SONGS OF H. LESLIE ADAMS

Dr. Darryl Taylor, founder
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In the field of art song composition, one American name must be added to the register of champions, H. Leslie Adams. A native and resident of Cleveland, Ohio, Adams can be likened in his emphasis on vocal music output to great Romantic lieder composers of the nineteenth century, as much for the quality of his song writing as for prodigious output. This is not to say that his writing is lacking in originality. Nothing could be further from the truth. His songs are sung regularly by such artists as Martina Arroyo, Florence Quivar, Veronica Tyler, Mark Doss, Donnie Ray Albert, and many others. They are recorded on Albany Records, Now Records, MSR Classics, and CRS Master Recordings. Still, Adams songs remain largely unknown to many American singers. This article is focused on his musical life, will detail some important cycles, and hopefully introduce some worthy repertoire to the reader.

Harrison Leslie Adams was born in Cleveland, Ohio, December 30, 1930. He studied music at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music. Adams was initially enrolled as a voice student with emphasis on music education. He studied composition with Herbert Elwell and Joseph Wood, graduating from there in 1955. He further studied composition with Robert Starer in 1959 and Vittorio Giannini in 1960. Adams went on to graduate study at California State University at Long Beach, graduating in 1967, working with Leon Dallin. He earned a PhD from Ohio State University in 1973. While at OSU, he studied composition with Marshall Barnes. Rounding out his musical preparation, he studied orchestration with Edward Mattila, Eugene O'Brien, and Marcel Dick, 1978-83.
Currently, H. Leslie Adams works full-time at composition, from his studio in Cleveland, Ohio. He has composed not only for solo voice, but has written successfully for full orchestra, chamber orchestra, ballet, solo instrumental works, several choral works, and an opera, *Blake*. It is in solo voice composition, however, where he has made the most significant contribution and where one is most struck by his depth of soul. Music lovers from all strata are consistently moved by his lyricism, his connection to text and emotion. Critics have said of his music, "Adams's songs are firmly diatonic, with no suggestion of atonality or excessive chromaticism. They are tuneful, often simple, but just as often they take the most unexpected and delightful harmonic turns. They don't go quite where we think they will, and are all the better for surpassing our expectations. Each is beautiful in an individual way. 'For You There is no Song', one of several settings of Millay…immediately enchants us by its sophistication. Neither … sound quite like any other composer I know, freeing Adams of cries of 'derivative'. 'Flying' surprises us with its archaic madrigalisms; 'Amazing Grace' is rhapsodic; 'Lullaby Eternal' is gentle and pretty. They seldom fail to impress. Here is an American song writer who deserves more attention."¹

Adams describes his writing inspiration as fluid, spontaneous, almost coming from an unearthly source. This is one reason why he resists teaching composition. “I don’t want to talk about how I do it. I just want to do it and not question from where it comes,” says Adams. “For me, creation and analysis are diametrically opposed. We have to have good teachers, but I am not partial to being one, after serving for nine years on a university faculty.” For this reason, he reads no biographical or critical notices. He admits to finding them of little use for assisting his creative flow.
When beginning the songwriting process, Adams searches arduously for text that will inspire him. Chosen words must have “a certain vibration,” when he places them on a music stand and regards them from a distance. From this exercise, the composer assesses length, flow, and is sparked into the compositional process thereby. It must be emphasized that the composer writes not for any particular race. While he is African American, his music is not racially identified, nor intended solely for performance or consumption by any one grouping of people.

The solo vocal works of H. Leslie Adams can be codified most easily into three periods, his student compositions, while good and indicative of raw potential, are regarded by the composer as anticipating his mature style. Overlapping his Student Period is the composer’s gradual acknowledgement as a composer, culminating in and beginning a second period, taking place in New York City. Adams left New York first for graduate studies in California, 1965, and then, in 1970 he went on to pursue opportunities in Lawrence, Kansas, where he served on the faculty of the University of Kansas, as director of the concert choir. From 1970 – 1973, he prepared his dissertation “Problems of composing choral music for high school youth,” for completion of the doctoral degree at the Ohio State University (1973 University Microfilms). Also during this time period, there was, understandably, a proliferation of choral writing from the composer. Adams refers to this era as a time when he talked more about composing than did it. The third and current period of Dr. Adams’ song writing style begins with the composer’s return to Cleveland. In this time, he devotes himself fulltime to the task of making and promoting his music.
Student Period 1951 – 1957

