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## Image, Narrative, & Concept of Time in Valerie Capers's Song Cycle Song of the Seasons

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IMAGE, NARRATIVE, & CONCEPT OF TIME IN VALERIE CAPERS'S  
SONG CYCLE *SONG OF THE SEASONS*

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A doctoral document submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Musical Arts

School of Music  
College of Fine Arts  
The Graduate College

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## **Dissertation Approval**

The Graduate College  
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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This dissertation prepared by

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## ABSTRACT

Image, Narrative, & Concept of Time  
In Valerie Capers's Song Cycle *Song of the Seasons*

By

Lillian Channelle Roberts

Dr. Alfonse Anderson, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of Voice  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Once I was a classical pianist, then I was a jazz pianist, but now I'm a pianist – No label. And in my writing, I'm not concerned with any particular style. I've found that if you have musical groundwork and some idea of the emotional impact the music should have, the musical style will hang together.

—Valerie Capers

Primarily known as a renowned jazz pianist, Valerie Capers is a blind, African-American woman composer who defied all odds by becoming the first blind graduate of The Juilliard School. Dr. Capers also became valedictorian of the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind, the Chair of Bronx Community College, and her jazz curriculum was used as a model for schools to implement jazz programs at colleges throughout the United States. While her base is in New York, she continues to make strides as a composer and performer on the national and international level.

The purpose of this document is to provide a stylistic analysis of the text, musical setting, and overall form of Valerie Capers's *Song of the Seasons*, a song cycle of four songs for soprano, cello, and piano. Although Capers wrote pieces for various mediums, her love for words and music inspired her to write for the voice, which she proclaims as “powerful.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Helen Walker-Hill, “Valerie Capers (b. 1935),” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American Women Composers and Their Music*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002, *The African American Experience*. Greenwood Publishing Group, accessed February 5, 2015, <http://testaae.greenwood.com/doc.aspx?fileID=GR9947&chapterID=GR9947-2016&path=books/greenwood>, 10.

*Song of the Seasons* is the first large-scale classical vocal work written by Capers, for which she also wrote the text. The work was commissioned in 1987 by the Smithsonian Institute and received rave reviews by the Washington Post.

According to Capers, *Song of the Seasons* is “a celebration of life” and was inspired by Japanese Haiku, a Japanese poetic form that illuminates the human condition through imagistic themes of nature, love, and death.<sup>2</sup> The cycle of revolving seasons is connected through figurative language of the composer’s own text, European art song, opera, and African-American Jazz. Like other great American composers of her time, the incorporation of multiple influences—such as Wagner, Beethoven, Monk, and Ellington—helped establish her unique style which has culminated into what I refer to as Valerie Capers’s “American Art Song Aesthetic.” Specifically, her style is a post-modern hybrid that combines impressionism and African-American jazz. Therefore, because of Capers’s uniqueness, I will explore and analyze her contribution to the development of post-modern American song cycles in the English language and show why Valerie Capers’s songs deserve to be included in American art song anthologies.

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2. African American Composer Initiative, “*Valerie Capers speaks about Song of the Seasons.*” accessed March 3, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s43zKfc3jKo>.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the years, I have been inspired by numerous professors. Although it's difficult to find the words to express my gratitude for the help I have received, I will certainly try my best to do so in very few paragraphs.

First, I would like to thank my committee for their endless commitment to my success. Their guidance and support has been essential to the completion of this document and degree. Dr. Linda Lister, thank you for attending every single recital and editing my document very thoughtfully. I would also like to thank Professor Nate Bynum for attending every recital and lightening the mood at my orals by telling a story about "CRS." This truly relaxed me and allowed me to finish the exam with flying colors. Professor Dave Loeb, your enthusiasm and support of my talent is greatly appreciated. I am truly thankful for your kind, encouraging words every time our paths cross. I would also like to thank Dr. Stephanie Weiss who took time out of her busy schedule to remain on my committee after receiving an appointment in another state. And special thanks to the many professors who have helped me write, present, and research more effectively. This list includes Dr. Christina Wright-Ivanova, Dr. Jennifer Bellor, Dr. Jonathan Lee, Dr. Anthony Barone, Dr. Ken Hanlon, and Dr. Stephen Caplan. Your scholarship and expertise truly inspired me to produce high quality work in the field of music.

I would also like to thank the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago for contacting Valerie Capers for her music score, *Song of the Seasons*. Their research is invaluable to the study and performance of African-American compositions. I would also like to thank Hugo Nogueira, for his diligence and accuracy in transcribing *Song of the Seasons*. I am truly humbled to have his friendship and knowledge, and advice. Thank-you for always saying "yes" to my requests.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to John Robinson. Thank you for assisting me with the transcription process and for providing valuable information regarding the solo compositions of Valerie Capers. This project would not have been successful without your help.

I must acknowledge a few friends who have provided their friendship and support throughout this process. Avid Williams, thank you for always being on my side. I am so grateful for your advice and love. Your friendship means the world to me. Jarvis Moorehead, your words of encouragement throughout this process was truly inspiring. I am grateful for all of your love and support. Ebony and Chris Martin, thank you for offering help without hesitation and for assisting me when I needed it most. I am so grateful for true friends like you.

My final thanks is reserved for my voice teacher, mentor, and advisor, Dr. Alfonse Anderson. Your knowledge and guidance in the field of voice is indispensable. I am truly grateful for your scholarship and valuable advice throughout the years. I have learned so much from you in regards to being a well-rounded musician, singer, and professor. I am humbled by your generosity, love, and guidance throughout the years. Thank you for everything.

## DEDICATION

This is especially for you, Mom and Dad. Thank-you for always being in my corner and for showing my son and I unconditional love. We made it!

And

To my brother, Kevi, for taking care of my son with unconditional love. You truly helped me achieve great success by taking care of my prize and baby boy!

And

To my other brother, Ernie, for your love and support. Thank-you for talking to Kayden on the phone and playing with him during visits and making him feel loved.

And

To my sweet and beautiful nieces, Alexis and Ciarra, I am so proud to be your “auntie.” I love you with all my heart.

And

To my son and baby boy, Kayden-poo, you will always be my guiding light. I love you for your 6-year-old strength, wisdom, and support.

And finally,

To Valerie Capers, thank you for everything. I am truly grateful to have met such a gifted and humble musician. You are magnificent.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Valerie Capers's *Song of the Seasons* for soprano, cello, and piano is a unique example of a modern song cycle epitomizing what I refer to as Capers's "American Art Song Aesthetic," a post-modern hybrid of European infused idioms and African-American jazz influences.<sup>3</sup> This cycle of four songs incorporates the composer's own poetry and music, a practice that is unusual and unique among art song composers. Although other composers have written poetry for their own compositions, this practice is not commonly used.

Carol Kimball, author of *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*, makes a statement regarding the rules of poetry in art song: "An art song's poetry existed before the song was written. Though there are some composers who have written their own art song texts, this is the exception and not the rule."<sup>4</sup> In Capers's case, she writes most of her own poetry and libretti. "Bird Alone," and "Rainbow" are the only songs in which the composer sets pre-existing text. Her other vocal compositions such as *Sojourner*, *Song of the Seasons*, and *Ruby*, are set to texts or a libretto written by her.

Capers's cycle was commissioned by the Smithsonian Museum to show her gift of writing classical music. D. Antoinette Handy, former head of the National Education Association (NEA) said, 'Everyone knows that you work as a jazz musician, but I want them to know that

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3. Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Style and Literature*, revised edition. (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 245.

4. Carol Kimball, *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*. (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2013), 15.

you are a composer.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, her song cycle, “*Song of the Seasons*” was born. Receiving shining reviews, it was eventually performed at the Marlboro Festival and abroad.<sup>6</sup>

*Song of the Seasons* highlights Capers’s distinctive song style. The influence of Haiku brings an exotic element to the pieces through inadvertent references to Japanese culture through descriptions of cherry blossoms and the manner in which “Spring” and “Autumn” are portrayed. Therefore, an analysis of the poetic language and sound devices will be discussed. The style of each poem alternates between imagery and narration. “Spring” and “Autumn” use imagery, while “Summer” and “Winter” tell stories.

For every work she composes, she is attracted to a subject, then creates color and texture within each voice through the use of dense chordal structures, with additional unexpected melodies in the soprano voice and the idiomatic expressions of the cello. These characteristics are used to express the feelings of the character she is trying to portray. “People respond to how you color a character and how you write a scene. It’s very important,” says Capers.<sup>7</sup>

The following assessment of Valerie Capers’s work appears to be common among critics and audiences. Capers doesn’t object and makes the following statement:

Some people describe me as an eclectic composer. I like that idea... I like to call on musical colors and textures, regardless of where they come from, and it works for me. It doesn’t sound disjunctive... One piece sounds baroque and another piece sounds like the blues – I think of all those approaches as sound textures. It’s the way in which you coordinate the musical textures.<sup>8</sup>

This eclecticism can be seen in the variety of genres that she employs. Over the years, Capers has written works for jazz piano and ensembles, classical piano, choral pieces, an “operatorio”

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4. Walker-Hill, “Valerie Capers (b. 1935),” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 7.

