteenth-note triplet, and then a sixteenth-note triplet. The left hand has a sixteenth-note triplet. The score ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

In “Thirteen Ladies...,” Larsen combines two separate dance styles, the first being the Grand Waltz, faintly reminiscent of works like Chopin’s *Grand Waltz Brilliant*, op. 18. The second is the Danse Macabre, a dance based on the artistic allegory that expresses the equalizing power of death, regardless of social status.⁸⁸ A prominent example is the *Danse Macabre*, op. 40 by Camille Saint-Saëns. Larsen introduces the Grand Waltz Macabre in measure 18.

⁸⁸ “Dance of Death,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2008), <https://www.britannica.com/art/dance-of-death-art-motif>.

Figure 17.2. Libby Larsen, “Thirteen Ladies”..., mm. 17-21

17 $\text{♩} = 60$
 mf
 maids - Liz - zie, lit - tle Liz - zie, a do -
 f
 mf

As if replicating the procession of the living and dead from the *danse macabre* literary and artistic motif, Holmes’ victims begin to process before the listener. The victims initially process as individuals, but as the music progresses, they begin to appear in groups.

Throughout the song, Larsen creates an almost coy impression of Holmes as he playfully repeats “Thirteen ladies, there may have been more. Thirteen ladies, I cannot say for sure.”

Figure 17.3. Libby Larsen, “Thirteen Ladies...,” mm. 74-78

74 $\text{♩} = 60$
 tempo primo
 Thir - teen la-dies, there may have been more Thir - teen
 p

Again, as in the *danse macabre* procession, we transition from the dead who lead the parade to the living who follow them to the grave. The last three women mentioned are the three

who escaped. As Holmes' plan to kill the waitresses unfolds, previous themes reappear beneath the word "die."

Figure 17.4. Libby Larsen, "Thirteen Ladies..." mm. 186-196

186

la - dies. Three wait-ress-es in my

192

res-tau-rant, I thought I could con - nive to chlo-ro-form all three at once, of

pp

tr.

mf

pp

We see a quick return of themes from measure 32 of "I State my Case." The "gossimer" passage transitions to the almost pointillistic movement of the spider, ending with the clicking of the spider's chelicerae. Silence begins to set in but is pierced by Holmes' cry: "They escaped." The song ends frantically as we learn that the victims informed the authorities of Holmes' suspicious behavior.

Figure 17.5. Libby Larsen, “Thirteen Ladies...,” mm. 197-201

197 *freely*

course to watch them die.

gossimer *skim and skitter* *Swa-*

pp

40

198 *tempo primo* (♩ = 60)

They es - caped. They went to the au-

f

f

In “Evidence,” Larsen revisits Holmes’ previous crime scene by returning to the music and text from “I State my Case.” Unlike in the first song, however, Larsen includes brief piano interjections that wedge themselves between most of the items being described.

Figure 18.1. Libby Larsen, “Evidence,” mm. 4-6

4 subito ♩ = 76 - 80

- a lit-tle spin-ning top and a tin man - a top coat - a

pp *p* *mf*

8va

In “I State my Case,” the list of items ends with “bones.” In “Evidence,” however, Larsen elaborates. Instead of a general reference to “bones,” the attention is drawn to gruesomely specific items: “a strand of hair, caught on the stove pipe, a jawbone, seventeen teeth.” At the bottom of the singer’s range, Larsen adds the final gory detail: “two human ribs, one partially consumed.”

Figure 18.2. Libby Larsen, “Evidence,” mm. 16-20

16 subito ♩ = 40+ ♩ = 40-

Two hu-man ribs, one part-ial-ly con-sumed.

f *p* *p* *gossimer*

Musical elements from the Grand Waltz Macabre are revived as Holmes' laments that "it's the bones that betray." One last time, the piano ascends to the upper prepared octaves, and disappears.

Figure 18.3. Libby Larsen, "Evidence," mm. 25-29

The musical score for Libby Larsen's "Evidence" (mm. 25-29) is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 25-27, and the second system covers measures 28-29. The score is in 6/4 time and features a piano part with a long melodic line and a bass line with chords. The piano part includes a trill and an 8va section. The bass line includes a "tray." marking and a "rit." marking.

System 1 (Measures 25-27):

- Measure 25:** Bass clef, 6/4 time. A long melodic line in the piano part, starting with a trill. The bass line has a chord marked "tray.".
- Measure 26:** Continuation of the melodic line in the piano part. The bass line has a chord.
- Measure 27:** Continuation of the melodic line in the piano part, ending with a trill. The bass line has a chord.

System 2 (Measures 28-29):

- Measure 28:** Bass clef, 6/4 time. The piano part has a trill. The bass line has a chord. A "rit." marking is present above the staff.
- Measure 29:** Continuation of the melodic line in the piano part, ending with a trill. The bass line has a chord. A "morendo" marking is present below the staff. The piano part is marked "8va" and "6".