As a young composer, Adams’ works suggest he is aware of his voice for composition. He marks opus numbers in very early compositions. At twenty years of age, he shows a predilection for high brow literature (Milton, Shelly, and Vachel Lindsay), marks early scores with opus numbers, dating compositions. These works contain ear markings of mature style, i.e., strongly emotive texts chosen, juxtaposition of highly contrasting dynamics, i.e. fff to ppp inside the range of twelve measures, extended tertiary harmony, with melodic line independent yet completing necessary harmonic statements, not just supported from harmony of the accompaniment.

Songs from H. Leslie Adams’ student period are:

1950    Break, Break, Break (Alfred Tennyson)

June 6+7, 1951 Night, op. 3 (Percy Bysshe Shelley)

June 14, 1951 Hark, to the Shouting Wind! (Henry Timrod), op. 4

June 29, 1951 Teach Me, O Lord (Leslie Adams)

Nov. 1951 Of Man’s First Disobedience

(John Milton, from Paradise Lost)
Dec. 14, 1951  I Hear a Voice Calling Me (Adams)

March 1952   Nightfall (Harry H. Stratford)

1953    The Leaden-Eyed (Vachel Lindsay)

1953    Factory Windows (Lindsay)

1961    A White Road (William Braithwaite)

**New York Period 1957 – 1967**

While Adams first arrived in New York in 1957, following graduation for Oberlin Conservatory, his work in New York with Vittorio Giannini netted little in the way of stylistic change or tangible evidence of increased effectiveness. Adams had already begun composition of *Five Millay Songs* and *Nightsongs* while in Oberlin (begun in 1955). The New York period does mark, however, recognition, both by the composer and the public, of Adams’ promise as a song composer. This is particularly noteworthy, given the general penchant of the period for writing in larger forms, almost ignoring song composition. Few American composers of the day wrote as extensively or as well for voice and piano.

In the spring of 1961, Adams marks his New York debut as a composer, giving a concert of his works at Steinway Hall. This constitutes the very first all-Adams program (the first Adams song heard in NYC sung by Fred Thomas, baritone, Town Hall, “Prayer,” from *Nightsongs* was performed). While the concert was a personal success, it did not provide the sort of critical
notice the composer correctly assumed was needed to validate his arrival, so this concert was followed by a critically acclaimed performance at Judson Hall, December 1, 1961. Of the music performed on the two concerts were premieres of his song cycles, *Six Songs on Texts by African American Poets* (later renamed *African American Songs* and then *Nightsongs*) and *Five Songs on poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay* (later renamed *Five Millay Songs* or *Millay Songs*). Singing the songs were Eugene Thamon Simpson, bass ("Drums of Tragedy," from Nightsongs), and Gwendolyn Walters, soprano, who sang the other four of the six *Nightsongs* and the entire *Millay Songs* cycle.

Other non-voice pieces penned during this period include his “Contrasts” for piano, “Sonata for horn and piano,” “Sonata for violin and piano”, an original score for Villages production of *Death of a Salesman*, Middlebush, NJ, “Sonata for cello and piano” (2nd and 3rd mvts). His “Concerto for piano and orchestra” was written during this time as a master's thesis for work at Long Beach State University, completed in 1967.

**Millay Songs**

*Millay Songs* was begun in 1955, just prior to Adams’ arrival in New York and was completed and premiered in 1961. It was sung by soprano Gwendolyn Walters, with the composer at the piano. The final song of the cycle, “Gone Again is Summer the Lovely,” was not premiered until the following year, by the same performers at Judson Hall in New York City.