6. Ibid., 7.

7. Valerie Capers and John Robinson, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

8. Walker-Hill, “Valerie Capers (b. 1935),” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 3.

and art song. Incidentally, *Song of the Seasons* is one of two song cycles written by the composer. Due to blindness and the physical challenges associated with notating music, her compositional output is limited.<sup>9</sup>

According to Walker-Hill, Capers must write the music down in Braille before reading aloud to record on tape in order to get it transcribed by someone else. This process is time-consuming and monotonous, as it requires dictation of every single note.<sup>10</sup> I recall a phone conversation with the composer where she mentions not being able to play the cycle with me for my lecture recital due to having to put the music back into her fingers note by note. She apologized before she recommended I get someone else to play the piano because it was a long and tedious process for her.<sup>11</sup>

According to Capers, *Song of the Seasons* is “a celebration of life” that highlights the human condition through themes of nature and love.<sup>12</sup> The overall form of the piece is influenced by the composer’s own text, which incorporates figurative language such as imagery, metaphor, and personification. Examples of this language can be seen in the first song of the cycle, “Spring,” which uses “cherry blossoms” and “spring birds” to represent springtime. The second song, “Summer,” uses metaphorical language on the phrase “trembling trees” to represent a sensuous love scene between two lovers. Capers incorporates the use of tone painting by creating a tremolo effect in the accompaniment. In the third song, “Autumn,” Capers uses personification

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9. Capers lost her sight at age 6 to a streptococcal infection, which allowed her to enroll in the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind. Her formal music training as a pianist began here.

10. Walker-Hill, “*Valerie Capers (b. 1935)*,” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 9.

11. The telephone conversation that took place is off the record and therefore cannot be verified. However, the information is relevant as it provides a first-hand account of Capers’s consideration to play the cycle she composed with an explanation as to why she shouldn’t.

12. Valerie Capers, *Program Notes “Song of the Seasons (1987)”*, e-mail message from author, August 3, 2014, 1.

in the phrase “And early frost the bloom has kissed,” which illuminates the transition from summer to autumn when frost “kisses” the blooming flower. These examples illustrate Capers’s poetic writing style and the use of imagery in the cycle.

According to the Haiku Society of America, “A Haiku is a short poem that uses imagistic language to convey the essence of an experience of nature or the season intuitively linked to the human condition.”<sup>13</sup> The essence of Haiku provides insight into the historical context and overall poetic language and mood of the cycle. Capers uses numerous images in order to invoke the experience of nature and life that are inevitably connected to the revolving seasons.

Although Capers did not intend to solely highlight Japanese culture, the use of these images inadvertently reference Japanese customs and the link between human life and nature. Capers intended to inspire a universal message, which is captured through a semi-conversational vocal line which I will refer to as semi-declamatory or recitative.

According to Capers, *Song of the Seasons* is based on the human life cycle: birth, youth, maturity, and death. The composer captures these moments through the cycle of seasons amidst Haiku-based images and humanistic narratives of love and death. In a private interview, Capers summarizes the meaning of each season:

The cycle is more than just spring, summer, fall and autumn, and winter. It is metaphorical. It is the cycle of life; your birth, your youth, your maturity, and your death. And that is not unique to any culture on the planet. We all experience the same thing. So it’s the universal metaphor, concept of birth, of springing out... into developing... into blossoming into spring, maturing into the summer. And then, maturing in the autumn. And then, coming into the wintertime of your life; which is the winter of course, the simple metaphor of death.<sup>14</sup>

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13. “Haiku Society of America,” *Report of the Definitions Committee: Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Society*, (New York City, September 18 2004) accessed March 2 2016. [http://www.hsa-haiku.org/archives/HAS\\_Definitions\\_2004.html#top](http://www.hsa-haiku.org/archives/HAS_Definitions_2004.html#top), 1.

14. Capers, interview, August 11, 2016. See Appendix G for the interview with Capers.

The influence of Haiku and Japanese culture should not be ignored, especially since certain images and word usage reflect the culture and style of Japanese poetry. The images used in “Spring” and “Autumn” were drawn from Japanese ideals and culture such as cherry blossoms, and ancient trees that are gold and crimson. These images help to create color and texture within the cycle.<sup>15</sup>

The first and third poem, “Spring” and “Autumn,” utilize vivid descriptions of their respective seasons. The feeling of spring is created through the use of certain objects to indicate the “birth” of springtime. The descriptions of cherry blossoms blooming, and the spring birds returning from their winter flight while singing about future dreams and things to come evokes a celebratory atmosphere. Other images such as “gaily gliding brooks” and “the smiling sun” that awaits the dawn” also illustrate this joyous feeling.

Although the tone of “Autumn” is more somber, Capers captures the essence of the poem by utilizing phrases like “The distant mountains clothed in mist, and early frost the bloom has kissed.” These images are captured by Capers through color and texture. Tempi, intervals, and an overall dense texture portray significant moments within each song. Although Capers dominates the spring and autumn seasons with imagery and sound devices, Capers uses florid piano figurations and idiomatic features of the cello and voice to depict the story in vivid detail. For example, the cello alternates between pizzicati, playing long legato lines, and harmonizing with the voice, whereas the vocal line is syllabic and colorful throughout its expansive range. The structure of the vocal line is reminiscent of an operatic aria. In this way, we are reminded of other song composers like Strauss, Griffes, and Berlioz whose song repertoire provide vocal freedom to operatically trained voices.

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15. Appendix E.1. contains concise information regarding Exoticism and the Haiku influence.

“Summer” and “Winter” are narrative poems. “Summer” tells a romantic love story that sadly ends where autumn begins. Capers uses “romantic love” as a metaphor for summer which she describes as “a little story; a little interlude, a little incident, a little happening,” whereas winter which represents death, is a reflection of the end of life.<sup>16</sup> The final song, “Winter” is aria-like and reflective. The speaker contemplates death and recalls her youthful days as she realizes the end is near.

Capers’s clever use of images and narrative creates an interesting palette of color, sound and texture. The ensemble of the voice, cello, and piano are used to describe each event. The vocal line has a unique melody that moves by step or by leaps that are standard, quartal or extremely wide. The leaps are sometimes difficult to reach and may require studious practice and discipline on the part of the singer. The cello provides harmony or solo virtuosity, and at times tone painting by way of the plucked string. The piano seems to hold the instrumental ensemble together which is essential to the success of the entire work. Capers creates an extremely dense texture through her use of pedal tone, extended chords, varying scales, and florid piano figurations.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note that Capers was influenced by her idol, Richard Wagner. In the Opera News article, *On the Beat*, Capers describes her inspiration for the Jazz instrumental piece, “Wagner Takes the A Train.” Although this quote specifically applies to her instrumental composition, her unique aesthetic is also evidenced throughout her vocal work.

I read once that Wagner said that composing is not just an idea, but it’s the transition of that idea, the development and the way in which you work and rework and mold it. The idea of taking a leitmotif and giving it a particular meaning to represent something ... well, it’s a kindred spirit to the jazz improviser. We get an idea, and that idea opens up

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16. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

17. See Table E.4. for more details regarding the characteristics of each voice

the musical line or ideas that we're going to play. And the germ of that idea changes and evolves and moves to another place entirely. I got the idea last year, and I found the twenty-nine motifs I could use. A great many I could not use, because they had minor diminished qualities that could not be adapted into the major harmonic structure of the piece itself. I assigned about twelve each to the guys in my group, and it was a riot!<sup>18</sup>

In D. Antoinette Handy's book, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, Capers's responds to the author's questionnaire with the following statement in June 1996.

My musical influences have been universal in scope. I find that in every area of music there is creativity and inspiration—something I take from it on a conscious or subliminal level. I have reached out to such varied sources as Wagner, Monk, Ellington and Bach, among others. Their vibrations and challenges have created an excitement for me as a performing artist and composer. The inspiration is everywhere. John Coltrane was a very personal day-to-day mentor, emotionally, sentimentally, and artistically. It goes without saying that as a pianist, my influences have been Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal, and Les McCann. They were all influential in my musical development.<sup>19</sup>

According to Walker-Hill, the influence of Wagner can be seen in the style and form of her song cycle, which incorporates the use of misdirection and chord evasion except at the end of each song which is concluded with perfect cadences.<sup>20</sup> Capers also borrows phrases, intervals, and more from Wagner's operas such as the Major 9th interval in the phrase "I listen to the rain," in *Winter*, and the phrase "Heigh Ho" which is used by the Valkyries. The combination of Haiku and European and jazz idioms really adds to the colors and textures Capers intended to create. Capers refers to the style of *Song of the Seasons* as romantic.

Yes, it's romantic. It's certainly not twentieth century contemporary. It's in the Romantic style. I use the sounds and the styles that have been traditional in music through the years,

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18. Brian Kellow. "On the Beat," *Opera News* 64, no. 2 (August 1999): 8, Music Index, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mah&AN=2107555&site=ehost-live>.

19. D. Antoinette Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestras*, 2nd Ed. Lanham, MD., & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 257.

20. Walker-Hill, "Valerie Capers (b. 1935)," in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 14.

and the romantic nineteenth century and early twentieth century. So yes, it's absolutely romantic.<sup>21</sup>

Immediately following the premiere of *Song of the Seasons* at the Smithsonian in 1987, the reviewer of the Washington Post called it "the high point of the afternoon.... This is music rooted in the tradition of Debussy, endowed with a lovely feeling for melody and a nice sense of texture."<sup>22</sup>

Capers's cycle may be categorized as a hybrid of musical impressionism and jazz vocabulary. There are several moments worth highlighting. However, the middle section of "Spring" is one of the most beautiful moments in the entire work which consists of a legato cello solo with sparse piano accompaniment. This section was inspired by Debussy's tone poem "La mer." Capers states:

Debussy is so wonderful with his instrumentation about bringing in the instruments suggesting that there are so many of these things of life that are coming and then finally they blend in and the darkness has gently been faded away and now are facing the dawn. And that's the kind of thing I was hoping to get in those couple of bars. The idea of nighttime slowly turning into dawn..."<sup>23</sup>

The Jazz influence can easily be exchanged with impressionism as quartal harmony and extended chords are often found in either genre. Operatic influences are presented within the range of the vocal line and the recitative in "Winter." This combination of styles is something Capers is known for. The overall style of her work is impressionistic which may be characterized as "painterly."<sup>24</sup> In other words, Capers uses pentatonic, octatonic, and whole tone scales to invoke a particular feeling or mood. And although she teeters between harmonic extensions and

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21. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

22. Joan Reinthaler, *Music of the Black American Composer*. Washington Post, May 4, 1987.

23. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

24. Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 4, The Early Twentieth Century. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78.



half-diminished chord structures, the culminating result of the work is quite successful. The combination of the subtle hint of jazz through minor pentatonic scales, fully diminished chords, and chromatic planing produces a modern interpretation of the color and texture of impressionism while maintaining the passionate expression of romanticism.<sup>25</sup>

Although Capers is known primarily in the Jazz world, this cycle is an American masterpiece that should be performed more frequently. An analysis of her work will introduce the classical world to a modern art song composition by a blind, African-American woman and provide other singers and vocal instructors with ideas for interpretation and programming of American song.