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Song Cycle Poetry:

Slants of Light – Four songs on poems by Emily Dickinson – Debra Kaye

1. Not Knowing

Now knowing when the dawn will come
I open every door.
Or has it feathers like a bird,
Or billows like a shore?

2. Slants of Light

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons –
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes –

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us –
We can find no scar,
But internal difference –
Where the Meanings, are –

None may teach it – Any –
'Tis the seal Despair –
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air –

When it comes, the Landscape listens –
Shadows – hold their breath –
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death –

3. I heard a fly buzz –

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air -
Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset - when the King
Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable - and then it was
There interposed a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -
Between the light - and me -
And then the Windows failed - and then
I could not see to see -

4. This - is the land - the sunset washes –

This—is the land—the Sunset washes—
These—are the Banks of the Yellow Sea—
Where it rose—or whither it rushes—
These—are the Western Mystery!

Night after Night
Her purple traffic
Strews the landing with Opal Bales—
Merchantmen—poise upon Horizons—
Dip—and vanish like Orioles!

The Lost Hours – Richard Burke

1. Ardor and Memory

The cuckoo-throb, the heartbeat of the
Spring;
The rosebud's blush that leaves it as it
grows
Into the full-eyed fair unblushing rose;
The summer clouds that visit ev'ry wing
With fires of sunrise and of sunseting;
The furtive flickering streams to light re-
born
'Mid airs new-fledged & valorous lusts
of morn,
While all the daughters of the daybreak
sing:—

These ardor loves, and memory: and when
flown
All joys, and through dark forest-boughs
in flight
The wind swoops onward burnishing the
light,
Even yet the rose-tree's verdure left alone
Will flush all ruddy through the rose be
gone;
With ditties and with dirges infinite.

2. The Lost Days

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the
street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of
wheat
Gathered for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty
feet?

3. A New Year's Burden

Along the grass sweet airs are blown
Our way this day in Spring.
Of all the songs that we have known
Now which one shall we sing?
Not that, my love, ah no!—
Not this, my love? why, so!—
Yet both were ours, but hours will come and go.
The grove is all a pale frail mist,
The new year sucks the sun.
Of all the kisses that we kissed
Now which shall be the one?
Not that, my love, ah no!—
Not this, my love?—heigh-ho
For all the sweets that all the winds can blow!

The branches cross above our eyes,
The skies are in a net:
And what's the thing
We two would most forget?
Not birth, my love, no, no—
Not death, my love, no, no,—
The love once ours, but ours long hours ago

4. The Woodspurge

The wind flapp'd loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My naked ears heard the day pass.

5. Autumn Idleness

This sunlight shames November where he grieves

In dead red leaves, and will not let him shun

The day, though bough with bough be over-run.

But with a blessing every glade receives High salutation;

The deer gaze calling, dappled white and dun,

As if, being foresters of old, the sun Had marked them with the shade of forest-leaves.

Here dawn to-day unveiled her magic glass;

Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew;

Till eve bring rest when other good things pass.

And here the lost hours the lost hours renew

While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass,

Nor know, for longing, that which I should do.

6. The Woodspurge (continued)

My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run Of some ten weeds to fix upon; And of those few, out of the sun, The woodspurge flow' red, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be Wisdom or even memory: One thing then learned then remains to me,— The woodspurge has a cup of three.

7. “. . . the daughters of the daybreak sing” (piano solo)

8. Sudden Light

I have been here before,

But when or how I cannot tell:

I know the grass beyond the door,

The sweet keen smell,

The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

You have been mine before,

How this is so I may not know:

But just when at that swallow's soar

Your neck turned so,

Some veil did fall - I knew it all of yore.

Has this been thus before?

And shall not thus time's eddying flight

Still with our lives our love restore

In death's despite,

And day and night yield one delight once more?

9. Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,-

-

The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:

Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms

'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.

All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,

Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge

Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.

'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched grass the dragon-fly

Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:--

So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.

Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,

This close-companioned inarticulate hour

When twofold silence was the song of love.

The Peculiar Case of Dr. H.H. Holmes – Libby Larsen

I. I STATE MY CASE

A room, unused since I ceased to reside there.

In it a stove that still bears the traces of fire.

 a little spinning top and a tin man

 a topcoat

 a trunk with a strip of blue calico mending a seam

 a woman's shoe

 an ink bottle

 a handful of pearl dress buttons

A gentleman – I am - the kind you want for your companion

A civic-minded man – the kind you want in your circle

A business man – the kind you want for your partner

 Doctor

 Pharmacist

 Land development

 Glass bending

 Gas refinery

 Hotelier

HUMANUS INTELLIGENCIUS ARACHNOIDUS

 My business – profit

 My resources – people

ANIMA, ANIMUS, ANIMATO

 My products

 a little spinning top and a tin man

 a topcoat

 a trunk with a strip of blue calico mending a seam

 a woman's shoe

 an ink bottle

 a handful of pearl dress buttons

 bones

II. AS A YOUNG MAN

September of my 20th year.
I study medicine in Ann Arbor
– hundreds of miles from friends and relatives.
Wife and child in New York.
Sixty dollars in my pocket
Nine months of work ahead.