Distributed by Henry Carl Music (HCM), there are three versions, for high, medium, and low voice and piano. These songs are some of the finest of Adams’ considerable catalog. The work was orchestrated by Adams for mezzo-soprano Hilda Harris.
As with most of Adams’ song writing, the beautiful melodies of the voice are firmly supported by a piano accompaniment that is keenly reflective of the text. (see example 1: “For you there is no song”) Millay's texts are, for the most part, melancholic. They express sentiments of the tedium of daily life, lost love, and lost opportunities. The penultimate song, "The Return from Town," is shocking in its contrast to the previous three songs. It, too, speaks of opportunities lost, but does so almost as a matter of jest (the text says, succinctly, "I saw someone fair. I ignored him and went into my own house. There I already have a handsome husband.") Adams provides alternate text allowing the piece to be sung by either gender.

Picturesque is the best word one may use to describe the piano treatment of these songs. Much like the songs of Schumann, the piano intercedes to complete fragments of thoughts where words fail. A fine pianist himself, Adams is very specific with markings. The voice part is written with sensitivity for the expressive powers of a lyric instrument. Decidedly, this composer knows how to maximize effects possible from singers. On high notes, time is given for the blossoming of tone. Lines are written for the voice in such a way as to encourage vowel-to-vowel singing, the framework necessary for true legato. There are some complexities here that will require specific attention if a unified ensemble is to prevail. The level of difficulty for this work is medium to medium high. It is a gratifying piece to perform.²
Nightsongs

Composed in 1961, this work was originally entitled Six Songs on Poetry by African Americans. Later, it was called African American Songs. It was suggested to the composer (by this author) that such a title, while well intended, might dissuade some non-Black singers from performing the work. The thematic commonality of the songs suggests night moods and subjects involving nocturnal activities. Nightsongs, taken from the title of the fourth song of the set, thus became the enduring moniker for Adams’ most popular song cycle.

According to Adams, “While residing in New York City during the early 1960s (I) met the writer and poet, Langston Hughes, at a concert performance of the opera The Barrier, for which Hughes supplied the libretto.” Adams expressed his great emotional connection to Hughes’ work and requested permission to set the author’s poetry in song. Such was granted, leading immediately to Adams’ setting of “Prayer” and “Fantasy in Purple,” the latter being renamed “Drums of Tragedy” for the song setting. From the setting of these two, Adams was inspired to create a larger work, a song cycle, on poetry by African American poets. The cycle was not and is not intended, however, to be sung only by African American performers, but, as with all of Adams’ works, is accessible to all singers, irrespective of race or even gender. Several songs of Adams offer alternate words to accommodate male or female singers (e.g., “When Phyllis smiles” becomes “When Phillip smiles;” “Li’l Gal” becomes “My Man,” etc.).

Nightsongs was premiered December 1, 1961 by Gwendolyn Walters in the same historic concert where she sang Millay Songs for the first time. Prior to
this, the first song of the set, “Prayer” was heard sung by Fred Thomas, baritone, with Clifford Welsh, piano, Town Hall, New York City, October 20, 1961. Both cycles were recorded by tenor Darryl Taylor (Millay Songs, complete, is on Sence You Went Away, Albany Records, with Patrick O'Donnell, piano; Nightsongs, complete, is on Love Rejoices: Songs of H. Leslie Adams, Robin Guy, piano, Albany Records).

The individual works that comprise Nightsongs are distinct and individual. Taken separately, they are enjoyable and complete. The cycle as a whole covers a wide range of emotions and compositional treatment.

Nightsongs

Prayer (Langston Hughes)

Drums of Tragedy (Hughes)

The heart of a woman (Georgia Douglas Johnson)

Night Song (Clarissa Scott Delany)

Sence You Went Away (James Weldon Johnson)

Creole Girl (Morgan Collins)

The cycle is published by HCM Publishing and is available in three keys, for high, medium, and low voice. The work was orchestrated by Adams in 1987 for mezzo-soprano Hilda Harris.