Wayne Sanders, founder and Artistic Director of Opera Ebony in New York, makes the following statement regarding Capers's music. Although his statement specifically refers to *Sojourner*, his words clearly define her entire body of work:

The joy in Capers' music reaches out: people seem to be able to feel what she's talking about, what she's trying to say. As performers, her music gives us something to work with; it really taps the emotions and allows us to be spontaneous with our own feelings. Each evening that you do the work something different happens with the emotions. That lets me know that the music is very, very special. Her music allows you to make your own statement. Her music and her words really touch the human spirit: there's a truth in the way she goes about her composing that comes from a very deep inner vision, and has an uncanny sense to it. She studied classically at Juilliard and many other places, and that's allowed her to express herself [equally well] in the jazz idiom; she's free to create her own style and, in a sense, her own music. She doesn't let the traditions, which are important to her, box her in. She dares to forge her own way.<sup>26</sup>

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25. George Colligan, "What is harmonic planning and how do you use it?" *Keyboard Magazine*, March 19, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.keyboardmag.com/jazz/1303/what-is-harmonic-planing-and-how-do-you-use-it/51347>, 1.

26. Wayne Sanders on Valerie Capers, interview by Dolores Brandon, "Traces," November 1991, accessed September 19, 2016, <http://doloresbrandon.com/interviews/wayne-sanders-founder-opera-ebony/>, 2-3.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Valerie Capers (b.1935) was born and raised into a family of musicians in the Bronx in New York City. Her father, Alvin Capers, was a professional stride jazz pianist while her mother played piano socially. Capers's brother Bobby played saxophone and flute and would eventually influence her to train as a jazz pianist. With parents whose musical life took root during the Harlem Renaissance, Capers began to play piano at an early age.

Even though Capers lost her sight at age six to a streptococcus infection, she graduated as valedictorian from the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind in 1953.<sup>27</sup> In 1959, she became the first blind graduate of The Juilliard School, where she obtained her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in classical piano. The recipient of numerous honors and awards, Capers, along with Oprah Winfrey and Marla Gibbs, was one of the initial beneficiaries of the *Women of Essence Award* from Essence magazine, which was presented on television in 1987. In addition, she received the *Jazz Heritage Award* and was inducted into *International Women in Jazz*. Capers received three honorary doctorates from the following institutions: Susquehanna University (1996),<sup>28</sup> Bloomfield College (2004), presented together with Wynton Marsalis and Doane College (2004).<sup>29</sup>

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27. John S. Wilson, "Valerie Capers to Conduct Her Jazz-Based Cantata: Born of Necessity ..." *New York Times*, December 17, 1978, accessed November 25, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.unlv.edu/docview/123555315?pq-origsite=summon&accountid=3611>. In the case of Valerie Capers, Streptococcus began as strep throat but quickly spread to the blood stream to cause damage in the optic nerve.

28. Walker-Hill, "Valerie Capers (b. 1935)" *In From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 3.

29. Valerie Capers Official Website, "Bio." accessed August 7, 2016, <http://www.valeriecapers.com/bio.html>, 1.

Recently, Capers was the first to be honored in 2012 on the Bronx Walk of Fame with her own street sign and title, “A Bronx Living Legend.”<sup>30</sup> While teaching at the Manhattan School of Music as a consultant for blind students from 1987 to 1995, Capers initiated a nationwide curriculum for teaching jazz studies in universities.<sup>31</sup> Capers served as chair at Bronx Community College in the Department of Music and Art in New York and currently holds the esteemed title of Professor Emeritus. The New York Times extolled Capers as one of the nation’s supreme jazz educators.<sup>32</sup>

Commissioned to compose a classical piece by the Smithsonian Institute in 1987, Capers wrote *Song of the Seasons*, a song cycle for voice, cello, and piano. In addition to her numerous jazz recordings and performances throughout the world, her most significant vocal compositions include *Sing About Love*, *Christmas Cantata* performed in Carnegie Hall with critical acclaim, *Sojourner*, produced and staged by Opera Ebony of New York, and *Song of the Seasons*, which was commissioned and performed at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. and Weill Recital Hall in New York City.<sup>33</sup>

In 2001, Capers performed with the Rendez-vous de l’Erdre (Nantes, France). Other performances with her trio include: the International Grande Parade du Jazz Festival (Nice,

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30. “Norwood News,” *Bronx Jazz Musician Valerie Capers to Join Borough ‘Walk of Fame,’* (Bronx, April 12 2012) accessed May 13, 2016.  
<http://www.norwoodnews.org/id=7241&story=bronx-jazz-musician-valerie-capers-to-join-borough-walk-of-fame/>, 1-2.

31. Walker-Hill, “*Valerie Capers (b. 1935)*,” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 5.

32. Capers Official Website, “Bio,” 1.

33. The term “operatorio” was created by Valerie Capers in order to describe her work *Sojourner*, which is based on the life of Sojourner Truth. Capers invented the term in order to highlight a new form that employs elements of opera and oratorio. Capers did not intend for this piece to be staged and insisted it was chiefly music and not meant for stage or to be performed as an opera. Four years later, it was staged four times starting in 1985 to 1990 by Opera Ebony and Von Washington at Calvin College Fine Arts Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan (Walker-Hill, 2002), 14.

France), the Martin Luther King Festival (Ottawa, Ontario), and the North Sea Jazz Festival (The Hague). Her most recent performances took place at the *Salzburg Global Seminar* (Salzburg, Austria), the World-Wide Plaza Summer Festival (New York City) and the opening concert for the Women in Jazz Festival for Jazz at Lincoln Center at Dizzy's Coca-Cola Club (New York City), and the Holiday Festival and Jazz at Noon Concert at the Empire State Building. As a classical pianist, she performed Mozart's "Concerto for Piano & Orchestra, No. 23" at Pepperdine University Center for the Arts (Malibu, California).<sup>34</sup>

Capers has performed with numerous great artists such as Dizzy Gillespie, Wynton Marsalis, Ray Brown, Mongo Santamaria, Tito Puente, Max Roach and James Moody. Capers has recorded with several labels including Columbia/Sony. In 2000, her book *Portraits in Jazz*, comprised of intermediate pieces for the piano, was published by Oxford University Press. Additionally, her arrangement of the English Carol, "It Came upon the Midnight Clear" was published for acappella mixed chorus.

Although she is primarily known as a jazz pianist, Valerie Capers enjoys composing for the voice. In fact, samples of her contralto voice can be heard on her jazz album, "Come on Home" recorded in 1995 with Becky Brewer Clay Patrick, McBride, and Wynton Marsalis. Her preference for vocal writing began after she took a vocal techniques class with John Motley who eventually commissioned her first choral work for his All-City Chorus. Capers states, "I got hooked on writing for the voice....I'd rather write something with words than a purely instrumental composition. The union of music and words is powerful."<sup>35</sup>

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34. Capers Official Website, "Bio," 1.

35. Walker-Hill, "*Valerie Capers (b. 1935)*," in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 10.

## CHAPTER 3

### POETIC LANGUAGE

In order to reach the audience member on an emotional level that yields a response, the singer must “ring the ring of words.” They must plumb the depths of the poetry, be fastidious in their delivery of the words, and find the dramatic images and emotional moments submerged in the words they are singing. A precise approach on the singer’s part yields a performance rich in commitment and communication.<sup>36</sup>

—Carol Kimball

The importance of researching the meaning of the poetry of a particular art song or song cycle is the fundamental ingredient to a successful performance. Occasionally, singers overlook or neglect their responsibility to communicate the story. Therefore, research regarding the language, form, poetic devices, and meaning is paramount to conveying the significance of the text to the audience. Without meaning, the art song loses impact and the overall effect or intention of the composer gets lost. It is for this reason that poetry must be dissected in a way that assists the performer with their interpretation of a piece. Before exploring the historical influence and poetic devices of the poems, the overall form and unifying characteristics must be explored.

Each of the four poems in “*Song of the Seasons*” is written in free verse form, meaning they do not follow any particular rhyme scheme or set formula. Typically, contemporary writers who wish to express the shape of a poem according to their own artistic taste use this form. However, free verse poets use figurative language and sound devices to express a particular mood or emotion. Reaske defines free verse in the following way:

Poetry composed in lines which are free of the traditional patterns of rhyme and meter and whose rhythm is based, instead, on the stress resulting from the meaning of the line and its natural and punctuated pauses. Each line contains varying numbers and types of poetic feet; however, although the strict traditional patterns of versification are not followed, free verse cannot be said to be formless. A pattern away from, and back

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33. Kimball, *Art Song*, 9.

toward, this norm. Although the form has been most widely used by modern poets since the beginning of the Symbolist movement at the end of the nineteenth century, poetry of this type was written by the Hebrew psalmists, Goethe, Mathew Arnold and others.”<sup>37</sup>

According to Carol Kimball, this form is the preferred form for twentieth-century poets.<sup>38</sup> These poems are mainly reliant on the intonation of the words to convey their story. Sense and sound are common techniques that are employed in free verse poetry. Free verse poets often employ the use of figurative language and sound devices even though their work excludes the use of strict metrical systems.<sup>39</sup>

The unifying elements of each of the four poems include the influence of Haiku, free verse form, stanza structure and punctuation, and finally, a device unique to these particular poems (which I refer to as “the non-rhyme scheme”), which is used at the beginning of each poem. This term represents the verses that do not rhyme at the start of each poem. The Haiku influence is noticeably present in the poems “Spring” and “Autumn,” which show the connection between nature and human circumstance through images. The other poems “Summer” and “Winter” utilize a more humanized point of view and alternates between poetic, middle, and familiar language. Each poem is written in one long stanza in paragraph form and highly punctuated with commas, periods, and exclamation points. The examples below illustrate the non-rhyme scheme that is used at the beginning of each poem.