I need money – HUMANUS
And a plan - INTELLIGENCIUS

It is well known
That in the state of Michigan - if one studies medicine –
All the materials needed for dissection
Are supplied by the State.

The State needs materials– HUMANUS
For which they pay handsomely – ARGENTUS

I supply the materials with the help of my classmate – BUSINESS
We graduate, and find that doctoring is not PROFITUS

We devise a plan for doing BUSINESS

Fraud in the form of a little waltz -

..... a trusted friend, of modest means, already insured for life,
increases his policy to protect his child and wife.
(should harm befall him)

Later on, the trusted friend begins to drink quite heavily
And kills his wife, and kills his child, and blames it on insanity
(In reality they go West and wait for each other)

Some months later, a body is discovered, badly decomposed
With the body, is a letter, a suicide note.
A relative collects the money, we split it into three
The relative, the trusted friend, my classmate and me.

we need three bodies - RIGOR MORTUS
Hidden in three cities - HIDE-US SEEK-US

The plan is too complicated
I kill my classmate instead
I use his insurance
To bide my time.

III. I BUILD MY BUSINESS

It is well known that business done with men is straight on, clean and quickly settled

Item: Dr. Russell, a tenant in my hotel. Rent Due.
I struck him on the head with a heavy chair.
I sold his body – Forty five dollars.

Item: Mr. Rogers, an acquaintance from Virginia.
I took him fishing and struck him on the head with the oar.
Just practice.

Item: Charles Cole – A Southern Speculator.
The vicious blow crushed his head so badly that he was almost useless
To the party that bought him. Two thousand dollars.

Item: Robert Latimer, my janitor.
Discovering my business, he wanted money.
I locked him in the vault of my hotel and slowly starved him.
CORPUS GRATIS

Item: Benjamin Pietzel – My business partner. And his son.
After seven years of practice, I carried out my PLAN ORIGINALUS
INSURANCE FRAUDUS

Item: Wade Warner. I bought my glass bending furnace from him.
I paid a fortune for it. A fortune.
Asking him to demonstrate the furnace, I locked him in it.
INCINEROS...CORPUS INVISIBILUS
FORTUNE RETURNUS
BUSINESS EXPANDUS

IV. THIRTEEN LADIES AND THREE WHO GOT AWAY

It is well known that when you gain the confidence of women, you learn to juggle trust.

Introduction:

First you set the stage – You build a hotel
Then you set the method – secret vaults, secret rooms.
You employ young ladies: stenographers, cooks, waitresses, maids:

Waltz:

Lizzie, little Lizzie, a domestic in my hotel,
Quinlan, my partner, took a fancy to her
I called her, to my office, on the pretense of a raise.
I invited her to step into my vault to retrieve a cup and tray
I closed and locked the door – she cried
She pleaded me, to let her out – denied,
Unless she wrote a letter leaving Quinlan for good.
If she wrote the letter then release her I would
She did. I killed her.

Thirteen ladies, there may have been more.
Thirteen ladies, I cannot say for sure.

Minnie and Nannie Williams, of wealthy estate
Required my protection, which I freely gave.
Minnie came to live with me of her own volition,
My visits to Nannie, ignited her suspicion.
Minnie murdered Nannie – Ah!
I disposed of Minnie – Ah!
Being their protector – Ah!
I was their estate's executor – Ah!

Thirteen ladies, there may have been more.
Thirteen ladies, I cannot say for sure.

Sarah Cook, her unborn child and Mary Haracamp
A three-for-one they became.
Julie Connor and her daughter Pearl
Came to me and never came away.
Nellie and Annie Peitzal, suffocated in a trunk.
Anna Betts, Gertrude Conner, poisoned just for fun.
Emmeline, my mistress, she broke my heart
I locked her in my vault, and watched her slowly starve.

Thirteen ladies...

Three waitresses in my restaurant, I thought I could connive
To chloroform all three at once, of course to watch them die.

They escaped.
They ran to the authorities.
Suspicious were raised.
The end of my story.

V. EVIDENCE

a little spinning top and a tin man
a topcoat
a trunk with a strip of blue calico mending a seam
a woman's shoe
an ink bottle
a handful of pearl dress buttons
a strand of hair caught on the stovepipe
a jawbone – seventeen teeth
two human ribs, one partially consumed
..... bones
It's the bones that betray.