Nightsongs lasts 22 minutes, altogether. The dynamic range is considerable. Both singer and pianist are required to perform within the scope of pianissimo to fortissimo. “Prayer” begins the cycle in a hushed atmosphere. One can feel the
anxiety of uncertainty in the spaces Adams leaves between the rich, chordal accompaniment. The singer asks, simply, in all humility, “I ask you this, ‘Which way to go?’ I ask you this, ‘Which sin to bear? Which crown to put upon my hair?’ I do not know, Lord God, I do not know.” In keeping with the terse nature of the poem, the song is succinct, compact, reiterating the full poem verbatim in the voice with arpeggiation in the piano accompaniment. The repeated octaves of the first stanza can be heard as the tolling of a twilight clock, heard ever so much louder when one cannot sleep for angst. (see example 2: “Prayer”)

“Drums of Tragedy,” also on poetry of Langston Hughes, evokes a ritual incantation, where African drumming “drowns out the rattle” of the singer’s “dying breath.” The poetry speaks of wanting to die with a great swell of music and heralding.

“The heart of a woman” tenderly, expressively extols the joy of feminine purpose and possibility that is, in this instance, turned to despair in domesticity. Adams employs a lazy triplet figure and hints of blues modality to suggest a casual elegance in the work’s first stanza. The second stanza, while harmonically similar to the first, presents a different mood, owed in part to the broken chords that had once flowed so naturally. The vocal line is increasingly agitated, augmenting in volume and range, concurrent with a piano accompaniment that now seems completely out of synch with what had been an effortless musical mélange. This is a most effective and moving piece.

“Night Song,” once again, finds the composer programmatically supporting the poetic ideal in the piano accompaniment. Here, key words and phrases are
highlighted by the piano, underscoring a lilting melody in the vocal line. The modal change from minor to major in the last stanza, accentuates the positive and life affirming nature of the poem, overall. Here, “Another day shall find me brave, and not afraid to dare!” is exultantly proclaimed, while returning to the original minor mode.

Acknowledged as one of the composer’s finest and most moving songs, “Sence you went away,” was penned by one of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, James Weldon Johnson. Here, Johnson chose to express the profound nature of a simple person, by relating the poem in Southern dialect, with “Sence” instead of “Since,” for example. Ebony Magazine acknowledged “Sence you went away” as one of the most moving songs ever written by an American composer. Interestingly, the song is neither florid nor of difficult range. It is in the work’s simplicity, its sweeping vocal line, the rapport between singer and pianist which must be established, how the emotive nature of the work tends to transport the listener to a deep place; these qualities render it a most affecting piece. (see example 3: “Sence you went away”)

“Creole Girl,” a raucous and rhythmically charged creation ends the cycle with verve.

Nightsongs is the most frequently performed of Adams’ works. It is available in three keys, high, medium, and low, from HCM. The difficulty level varies from song to song, but it is overall accessible to most intermediate singers, particularly if songs are excised and sung individually. The piano accompaniments are also mid-range in difficulty.
The University of Kansas, Lawrence/Emphasis on Choral Music

The interval of 1967 – 1970 saw Adams working as music director and musician, most concentrated in New Mexico with the Kaleidoscope Players. In pursuit of financial stability, Leslie Adams accepted a position at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, as conductor of the concert choir. During his Kansas tenure, 1970-1979, he completed his dissertation study for Ohio University (1970 – 1973 - “Problems of Composing Choral Music for High School Youth,” 1973 University Microfilms). As is to be expected, it is during this period that Adams writes most prolifically for chorus.

Works from his time spent in Kansas include *Madrigal*; *Hosana to the Son of David*; *There was an old man*; *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Psalm 23*, and *Psalm 121*; *Man’s presence, a song of ecology* (children’s choir), all written for chorus. He also wrote a trombone quartet. His “Concerto for Piano and Orchestra” received its first performance for an American bicentennial concert in 1976.