Each poem begins with a “non-rhyme scheme” that is usually followed by a combination of rhymes with a fluctuating pattern.<sup>40</sup> Capers begins each poem in the following way:

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37. Christopher Russell Reaske, *How To Analyze Poetry*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 18.

38. Kimball, *Art Song*, 101.

39. Free Verse, “Definitions and Examples of Free Verse.” accessed July 20, 2016, <http://literarydevices.net/free-verse/>, 3.

<sup>40</sup>

40. Refer to the Poetic Language Table in Appendix E.2. and E.3. for an abridged version of the analysis of Capers’s text.

“Spring”	The snow has left the mountainside and cherry blossoms are in bloom. The spring bird from its winter flight
“Summer”	I gazed into your eyes and saw reflected there, The summer of my soul.
“Autumn”	The fields of green, Now brown and yellow. A silvery white the moon.
“Winter”	Late at night as I peer into the dark and endless winter sky, I listen to the rain, And I recall my youth. <sup>41</sup>

In the following paragraphs, the common characteristics, setting, poetic devices, and meaning of each poem will be explored. Each poem will be examined separately to ensure clarity. The elements discussed will include figurative language such as imagery, metaphor, and personification. Next, I will discuss sound devices: repetition, assonance, alliteration and rhymes. Third, conversational diction and uncommon word usage will be explored. Finally, I will explore the similarities, differences, and the overall connection between each of the four poems.

### **Spring**

Poem 1	The snow has left the mountainside And cherry blossoms are in bloom! The spring bird from its winter flight, Re-turns to sing, its joyous song of splendid dreams and things to be, So sweet the sound drifts down to me. The trees reflect a silver moon, And dancing to a merry tune! The brook goes gaily gliding by. A smiling sun awaits the dawn, The dark and cold of winter gone. My heart cries out, My soul doth sing! ‘Tis spring, ‘tis spring! <sup>42</sup>
Setting	On the mountainside; among the cherry blossom trees Right before dawn
Character	A young woman

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41. For a full text of the poems as by Valerie Capers see Appendix E.5.

42. Qiana McNary, Program Notes. “Broadway United Methodist Church Proudly Presents An Evening of Aria and Art Song Performed by soprano Qiana McNary,” Broadway United Methodist Church Chicago, April 29, 2011, Accessed November 26, 2016, <http://assets.communityspice.com/bumclakeview/assets/music/An%20Evening%20of%20Aria%20and%20Art%20Song%20pub.pdf>.

Synopsis      A young woman celebrates the coming of spring through descriptions of melting snow on the mountainside, and blossoming cherry blossoms. The speaker comments on the melodious song of the spring birds as they express excitement about their future dreams and a promising future. The relator is immersed in the beautiful wonders of nature and describes gaily, gliding brooks, and dancing trees that reflect a silver moon before expressing her excitement as her heart repeatedly cries out, “It’s spring!”

One of the most significant characteristics of the poetry in *Song of the Seasons*, is the influence of Haiku. In an interview with the African American Composer Initiative, Capers speaks of her love for Haiku and her intention to incorporate the delicate descriptions of nature and the human emotions connected to this ancient Japanese poetic style. “And I love Haiku and the beautiful, delicate 17 syllables of words...descriptions of nature and of the emotions and things that are so beautifully and delicately expressed.” She remarks that she created her own text but would insert the beautiful descriptions of nature wherever she could.<sup>43</sup> This statement implies that Capers’s poetry was highly influenced by Haiku and explains why they are filled with naturist images and human emotion.

The late seventeenth-century poet, Boshō transformed what was formally known as hokku into the independent poetic form Haiku. In *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, Bashō makes the following statement regarding the Art of writing Haiku poetry. “However well phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural - if the object and yourself are separate - then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.”<sup>44</sup> Thus showing the significance of describing oneself through an object. Capers’s poetry begins with numerous

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43. African American Composer Initiative, “Valerie Capers speaks about *Song of the Seasons*.” accessed March 3, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s43zKfc3jKo>.

44. Bashō. *The Narrow Road To The Deep North: And Other Travel Sketches*, trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 33.



images embedded with human emotions and naturalist views. Even though “Summer” and “Winter” are described from a humanistic point of view, the influence of Haiku and Japanese culture is still present.

The first poem, “Spring,” is full of descriptive images of melting snow, cherry blossoms, and song birds. Capers immediately introduces us to the speaker who watches this recurring phenomenon unfold. These descriptive images are presented in first person by the speaker which immediately tells us that she is describing the experience of spring in real time. The speaker takes us on a journey through spring through the use of figurative language and euphoric images, such as spring birds that sing, and gaily gliding brooks, that create a celebratory atmosphere.<sup>45</sup>

The second poem “Summer” is told through the eyes of two lovers and their hot, sizzling passion. “Autumn” reveals the numbness and sadness of the broken-hearted speaker as she watches the harvest preparations unfold. The final poem “Winter” uses direct, everyday language that mirrors the dark, dreary emotions of the cold, dim winter.

One of the most significant elements of the first poem, “Spring,” is Capers’s use of exoticism and the link between nature and the human circumstance. The intrigue of exoticism is presented through cherry blossoms images, which are primarily known as the Japanese national flower, and spring birds that prepare for mating season through melodious song. These ideas are not exactly clear to performers or audiences upon first hearing as they are mentioned briefly. But, if one analyzes the significance of the cherry blossom and the spring bird, we will find a deeper meaning that can be used to interpret the poems more effectively.

Cherry blossoms symbolize the beauty and meaning of spring. They also symbolize the arrival of spring. These beautiful flowers originated in the Himalayas. The most famous cherry

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45. Valerie Capers, *Program Notes “Song of the Seasons (1987),”* 1.

blossoms come from Japan and are called *Sakura*.<sup>46</sup> These special flowers hold great significance for the Japanese people who believe they represent the beauty of life and how quickly it ends. These flowers only bloom for two short weeks in the springtime. Japanese school years begin at the time of their bloom and are located throughout Japan in front of schools and businesses. Celebrations, parties, and romantic evenings are also momentous events that take place under cherry blossoms. This flower was sent to other countries like Europe, Canada, and the United States. However, their significance in those countries are for beauty's sake with the exception of Washington D.C. where it serves as a symbol of peace between Japan and the United States.<sup>47</sup>

The images of cherry blossoms, melting snow, and spring birds singing immediately reduce the anticipation of spring. The suggestion of snow melting and cherry blossoms changes the place and emotional state of the speaker because the span of space and time feels epic and refers to a world outside of the United States. These objects also suggest a mood of unparalleled excitement and anticipation. Capers's "celebration of life" is presented in the initial phrase, as cherry blossoms are representative of festivity and commemoration.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the use of the exotic cherry blossom, Capers introduces the image of birds singing. The significance of birds returning to sing is a joyous time because it signifies the mating call from males who are marking their territory and making themselves and their space presentable for the female bird to choose them as mates. In the bird world, the female chooses her mate based on these conditions. This birds singing heightens the feeling spring and corresponds with Capers's reason for beginning the cycle with this season. When this piece is set

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46. Erina Takeda. "Significance of Sakura: Cherry Blossom Traditions in Japan," Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Festival Blog, April 9, 2014. accessed March 3, 2016, <http://www.festival.si.edu/blog/2014/significance-of-sakura-cherry-blossom-traditions-in-japan/>, 1.

47. Ibid., 1.

48. Ibid., 1.

to music, the spring bird becomes a metaphor for the human's happiness. The soprano is singing like the birds, and the cherry blossoms are blooming. Both of these marvels of nature represent the beginning of new life. The poet refers to herself as the speaker, which personalizes the poem and also suggests that the human sees herself singing about "splendid dreams and things to be" like the bird does. Thus, showing the connection between nature and the human condition which illustrates the foundation of Haiku.<sup>49</sup> Reaske reveals the subjectivity in regards to imagery, a figurative device that is commonly employed in free verse poetry:

There is always a certain amount of mystery surrounding images because we can never articulate their precise meaning. When we study the imagery of a poem we are studying the entire world in which the meaning of the poem dwells. This is the world that the poet has carefully created through his decision to select certain words and images rather than others.<sup>50</sup>

Capers uses figurative language such as imagery, metaphor, and personification to capture the essence of springtime, which provides clues to understand Capers poetic style. Imagery is often used to produce pictures which ultimately sets the mood and tone of the entire poem. There is one example in particular that immediately accomplishes this in the first verse of the poem:

The snow has left the mountainside and cherry blossoms are in bloom!

However, as I stated before, other historic elements are clearly present, which were discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The pictures of the snow melting on the mountainside and cherry blossoms in full bloom make us smile. Furthermore, Capers uses two examples of imagery to indicate the setting and atmosphere of spring. The first one, "The trees reflect a silver moon," suggests a certain time. In this case it means night:

The trees reflect a silver moon

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49. Robert Hass, ed., *The essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Buson, & Issa*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers), 1994, xv.