Cleveland Period 1979 – present

When H. Leslie Adams left Kansas for Cleveland, Ohio, it was for the sole purpose of establishing his voice as a composer. The artist felt compromised by academia. In his own words, he wanted to “Do it, instead of talking about it.” The 1977 publishing of Willis Patterson’s *Anthology of Art Songs by Black American Composers* introduced Adams to a much broader audience than he had heretofore enjoyed. From *Five Millay Songs*, Adams’ “For you there is no song” was a distinguished addition to the now-famous compilation.
Blake

In June of 1980, Adams took up temporary residence at the Yaddo Arts Colony in Saratoga Springs, NY. There, he began composition of his grand opera, Blake. Librettist Daniel Mayers’ (Brooklyn College) had the idea of setting the book by Martin Delany. The collaboration of Mayers and Adams carried composition of the work well into 1985. The opera was workshopped at Oberlin College and was performed in various venues. There were two excerpts programs, Oberlin Conservatory, April 11, 1985 with Gurcell Henry and Kathleen Orr, sopranos, Jane Gunther-McCoy, mezzo-soprano, Paul Adkins, Irwin Reese, tenors, Stephen Szaraz, baritone, Mark Doss, bass, William Appling, conductor (with piano) A 10 minute excerpt of the work was performed May 12, 1985, Oberlin College Opera Theatre, Judith Layng, director, Finney Chapel.

Blake had its first official hearing on June 20, 1985 at the Boldon Theater, Cleveland Playhouse. It was broadcast live from Cleveland over PBS, with Veronica Tyler and Kathleen Orr, sopranos, Jane Vernon, mezzo-soprano, Paul Adkins, tenor, Herbert Perry, baritone, Stephen Saxon, bass, and the William Appling Singers, Appling conductor. From there, the work was to have its world premier with a joint production in Cleveland and Knoxville, Tennessee. Martina Arroyo, Curtis Rayam, and a host of other luminaries were to preside over the works debut. For various reasons, chief among them financial, this never happened.
Arie from *Blake* have been performed by various artists. A duet from the work was recorded by Videmus in the CD *Sence You Went Away*, a musical festschrift of sorts recorded on the occasion of Willis Patterson’s retirement from the University of Michigan, by alums of the School of Music there. The duet, “Has he come...Oh, Miranda,” was sung by soprano Christina Clark and baritone, Timothy Jones, with Patrick O’Donnell on piano, for Albany Records.

Other notable cycles of Adams are listed below. The author’s musical commentary, limited to discussion of *The Wider View*, should not suggest that entries not annotated are of lesser quality or importance, as such is certainly not the case. The Cleveland period for H. Leslie Adams has proven to be fertile for his creative output.

**Dunbar Songs**

Within a few short years of his relocation to Cleveland, Adams was commissioned by the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra to write a piece for Janet Alcorn, soprano. He chose texts of Paul Laurence Dunbar, naming the work *Dunbar Songs*. It was premiered on November 22, 1981 in Fanny Nast Gamble Auditorium of Baldwin Wallace College, Dwight Oltman, conductor.

*Dunbar Songs*

- The Meadowlark
- He gave me a rose
- The Valse

Orchestration for Dunbar Songs is flute/piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, percussion, high voice, harp, and strings.
Requiem

1985, Adams was commissioned by the Paul Kaye Singers of Minneapolis, MN to compose a work for chorus and orchestra. *The Righteous Man* is the result. With text by Daniel E. Mayers, the work was originally conceived as Cantata No. 1, written for 8-part chorus and chamber orchestra, and treats the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Upon further reflection, Adams changed the title to *Requiem* and dedicated the work to all mankind. The 25-minute work is scored for oboe, 2 clarinets, bassoon, 2 horns, timpani, percussion, 8-part divisi chorus with incidental soli, harp and strings. Though it is not a solo cantata or art song, it bears mentioning here as a significant vocal work with solo voice requirements.

Orchestrated Songs

1988, Adams orchestrated *Nightsongs* and *Millay Songs* for Hilda Harris. The performance took place Jan 24, 1988, Liberty Hill Performing Arts Center, Cleveland, OH. The works are scored for flute (alternates with Piccolo in *Five Millay Songs*), oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, tympani, percussion, harp, medium solo voice and strings.

The Wider View

This is perhaps Adams’ most ambitious song cycle. Here, he begins to write from a decidedly spiritual place. The selection of texts suggests an undulation of spirit, stemming from such varied sources as poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, to writings from a daily inspirational booklet.

The challenge of this work is two-fold; its expansive range, calling for hushed high notes juxtaposed with triumphant, heroic loud singing, and, stylistic range from artful, to esoteric, the sweep of grand opera and the playful verve of blues.
The Wider View

To the Road (Dunbar)

Homesick Blues (Hughes)

Li’l Gal (Dunbar)

Love Come and Gone (Georgia Douglas Johnson)

The Wider View (R.H. Grenville)

Love Rejoices (James Dillet Freeman)

Composed in 1988, The Wider View was premiered in 1989 with Edythe Johnson, soprano; Paul Adkins, tenor, at Kulas Hall, Cleveland Institute of Music. The first performance by one singer was done in 1999 by Darryl Taylor, tenor, at The University of Northern Iowa School of Music, Russell Auditorium.

Described in the composer's own words:

What is the greatest love of all? Where can it be found and, once found, can it be sustained? The composer, in search of answers to these questions, has created a panoramic portrait of human love and the perpetual journey that man travels to ultimately find the greatest love of all: that which encompasses all.

The Wider View is a very challenging work, especially for the singer. The performer attempting this cycle should be technically secure and willing to mount the test of a high tessitura, rhapsodic sweep of vocal line, and dramatically differing stylistic demands. The pianist, likewise, is rhythmically tried, with stylistic variety required. As was demonstrated with the premiere of this work, it
can be successfully divided among two or more singers and the songs are easily excised should performance of the entire cycle prove impractical.

**Hymn to Freedom**

Hymn to Freedom, a solo cantata for 3 voices and chamber orchestra, was composed in 1989. A commission of the Chicago Repertory Ensemble, the Cantata in 2 movements was debuted by Bernadine Oliphant, soprano, William Brown, tenor, and Donnie Ray Albert, bass, with Michael Morgan, conductor.

“Love Memory,” and “Love Response” 1990

Getrude Wilson, a local singer who was interested in Adams doing some text settings, made Adams a present of the complete works of Dunbar in 1981. “Love Response” was first composed in 1961 and revised in 1990.

1993 marked the passing of Adams' mother, Jessie Adams (1900-1993). Adams took a year's hiatus from composition in response to this emotional episode.

**Daybirth**

Adams has set various poems by Cleveland resident Joette McDonald. He met her in 1991, serendipitously, as they shared a theater seat. The importance of this collaboration is yet to be determined, but it does represent the most significant settings of her poetry. Adams’ intersection with McDonald inspired more song writing. McDonald has proved a muse for the composer who had been struggling to find texts that he felt moved to set. Adams calls his chance meeting with McDonald “a miracle.”
Joette McDonald was born March 10, 1936. She has been a faithful chronicler of life since she began writing for *The Murray Democrat*, a local newspaper in her hometown of Lynn Grove, Kentucky, at the age of 11. She attended Murray State University briefly, before assuming a teaching position in Calvert City at the age of 18. She went on to complete a B.S. degree from Kent State University. Now retired from teaching, McDonald has won numerous awards in poetry. A book of collected poetry, *Waiting for the Bus at Promtemus* is scheduled for publication in 2005.

Other composers to set poetry of Joette McDonald include Michael Goff and Michael Nickley.

Owing to the collaboration with McDonald, Leslie Adams compiled *Daybirth, A Collection of Songs on Poetry of Joette McDonald*. This is an ever increasing volume. The composer receives regular inspiration from the poet and the admiration is mutual. *Daybirth* is not a cycle, per se. It is a mounting tribute to the influence of McDonald’s poetry on Adams’ song writing.

**Adams’ continued work**

H. Leslie Adams continues to write from his Cleveland studio, solely focused on composition and promotion of his music. Currently, he is working on a new dramatic work, *Slaves*. He was honored by the National Association of Negro Musicians with a career achievement award in August 2004. Adams is a regular lecturer at colleges and universities, instructing performances of his music. The inquisitive performer will find him affable and approachable. He is always willing, eager even, to share his store of musical gifts with the public. The day is not long in coming when his name will be as standard to American song literature as Rorem or Argento. How fortunate then are contemporary musicians to have access to him as a living, breathing composer, writing music that speaks from his soul and is so readily identifiable as American.
Songs of H. Leslie Adams

*Five Millay Songs* (Edna St. Vincent Millay)

Wild Swans

Branch by branch

For you there is no song

The Return from Town

Gone Again is Summer the Lovely

High key: C₄-A₆; Medium: B flat₄-F sharp₅; Low: A flat₄-E₅

*Five Millay Songs* is scored for flute (alters with Piccolo), oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, tympani, percussion, harp, medium solo voice and strings.