50. Reaske, *How to Analyze Poetry*, 19.

Although Capers reveals time in an abstract manner, the moon clearly indicates it is evening time. In another verse, Capers introduces another image that encapsulates the theme of joy. The following verse indicates time by telling us the sun is about to set and morning time is near. In other words, both devices create an atmosphere of expectancy and joy. One is aware that the sun is coming out soon, which generally breeds happiness:

A smiling sun awaits the dawn

The last figurative device employed by the composer is personification. This method refers to the designation of human traits to ideas or objects.<sup>51</sup> As demonstrated in the following examples, Capers uses this device often. She assigns human traits to a tree when she states it is “dancing,” clearly referring to a spring breeze that is causing the trees to sway. In the next example, a brook (a small stream of water) is given a human emotion as it “goes gaily gliding by.”

Yet another image is that of “a smiling sun” to induce feelings of bliss and pleasure, which culminates in uncontainable happiness forcing the speaker’s heart to “cry out” in joy. Finally, “my soul doth sing” represents a deep and passionate connection to the coming of spring, the seasonal renewal of life. These examples illuminate the feeling of excitement and hope for her future which resonates deep within her soul and heart:

The trees reflect a silver moon, And *dancing to a merry tune!*

The brook *goes gaily gliding by*

A *smiling sun* awaits the dawn

My *heart cries out*

My *soul doth sing*

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51. Reaske, *How to Analyze Poetry*, 39.

According to Stacy Howard, “Sound devices create the musical quality of a poem.”<sup>52</sup> Images, emotion, and the overall meaning of poetry are revealed through the use of rhythm, repetition, rhyme, assonance, and alliteration.<sup>53</sup> Capers uses these devices frequently in order to capture the true meaning of spring.

The first major device, rhythm, is used for moving the dramatic action of a poem forward. Because Capers uses a combination of rhyme schemes that can be attributed to the free verse formula, the measurement of each verse will not be shown. Capers alternates between non-rhymes, exact rhymes, and half-rhymes. She begins the poem with a non-rhyme scheme:

The snow has left the mountainside and cherry blossoms are in bloom

Immediately following this opening line, we are presented with numerous rhymes that flow with the natural pattern of speech. These rhymes happen at random and unify the text in a unique way. In other words, the pattern exists due to lack of form. The internal rhyme scheme Capers uses to convey certain images is exemplified in the four examples below. What makes it internal is that the rhyme scheme is taking place within the sentence structure. There is no reason or set formula regarding the use of these rhymes:

- The spring bird from its winter flight, Re-turns to sing, its joyous song of splendid dreams and things to *be*, So sweet the sound drifts down to *me*.
- The trees reflect a silver *moon*, And dancing to a merry *tune*!
- A smiling sun awaits the *dawn*, The dark and cold of winter *gone*.
- My heart cries out, My soul doth *sing*! ‘Tis *spring*, ‘tis *spring*!

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52. Stacy Howard, “Copy of Poetry: Sound Devices.” Accessed July 18, 2016, [https://prezi.com/-5yto\\_1erzrz/copy-of-poetry-sound-devices/](https://prezi.com/-5yto_1erzrz/copy-of-poetry-sound-devices/), 1.

53 . “Poetry Terms: Brief Definitions.” Accessed August 10, 2016, <http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/poeterms.htm>, 2.

Rhyme is the second device found that enhances the musical poetry of “Spring.” Reaske defines rhyme in the following manner. “Perfect rhymes, sometimes called exact rhymes, occur when the stressed vowels following differing consonant sounds are identical....the sound not the spelling, determines whether or not the sounds are identical.”<sup>54</sup> The following perfect rhymes were found as a result of this definition and clearly indicates a rhyme with the words *be* and *me*. The next two illustrations of perfect rhymes, *moon* and *tune*, and *dawn* and *gone*, are unique because they rhyme based on identical vowel and final consonant sounds. Capers employs this technique often. Traditional perfect rhymes are more obvious like *flow* and *grow* or *mine* and *fine*. These rhymes seem familiar based on visual and auditory presentation. Capers stretches our imaginations by creating rhyme schemes through vowel sounds even if they do not appear to rhyme. *Moon* and *tune* produce perfect rhymes with the [u] vowel sound. In the next example, Capers uses the [ɔ] vowel sound in the word *dawn* and *gone*. Both examples represent perfect rhymes that are identical through the use of vowels or a combination of vowel and consonant sounds that produce perfect rhymes. The manner in which these perfect rhyme schemes are produced helps to create the joyful atmosphere of spring.

Our final example reveals another perfect rhyme scheme through the words *sing* and *spring* due to the matching vowel sounds and subsequent consonants. This traditional rhyme scheme signifies the kind of perfect rhyme scheme we are accustomed to hearing and makes the poem memorable and effective:

My heart cries out, My soul doth sing! ‘Tis spring, ‘tis spring!

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54. Reaske, *How To Analyze Poetry*, 19.

The next device is somewhat unusual yet masterful. Capers uses a term known as syncope which in simple terms, means contraction.<sup>55</sup> Capers uses the old English term “doth” which means does, and “Tis spring” which stands for “It is,” a contraction that is uncommon among contemporary American English speakers. This contraction assists the rhyme scheme, by allowing the words of the reader to flow more easily. At the end of the poem, the speaker’s heart cries out from the soul and repeats the contractual phrase, “Tis spring, ‘tis spring!” Although this device may seem peculiar to some, its effectiveness is clear. The exclamation point at the end of “Spring” helps to emphasize the excitement of the speaker:

My heart cries out, My soul doth sing! ‘Tis spring, ‘tis spring!

Specifically, Capers repeats the phrase “Tis spring” two times in order to add emphasis and movement. Alliteration is the repetition of initial consonant sounds which is exemplified in the ending phrase:

’Tis spring, ‘tis spring!<sup>56</sup>

Notice there are two different examples of alliteration in the same verse. The [s] and [d] are the initial consonant sounds that are repeated:

*So sweet, and drifts down* to me

Here we have three words. There is no direct pattern for the strategic use of alliteration.

*Goes gaily gliding* by

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55. Literary Devices, “Definitions and Examples of Literary Terms.” accessed October 4, 2016, <http://literarydevices.net/syncope/>.

56. Poetry Terms, “40 Brief Definitions.” accessed July 25, 2016, <http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amilit/poeterms.htm>, 1.

The final example of sound devices for this piece is use of the method assonance: the repetition of stressed vowel sounds in words.<sup>57</sup> Vowel sounds are repeated six times in a single verse.

Capers uses this device frequently which induces a memorable effect.

Returns to *sing*, its joyous song of splendid *dreams* and *things* to *be*,  
so *sweet* the sound drifts down to *me*.

“Spring” is full of numerous images, sounds, and rhythms. These poetic devices are interspersed throughout the entire poem and truly illustrate the celebration of spring’s arrival. Capers attaches depth to the poem by creating a combination of exotic influences and natural images through the use of cherry blossoms and the natural mating call between birds. Capers’s springtime involves a variety of humans, animals, and objects. The mere combination of poetic devices within phrases, perfect rhymes and non-rhyme schemes, and the various methods of repetitive sound devices add magic to a poem that could have been considered cliché because of its subject, when in actuality, as the expressive words suggest, illustrates the magnificent beauty and joy of springtime.

## Summer

Poem 2      I gazed into your eyes and saw reflected there, The summer of my soul.  
Two people but a single heart, The season of our youth to start, Forever  
young, forever new, forever love, forever you. We walked together you  
and I, Beneath the vast hot summer sky. The fields were green, the days  
were warm, The breezes cool, your kisses strong. And as the trembling  
trees looked on, We loved in sweet fulfillment of our time. Forever young,  
forever new, forever love, forever you... But soon the summer days did  
fade Into a golden autumn shade that whispers Of what used to be.  
Forever! Now just a memory.<sup>58</sup>

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57. Reaske, *How To Analyze Poetry*, 26.

58. McNary, Program Notes, “Broadway United Methodist Church proudly presents An Evening of Aria and Art Song Performed by soprano Qiana McNary,” 10.



Setting	Somewhere hot; Spans from day to night during summer
Character	A young, innocent woman
Synopsis	Summer” is told through the eyes of a woman who experiences love for the first time. The speaker and her lover promise to love one another forever with the words “Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you.” Shared kisses, and the consummation of their love outside among the trees, makes this romance sizzle. But, just as the summer days end, so does the memory of true love.

Although the exact song title is unknown, “Summer” was inspired by an unknown Grieg song that spoke of lovers in a green meadow.

I mentioned to you. This happened years ago. It might have even been 15 or 20 years ago. This vocal teacher at the school, she did a new kind of vocal program for the students. I was there. And she sang this song. She said it was by Grieg. And I remember I said, Oh God, Oh that’s wonderful. And they were outdoors; they were in the meadow. ‘I remember the lovers and they were in a meadow. And it was beautiful. And they were so in love, the emotion of that. And I told you. I love that stuff. ...So I remember I was so impressed by it. ...And that was it. I just thought it was so romantic. So now, fast forward. I’m ready to write this third song of the cycle. And I said, summer. And all I did was I just kept thinking. I kept thinking about summer. And I kept thinking about green meadows and sunshine, and beautiful, endless blue skies, and two lovers very much in love. And I said I’ve gotta write something like that. And that’s how I started working on it.<sup>59</sup>

In “Summer,” the second poem of the cycle, Capers introduces us to the speaker’s youthful romance which serves as a metaphor for summer. The summer season is intricately linked to brief, passionate love and the loss of innocence. Capers makes frequent use of familiar language in order to depict this story. This poem has the characteristics of both a narrative poem and a free verse poem because it tells a story and there is no particular rhyme scheme present.

The construction of this poem differs slightly from “Spring,” in that it uses images and personification sparingly to depict summer. Capers deviates from using figurative language in order to introduce the audience to the story of romantic love as a metaphor for summer, which is

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59. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

one of the most distinctive aspects of this poem. Figurative language is used sparingly in that very few images and personification elements are used. The speaker is a young woman who experiences love for the first time. Although veiled in metaphor, Capers describes this passionate “hot” love affair through physical actions such as shared kisses and a reference to an orgasm. The reference to trees is used to describe the setting and to represent the consummation of this love when she makes the following statement during intercourse:

And as the trembling trees looked on, we loved in sweet fulfillment of our time.

In the next example, Capers uses personification to indicate a deep spiritual connection between the young woman and her lover. Summer is an object whereas the term *soul* is generally associated with the spiritual aspect of a human being. Therefore, this statement is clearly a personification that indicates a deep spiritual connection between the speaker and her lover. An immediate association with an all-consuming love affair is implied. When we read these words it becomes clear, this young woman is “drenched” in love:

The summer of my soul

Although figurative devices are used minimally, the following example illustrates a few instances of which personification is appropriately used. In this case, Capers uses personification to imitate or allude to physical love making. Capers’s use of the word “trembling” represents the sensuality of an orgasm between the two lovers:

And as the trembling trees looked on, We loved in sweet fulfillment of our time.

So, in this particular instance, Capers uses personification and imagery to emphasize the physical action of “making love” during summer which mirrors the intensity of the hot, summer sun, thus proving the comparison between passionate love and summer. The final image utilized by the composer can be found in the final verses of the poem:

But soon the summer days did fade into a golden autumn shade  
that whispers of what used to be. Forever! Now just a memory.

The end of summer and love is indicated in the verses above. Capers creates the image of the green summer scenery turning to a golden hue which suggests the image of wilted grass and yellow and orange leaves. The overall tone is sad, yet beautiful. The image of a love dissipating into “whispers” and “memories” along with the fading color of summer is a romantic ideal that is captured in this verse. The idea of nature, loss, and love is a nineteenth century ideal that is captured in this verse.<sup>60</sup>

Throughout the poetry in this cycle, short phrases are repeated in succession. In “Spring,” Capers repeats the phrase “Tis spring” three times. In the final poem, “Winter,” “Tomorrow, spring” is repeated in a similar way. The repetition in “Summer” is handled differently. The words, “Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you” is a line that is repeated during two separate sections of the poem. The promise to love one another seems strong and true which makes the end of their love seem sad and desolate.

Capers draws the reader into the speaker’s memory of this passionate love affair by incorporating a common youthful notion that “we’ll live forever because we’re young.” The rhyme scheme that returns is the first and only time Capers uses a refrain.

The repetition of this line is brought back to emphasize the youthful notion of everlasting love. This is a common thought among young lovers. They believe their love will last forever:

Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you!

The repetition of this phrase demonstrates how deeply in love this young woman is and emphasizes the comparison between love and summer. Their vow to love one another “forever” dissipates with the end of the summer season.

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60. Lorraine Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied*. (Pompton Plains: Amadeus Press, 2005), 43.

## Autumn

Poem 3	The fields of green, Now brown and yellow. A silvery white the moon. The distant mountains clothed in mist, And early frost the bloom has kissed. From ancient trees, Their gold and crimson splendor rise, To mingle with the azure sky. All labors now at rest, The harvest stored and set. For autumn gentle autumn, is the promise kept. <sup>61</sup>
Setting	Spans from sunset to evening time: among a field of autumn trees
Character	A heartbroken young woman: there is no reference to a speaker in this poem
Synopsis	“Autumn” is a neutral, soft depiction of the scenery of fall, with it’s ancient trees and leaves of red and yellow hue under a beautiful blue sky. The speaker describes the images from an observational point of view due to sadness and heartbreak over the end of love. Her descriptions of a silvery white moon and the fog that covers the mountains in the distance resemble her numb, removed state as she mourns the death of a great love affair. But the promise of the harvest and gentle autumn gives her a glimmer of hope and alludes to her gratefulness for the experience of love and the serenity and comfort of the fruitfulness of autumn.

“Autumn” is somewhat similar to the first poem “Spring” with its vivid descriptions of nature and the promise of the harvest. It is also the shortest of the four poems and is the only poem that seems to lack the speaker’s presence. There is no reference to the speaker. This poem is full of imagistic language. The first line reveals a landscape change from green to brown and yellow. This change represents the end of summer and the beginning of autumn:

The fields of green, now brown and yellow

Capers reveals the dark sky in the second phrase, “a silvery white the moon.” Her words help to create clear images of the objects she depicts, which help us picture the exact color of the moon through her description. The next phrase, “The distant mountains clothed in mist, And early frost the bloom has kissed,” reveals the fog covering the mountains in the distance and an indication that the colder temperatures have destroyed all of the flowers. The descriptive

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61. McNary, Program Notes, “Broadway United Methodist Church proudly presents An Evening of Aria and Art Song Performed by soprano Qiana McNary,” 10.

language in this sentence is “clothed in mist” which represents fog, and “early frost the bloom has kissed,” which represents the death of the wilting flowers of summer. The next line of images describes the picture of yellow and red leaves on the trees that can be viewed alongside the blue sky:

The distant mountains clothed in mist, And early frost the bloom has kissed

Their gold and crimson splendor rise, to mingle with the azure sky

The final verses in “Autumn” are expressed in common, everyday language. The second to last line suggests the speaker was an observer of the prepared harvest that is now stored and set. Her last words, “For autumn gentle autumn, is the promise kept,” indicate disappointment over the broken promise of her summer love. Although the speaker is sad and removed, she is not bitter. This emotional state alludes to the idea that the speaker was thankful for the experience of love and satisfied to be immersed in the beauty of autumn.

Capers uses assonance and repetition in this poem. There’s a slight rhyme in the words “mist” and “kissed” but when sung, the [t] and [d] of each word must be enunciated. Capers uses assonance instead of perfect or imperfect rhymes. In this particular poem, the distinction between a true rhyme and one that doesn’t really exist is difficult to discern. For instance, *rise* and *sky* seem like they rhyme but in actuality, do not, according to the rules. Therefore, the verse “From ancient trees, their gold and crimson splendor rise, to mingle with the azure sky” is really a rhyme of vowel sounds. Clearly, assonance is being used. A similar technique can be seen in the following examples:

The distant mountains clothed in *mist*, and early frost the bloom has *kissed*.

From ancient trees their gold and crimson splendor *rise*, to mingle with the azure *sky*.

All labors now at *rest*, the harvest stored and *set*.

For autumn gentle autumn, is the promise *kept*.

Furthermore, “For autumn gentle autumn” is an example of repetition, a common method found in Capers’s poetry.

### Winter

Poem 4	Late at night as I peer into the dark and endless winter sky, I listen to the rain, And I recall my youth. A dream, a dream, was it merely a dream, This age of innocence, This time of truth, Of fleeting passions of worlds anew. And now, in the winter of my days I sit and contemplate on things to come And things to be. As seasons end draws near to me. Heigh ho! The snow has almost gone. No more I’ll sing my winter song. The time has past, my heart beats fast! My soul takes wing, Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow SPRING! <sup>62</sup>
Setting	In her bedroom; late at night on a rainy winter day
Character	A mature young woman
Synopsis	“Winter” begins with the speaker in her room late at night. The dark and rainy evening leaves her inside to think about her innocent youth and experiences. As the season ends, she thinks about her future. When she notices the melting snow, she exclaims “Heigh ho” in anticipation of the coming of spring.

The final poem, “Winter,” is more thoughtful. A broken heart and a loss of innocence have encouraged growth and maturity in this young woman. Capers uses personal dialogue in the form of a memory in order to convey profound thoughts and lost love. She continues to reflect on her desolate state as winter’s end approaches.

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62. McNary, Program Notes, “Broadway United Methodist Church proudly presents An Evening of Aria and Art Song Performed by soprano Qiana McNary,” 10.

In “Winter,” Capers uses figurative language sparingly. Conversational diction dominates the tone of this poem which is similar to the language of “Summer,” “Spring,” and “Autumn.”<sup>63</sup> In addition, Capers uses assonance, rhyme and repetition to finish the story.

Capers’s rhymes are unpredictable. However, as we have seen throughout her cycle of poems, the precise pattern lies in the unpredictable rhymes and non-rhymes that are used. The introduction at the beginning of this chapter provides a detailed explanation as well as examples of non-rhymes used at the beginning of each poem.

Capers’s extreme fondness for images is not found here. The only image used is found in the expression, “My soul takes wing.” It is common knowledge that the spiritual soul cannot fly. This expression is only meant to represent the uncontainable excitement regarding the return of spring. Capers intends to communicate the feeling of joy within the entire body that celebrates the return of spring. The phrase before and after this statement helps to draw this conclusion:

The time has past, my heart beats fast! My soul takes wing,

Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow Spring!

Three of the four poems use the term soul to represent this spiritual or mind/body connection to love and nature. The connection between the human soul and nature are illustrated in the examples below:

“Spring”      My *soul* doth sing

“Summer”      The summer of my *soul*

“Winter”      My *soul* takes wing

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63. “Sound Devices Used In Poetry: A list of Definitions.” Accessed July 18, 2016, [http://homepage.smc.edu/meeks\\_christopher/SOUND%20DEVICES%20USED%20IN%20POETRY.htm](http://homepage.smc.edu/meeks_christopher/SOUND%20DEVICES%20USED%20IN%20POETRY.htm), 2.

The references to the soul show how deeply passionate this woman is about life. Each example represents excitement about the individual experiences of this woman and her journey to full maturity and womanhood.

The following sound devices become somewhat difficult to describe in the poem “Winter” due to varying consistency of the use of each technique. Once again, the composer uses assonance to make the poem accessible. *Gone* and *song* are examples of words with rhyming vowel sounds. The words do not rhyme due to their different endings. However, vowel sounds in close proximity produce a quasi-rhyme which can be seen in the verses below:

The snow has almost *gone*. No more I’ll sing my winter *song*.

The next example is an internal rhyme scheme which takes place in the second to last verse of winter. Fast and past are perfect rhymes that take place within the sentence structure:

The time has *past*, my heart beats *fast*!