*Nightsongs*

Prayer (Langston Hughes)

Drums of Tragedy (Hughes)

The heart of a woman (Georgia Douglas Johnson)

Night Song (Clarissa Scott Delany)

Sence You Went Away (James Weldon Johnson)

Creole Girl (Morgan Collins)

High key: D₄ flat-A₆; Medium: B flat₄-F sharp₅; Low: G flat₃-D₅

The works are scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, tympani, percussion, harp, medium solo voice and strings.
Dunbar Songs

The Meadow Lark \( D \text{#sharp}_4-G_5 \)

He (She) Gave me a Rose \( D_4-A_6 \)

The Valse \( C_4-G_5 \)

Orchestration for Dunbar Songs is flute/piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, percussion, high voice, harp, and strings.

The Wider View

To the Road! (Dunbar) \( E_4-A_6 \)

Homesick Blues (Hughes) \( F \text{#sharp}_4-G \text{sharp}_5 \)

Li’l Gal (My Man) (Dunbar) \( E \text{flat}_4-A \text{flat}_6 \) (alternate \( C_6 \))

Love Come and Gone (Georgia Douglas Johnson) \( E \text{flat}_4-A \text{flat}_6 \) (alternate \( C_6 \))

The Wider View (R.H. Grenville) \( A \text{flat}_4-A \text{flat}_6 \) (alternate \( C_6 \))

Love Rejoices (James Dillet Freeman) \( F \text{#sharp}_4-B \text{flat}_6 \)

Hymn to Freedom

Orchestration for Hymn to Freedom is:

Woodwind (doubling piccolo, B flat clarinet, bass clarinet and E flat alto saxophone); B flat trumpet; tenor trombone; and bass trombone or tuba (doubling double bass); Piano; Percussion (doubling timpani, bass drum, vibes, suspended cymbal, tam tam, glockenspiel and tubular bells); Vocal: soprano, tenor and bass baritone and Strings

These doublings added up to 1 woodwind player, 3 brasswind players, 1 keyboardist, 3 vocalists and 5 string players. This was the prescribed standard doubling specs for the Black Music Repertory Ensemble of the
Center for Black Music Research (Columbia College Chicago). When performing this work by other ensembles or orchestras, these specs certainly may be modified or expanded.

First movement. Soprano, D₄ to C₆ or alternative B₆.
Tenor, E♭₃ to C₅ or alternative A₅. Baritone, A♭₃ to E₄.

Second movement. Soprano, E♭₄ to A♭₆.
Tenor, A♭₃ to A♭₅. Baritone, B₃ to E♭₄.

*Daybirth* (A Collection of Songs on Poetry of Joette McDonald)

- Anniversary Song: D♭₄–F₅
- Cantus: C₄–D₅
- Contentment: F₄–A♭₆
- Daybirth: D♭₄–A♭₆
- Flying: D₄–A♭₆
- From a Hotel Room: available in high and low keys
- In the Midnight of My Soul: A♭₄ (optional D♭₄) – E♭₅
- Love Request: D₄–G♭₅ (optional A♭₆)
- Love Union (Christ at a Wedding): A♭₄–E♭₅ (optional A♭₆)
- Lullaby Eternal: available in high, medium, and low keys
- Midas, Poor Midas: E♭₄–A♭₆ (optional D♭₆)
- On this Day: A♭₄–E♭₅
- Song of Thanks: available in high, medium, and low keys
- Song of the Innkeeper’s Children: available in high, medium, and low keys
- Song to Baby Jesus (Song to a New-day)
Wave and the Shore

Arie and duets from *Blake*

Miranda’s Arioso and Lullaby  
Soprano: F<sub>4</sub>-A<sub>6</sub>

Miranda’s Prayer  
Soprano: E<sub>4</sub>-A<sub>flat6</sub> (optional C flat<sub>6</sub>)