The next two examples of repetition use conversational diction. The phrase “A dream” is repeated in the next example a total of three times. Capers uses the same device in the next phrase. The first example refers to the speaker’s reflective state while the next example helps to build anticipation and excitement over the coming of springtime. Capers also uses a perfect rhyme scheme with the words *wing* and *Spring* which have asterisks in the example below to differentiate between the use of repetition and perfect rhymes:

*A dream, a dream, was it merely a dream?*

My soul takes \*wing, *Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow* \*Spring,”

In addition to the use of figurative language, conversational language and sound devices, Capers uses the phrase “Heigh ho” to show resignation. Capers uses this uncommon phrase to capture a feeling or moment during this deep thought before winter changes. Immediately following the



use of common language, Capers suddenly surprises us with the uncommon phrase “Heigh ho.” At first glance, the reader may not think it has any particular meaning. But, this phrase actually has a specific meaning and helps to move the action forward. Capers borrows this phrase from the Valkyries in Wagner’s “The Ring Cycle” as the herald of springtime.”<sup>64</sup> Immediately following this word, Capers describes the return of spring as a very human experience felt through the word soul. “My soul takes wing, Tomorrow, Tomorrow! Tomorrow, tomorrow Spring” ends the cycle. The speaker’s mood is dark and contemplative during winter. The past was remembered once again and the soul was saddened by these memories. The return of spring brightens the soul and sends it into flight. The speaker is bursting with excitement and anticipation of spring which is echoed through the words “Tomorrow, Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow Spring!”

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64. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

## CHAPTER 4

### *SONG OF THE SEASONS: STYLE CHARACTERISTICS*

Throughout this document, the musical influences of Valerie Capers regarding her poetry and music have been discussed. The proof of her musical style, although eclectic and unique, can still be traced to Debussy, Wagner, and perhaps Art Tatum. These artists were highly regarded in their countries as the epitome of their art. Debussy was known for his use of Asian music or exoticism, (which was heard in 1889 at the Paris International Exposition), pentatonicism, and the whole tone scale; scales which according to Taruskin, utilize “half steplessness” in that neither of these scales incorporate semitones.<sup>65</sup> The pentatonic scale uses whole steps and minor thirds. In this particular instance, the minor pentatonic scale is also closely related to the blues scale, which is only separated by the flattened 5<sup>th</sup> between notes 3 and 4 of the pentatonic scale.<sup>66</sup> Capers is intimately familiar with both worlds which culminates into subtle influences of three distinct styles to achieve color and texture to depict a particular mood or scene. Taruskin refers to these instances as blurry, harmony which indicates a “feeling” that both the listener and performer experiences simultaneously.<sup>67</sup> These undefined tonal centers and exotic scales are associated with impressionism, which is linked to Claude Debussy, one of the most important French composers of the twentieth-century. Capers uses numerous technical ideas to create different pictures and atmospheres which is motivated by the harmony once the text is set to music. Although Capers’s style is highly influenced by the scales and techniques associated with

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65. Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 69.

66. GuitarMasterclass.net. “The Minor Pentatonic and Blues Scales,” accessed November 26, 2016, [https://www.guitarmasterclass.net/guitar\\_forum/index.php?showtopic=5023](https://www.guitarmasterclass.net/guitar_forum/index.php?showtopic=5023).

67. Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 76.

impressionism, the frequent use of half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords, (perhaps referential to the Tristan-chord), the major 9<sup>th</sup> interval, and the musical phrase “Heigh ho,” signifies the Wagnerian influence. The jazz influence can be heard in the following: octatonic scales, also known as “diminished scales” to jazz artists; the blues chords or minor pentatonic scales found in the cello line; extended chords; the improvisatory feel found within each song, and quartal harmony, which is characteristic of both jazz and impressionistic music.<sup>68</sup> Other elements that characterize Capers’s unique style are chromatic planing, syncopation, and the elaborate piano accompaniment.<sup>69</sup>

This chapter will discuss a few of the important aspects of Valerie Capers’s “American art song aesthetic.” The elements of her composition technique will be explored by highlighting significant style characteristics within each song through mini-scenes in “Spring” that induce feelings of joy and festivity—such as the “spring bird scene,” “dancing tree scene,” and “the rising dawn scene.” In “Summer,” the refrain and motive, “Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you,” is used to illustrate innocence that turns into a passionate orgasm the second time it is introduced. “Autumn” uses chord extensions in the vocal line which are further challenged by the high chromaticism in the harmony. And finally, “Winter” produces a unique recitative, the interval of a major 9<sup>th</sup> in the vocal line, and finally, motivic material from the first

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68. Even though non-tertian chords such as quartal (chords stacked by 4ths) and quintal (chords stacked by 5ths) originated in the medieval period with 2 part organum, classical composers such as Debussy, Liszt, Schoenberg and countless others have adapted this technique in order to deviate from the traditional harmonic system to a more free and extended use of tonality. These chords are traditionally more dissonant and have been utilized since the twentieth-century by numerous composers of varying genres. Arnold Whittal. "quartal harmony." *The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed August 5, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5433>.

69. “In planning, instead of chord motion being based on voice leading and root movements, voices move according to the key or scale (as diatonic planning), or the same voicing may move around chromatically (as in chromatic planning).” George Colligan, “What is harmonic planning and how do you use it?” *Keyboard Magazine*, March 19, 2015, accessed November 24, 2016, <http://www.keyboardmag.com/jazz/1303/what-is-harmonic-planing-and-how-do-you-use-it/51347>, 1.

song, “Spring.” Her use of quartal harmony and exotic chord structures plays an integral part in Capers’s musical style. The florid piano figurations, the soulful almost bluesy feel of the cello line, and the unexpected melodies and leaps within the quasi speech-like vocal line further illustrates the style characteristics of each voicing within the ensemble in *Song of the Seasons*. The influences of subtle European and Jazz idioms provide additional color and texture, and encapsulates the essence of Capers’s “American art song aesthetic.”

Although Capers is not concerned with the theoretical aspects of her music, the influence of Debussy, Wagner, and Jazz artists like Art Tatum are viable and present. Like Debussy, Capers is interested in creating a feeling or sound rather than focusing on the technical aspects of her compositional style. In a private interview, Capers expresses her fondness for impressionism and the possibility of being inspired to compose a piece in the style of Debussy or Ravel:

I might write something... I like this thing and I like this poem let's say. And I'd like to maybe have [the listener] hear something more impressionistic than atonal. You know... something like that. That's all... because I know the kind of colorings I'm going to use. Maybe if I'm going to write something about water or something like that and I'm going to have a very wonderful kind of flow and I want to have something very special. And I might want to write with the sounds that let's say that Debussy or Ravel might write... that impressionistic style that's so beautiful.<sup>70</sup>

In *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Taruskin includes a quote by Debussy that illustrates the motivation to create a feeling or color, which is similar to Capers’s own composition aesthetic. “As to the kind of music I want to make, I would like it to be flexible enough and sufficiently accented to correspond to the lyrical impulses of the spirit and to the capriciousness of dreams.”<sup>71</sup>

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70. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

71. Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 59.

Multiple techniques are used to set the scenery and tone of each season, which is essential to understanding the link between each of the four songs and the compositional style of Valerie Capers. The overall cycle is linked through colorful harmonies, interchangeable scales, dense chromaticism and dissonance, and half or fully diminished chords.<sup>72</sup>

The musical setting of the composer's own text is through-composed, a technique that highlights the composer's semi-declamatory vocal line and emphasizes the meaning of the words. The characteristics of impressionism are presented through atmospheric scenes with images that are captured through dense harmonic color and texture.

Additionally, it is important to note that Capers uses V to I tonality through pedal tones or the bass line accompaniment while the harmonies above function independently. The hypostasis state of held common tones creates a tonal center that maintains consonance and balance.<sup>73</sup> This technique is used in various sections throughout the cycle.

Capers also unifies the songs by ending each season with a final cadence, with the first song ending on D-flat, the next, A-flat major, B-flat major, then D-flat major again. The final key relationships unify the text, but the return to D-flat major signifies the return of spring once winter ends. The final motives of the first and last songs is repeated three times on the words "tomorrow" in the first song, and "tis spring" in the final song.<sup>74</sup> In addition, other leitmotifs are used throughout the cycle for unity and balance. For instance, melodic fragments from "Spring" are used in the cello line of measures 35-39 in "Winter." In "Autumn," the syncopated heartbeat in "Summer" begins in measure 2 of "Autumn" and continues through to measure 6. In measure

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72. Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 71.

73. "from the Greek hypostasis, ('substance' or essence)" that music analysts sometimes employ to call attention to an unchanging association of pitch, register, and timbre that remains constant throughout a piece." Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 4, *The Early Twentieth Century*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 76.

74. Walker-Hill, "Valerie Capers (b. 1935)," in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 14.

20, the melodic phrase, “The fields were green” is also used as the opening melodic phrase in “Autumn” with slightly different words “The fields of green,” in measure 2.<sup>75</sup>

### Spring

“Spring” is comprised of mini-scenes that are animated through a celebratory atmosphere in *Allegro vivace con animato* in 6/8 time. This spritely tempo captures the “birth of spring” through its use of high pitches in the vocal line, heavy pedal, and quartal harmony, which is used in every voice of the ensemble. Capers captures the metaphor of birth through images of “cherry blossoms,” “spring birds” singing, “gaily gliding brooks,” and “a smiling sun that awaits the dawn.” This section will explore Capers’s use of quartal harmony, tone painting, and a multitude of scales such as pentatonic, octatonic, and the whole tone scale.

The piece begins with a short introduction of three measures in the key of D-flat major.<sup>76</sup> Right away one begins to see the first pedal tone, a device commonly used by Capers. Figures 4-1 and 4-2 illustrate Capers’s use of pedal throughout the song cycle.