That Wild Fire  
Mezzo-soprano: E<sub>4</sub> flat-G<sub>5</sub>

Love Duet  
Soprano: D sharp<sub>4</sub>-B flat<sub>6</sub>. Tenor: D<sub>3</sub> flat-B flat<sub>5</sub> (optional A flat<sub>5</sub>)

Blake’s Monologue  
Tenor: F<sub>3</sub>-A<sub>5</sub> (optional B<sub>5</sub>)

My New-found Friends  
Tenor: D<sub>3</sub> flat-A<sub>5</sub> (optional C<sub>5</sub>)

I Shall Not See These Shores Again  
Duet. Soprano: D<sub>4</sub>-B flat<sub>6</sub> (optional C<sub>6</sub>)  
Mezzo-soprano: B<sub>4</sub>-F<sub>5</sub> (optional A flat<sub>6</sub>)

O Mirana  
Duet. Soprano: E<sub>4</sub>-A<sub>6</sub> Baritone: C<sub>3</sub> sharp-D<sub>4</sub> (optional E<sub>4</sub>)

Stevens’ Aria: Our Loss Will Be Great  
Baritone: (A<sub>3</sub>-F<sub>4</sub>)

*Individual Songs*

"Advocation"  
C<sub>4</sub>-A flat<sub>6</sub>

"Alone…."  
D<sub>4</sub>-A<sub>6</sub>

"Amazing Grace" (music and poetry by H. Leslie Adams)  
available in high, medium, and low keys

"Christmas Lullaby"  
(medium-high)

"Love Memory"  
(high or medium-high)

"Love Response"  
(medium-high)

"Love Request"  
(high or medium-high)

"What Love Brings"  
(high or medium)
"Love Memory" and "Love Response" are also grouped together as *Two Songs on texts of Paul Laurence Dunbar*

*Dramatic works*

*Blake*, Opera in 4 Acts, text by Daniel Mayers (suggested by an idea from a novel of the same name by Martin Delany).

*The Congo*, Theater Piece of Solo Readers, Speaking Group, Percussion

*Slaves*, (on a book by Sidney Goldberg), in progress, 2005
Endnotes


Bibliography

“100 Best songs by Black Composers,” *Ebony Magazine* June 2001


Finn, Robert. “Slave Rebellion Before Civil War Stirs on Opera.” *Cleveland Plain Dealer* Cleveland [January 1, 1983].


Discography

*Art Song Heritage of the Americas.* Frederick Kennedy, tenor; Henri Venanzi, piano. CRS Master Recordings CD 9662.


*Shades of Blue*, Julius Williams, conductor. Albany Records, Troy 431.

*The Horse I Ride Has Wings*, Donnie Ray Albert, baritone, David Garvey, piano. Now Records.


Publication Sources

Official Publisher:
Arts Source Publishing, Inc.
Email: CreativeArtsInc@webtv.net

Official Distributor:
Henry Carl Music, (HCM) primary distributors
Donald Miller, president
7588 Middle Ridge Road
Madison, Ohio 44057
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Darryl Taylor has sung in concert halls across the United States and Europe, including Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Merkin Concert Hall, and Barcelona’s Palau de la Música. His numerous tours of Spain have garnered him particular praise. His recordings, *Love Rejoices: Songs of H. Leslie Adams* (Albany Records), and *Dreamer: A Portrait of Langston Hughes* (Naxos Records, American Classics Series) have received lavish acclaim. Forthcoming is *Poetry Preludes: Music of Richard Thompson*, on Visionary/Albany Records and *Fields of Wonder*, with songs and spirituals of Robert Owens.

Founder of the African American Art Song Alliance <http://www.darryltaylor.com> and in demand as a lecturer and clinician, Darryl Taylor has enlightened students and faculty of Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, and the University of Michigan, among many others.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Darryl Taylor holds degrees from the University of Southern California and the University of Michigan. He is a member of Mu Phi Epsilon Music Fraternity, Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honors Society, and the National Association of Negro Musicians. Dr. Taylor serves as Co-Director of Voice Studies on the music faculty of the University of California, Irvine.