“Spring portrays “birth” and the celebratory atmosphere through its use of high pitches in the vocal line which move by step or wide leaps, heavy pedal, and quartal harmony which is also used in the cello line and piano. The composer depicts the “birth of spring” by creating pictures of naturist images. Each voicing contributes to the creation of a joyous atmosphere. The quartal leaps in the cello line from measure 2 through 4, which should be played lyrically, immediately introduces the composer’s initial use of the pentatonicism. This device was often used by Debussy, who is credited for learning about this exotic feature at the World Music Fair in

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75. Walker-Hill, “Valerie Capers (b. 1935),” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 14.

76. Refer to Appendix A for music examples.

France.<sup>77</sup> Although Debussy's piano piece *Pagodes* is a subtle representation of his use of pentatonicism, Capers's credits "La mer" for the inspiration of the cello solo in "Spring," which, according to her, was obtained on a subconscious level.<sup>78</sup>

The first major device used by Capers is specific to the first poem, which consists of mini-scenes during springtime. Three specific scenes utilize tone painting to create a particular scene or picture. Just like the principle on which impressionism is based, Capers's uses this device in "Spring" to illustrate "the spring bird scene," "the dancing tree scene," and "the rising dawn scene."

### The "Spring Bird" Scene

In measure 10, Capers enlivens the image of "spring birds returning from their winter flight." This section is introduced in measure 7 in the key of G dominant 7 which changes to an augmented C major chord in measure 10. The piano plays a series of arpeggiated chords that modulate from C sharp 7 in measure 11 to C sharp in measure 13. In measure 13, the key changes to B major to represent hope. Capers returns to B major in measure 16, which begins to descend with the vocal line to an F sharp diminished chord on the words "of splendid dreams and things to be, So sweet this sound drifts down to me." The piano arpeggiations are ascending while the vocal line and harmony shift downward.

### The "Dancing Tree" Scene

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77. Jeremy Day-O'Connell, "Debussy, Pentatonicism, and the Tonal Tradition." accessed on November 18, 2016. [https://www.skidmore.edu/music/documents/Day-OConnell\\_Debussy\\_Pentatonicism.pdf](https://www.skidmore.edu/music/documents/Day-OConnell_Debussy_Pentatonicism.pdf), 226.

78. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

Immediately following the “spring bird scene,” is the “dancing tree scene” which consists of a waltz-like figure in 6/8 time. Capers uses rhythm and staccato markings on beats 2 and 3 and beats 5 and 6 to create a dance-like atmosphere which signifies wind-blown trees while illustrating the exuberant atmosphere of springtime. This image lasts for 3 measures, and begins in measure 26 in the key of E-flat, modulates to C dominant 7, and ends in measure 29 on the key of F dominant 11. The soprano line leaps to a high B-flat on the word *tune*. This note is surrounded by a wide extension in the piano. It feels somewhat unstable while sung even though it is the highest note (the 11<sup>th</sup>) of the chord. These examples represent the unique way Capers uses color, rhythm, texture and melody to portray a particular scene. In “Spring,” nature and objects are characters that embody human traits.

### The “Rising Dawn” Scene

Tone painting is used to create a particular scene or picture. Just like the principle on which impressionism is based, Capers’s uses this device in “Spring” to illustrate dawn. This particular section is arguably one of the most beautiful sections in “Spring.” Measure 36, the first interlude, begins in the key of A-flat 7 in a relaxed, *Cantabile* tempo. The piano accompanies the cello with a series of rolled, block chords that continue through measure 43. In measure 37, the harmony changes to an A-flat augmented chord, which is connected to the whole tone scale. Measure 38 changes to a first inversion F minor chord that modulates to an A-flat, flat 9 chord. In measure 40, the chord changes to D-flat with an added 6th over A-flat while the cello plays a beautiful quasi blues scale that may also be interpreted as a minor pentatonic scale with an added 4th. The lyrical motion in the cello continues through measure 42, which changes to a B-flat half-diminished 7th chord over A-flat through measure 43. The cello line completes its thought



on an E-flat below the bass clef with a written out tremolo in the piano line in the key of A-flat. There is a triple piano marking below the piano line to represent “the rising sun.” In measure 45, Capers outlines an F Aeolian scale in the soprano line on the words, “A smiling sun awaits the dawn.” Capers’s changes the tonality to a D half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord while the soprano sings F and the cello plays descending D’s on different pitch levels throughout its range. In measure 47, G-flat major is played in tremolo block chords underneath a legato soprano line on the words “The dark and cold of winter gone.” Measure 48 marks the end of this scene which ends on an A dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord. This section illustrates Capers’s ability to use harmonic color to paint pictures. Notice how the entire section seems to center around A-flat. This is emphasized in the cello solo of the bass line, which maintains A-flat throughout the entire section. Capers alternates the keys in the next section, but modulates back and forth before the section ends in measure 49.

### The Celebration Climax

The final section of “Spring” emphasizes a festive atmosphere with the leaps in the vocal line starting in measure 51 in the key of E-flat minor 7. This pentatonic scale includes all voices with arpeggiated chords in the piano and lyrical, soulful notes in the cello. The texture becomes orchestral-like which builds to a great climax on repetition of the words “’tis spring.” Capers uses a device often used by Debussy known as “planing” on these same words.<sup>79</sup> The first time the phrase is sung it leaps from B-flat to D-flat. The next time the phrase is repeated, the leap begins on B-flat again then leaps to F. The final jump begins on D-flat before leaping to a high

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79. Phillip Magnuson, “Microcosms: Chapter 41. Impressionism,” accessed on November 27, 2016, <http://academic.udayton.edu/PhillipMagnuson/soundpatterns/microcosms/impressionism.html>, 5. This device functions as a repetition of the same harmonic structure such as quartal harmony, tertian tetrads, or tertian triads and should remain constant over the course of an entire phrase.

A-flat in the soprano line in the key of D-flat. Capers finally ends the season in the key of D-flat major, the same key in which the piece began.

### Summer

The second song, “Summer,” begins with a three-bar intro with a highly expressive melody line played by the cello above rolled block chords in the piano. This song is in 4/4 time and marked *Moderato espressivo*. The heartbeat of the intense love affair that begins and ends with summer is immediately expressed through syncopated chords that are pulsated throughout.

The tonal center starts off with an A minor 9 chord to an A minor 7 chord that is joined by the lover and narrator of the story, the voice. The duet between voice and cello shows the existence of two lovers through imitation, melodic trading, counterpoint, and submission by one voice or the other.<sup>80</sup>

According to Capers, “Summer” represents passion and youth.<sup>81</sup> The range of the vocal line is particularly wide in this piece, spanning from Ab4 to Bb6. This song is particularly special because it shows the relationship between the two lovers through the soprano line and the cello. The soprano tells the story, while the cello, which seems to represent the male lover of the soprano voice, imitates, harmonizes, or helps to create a particular mood with pizzicati.<sup>82</sup>

The piano is subordinate to the voice and accompanies the duet with rolled and block chords between voice and cello. The syncopated rhythm in the piano is the heartbeat of the entire piece. There are two significant sections in “Summer” that truly capture youth and passion which

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80. Walker-Hill, “Valerie Capers (b. 1935),” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 14.

81. Capers, interview by author, transcript, August 11, 2016.

82. Walker-Hill, “Valerie Capers (b. 1935),” in *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 14.

are represented by the refrain “Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you,” and what I like to refer to as “the orgasm.”

### The Orgasm: Part I

The promise of youth and love is symbolized in the initial setting of the refrain in measures 12 through 15. The motive in the vocal line is marked by an eighth note rhythm that keeps returning to C-flat on the words “forever,” and “love.” The harmony moves from B-flat to D-flat before settling in the key of C-flat diminished. This particular setting of the words shows the innocence of the two young lovers and their naiveté.

The next time the refrain returns marks the end of the orgasm which begins in measure 27, the one measure interlude. This measure immediately evokes the love scene with its *Animato* tempo and the tremolo and pizzicato played by piano and cello. The voice speaks the words “And as the trembling trees looked on, we loved in sweet fulfillment of our time.” The first two measures of this section are E dominant 7th chords. The final measure utilizes the E-minor pentatonic scale while the soprano line “fulfillment of our time” is sung as an octatonic scale. The final rolled chord is an E major chord over a B major pedal. The octatonic scale creates a jazz-like sound in the vocal line because of its diminished quality. Capers is familiar with both of these worlds which may be why we hear the influence of both genres in this section.

### The Orgasm: Part II

Measure 31 begins in the key of E major. In this particular instance, Capers initiates the refrain as a continuation of the orgasm from the previous four measures. Only this time, the pleasure is more loving and luxurious. The vocal line descends with leaps to a 6<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> on the words “love,”

“young,” “new,” and “you” over block chords that modulate in each measure. Capers modulates from measure to measure. In the first bar, Capers shifts to A sharp augmented (a whole tone scale) on the word young, to A Major 7 on the phrase forever, then shifts to E augmented 7 on the word “new.” This measure also has a jazz-like feel to it and can also be interpreted as a B-flat blues scale which is similar to the E-flat minor pentatonic scale. The harmony in Measure 37 continues to change to B-flat minor 9 over C on the final phrase of the refrain, “forever you.” The descending vocal line represents relaxed happiness or satisfaction. The example of these three sections shows the unique way Capers colors a scene. Unfortunately, the passionate, youthful love story ends at the close of summer in the key of A-flat major. Capers asks for an *attaca* that indicates going right into the next piece in which the cello, or the other lover, is left behind.

### **Autumn**

In song 3, *Autumn*, the composer maintains the same tempo of the previously performed song which utilizes rolled piano chords and a syncopated pulse in the piano accompaniment. This piece represents “maturity” and is in the key of B-flat. Capers creates a feeling of satisfaction and acceptance through a mixture of half-diminished chords, octatonic scales, and pentatonic scales. As a result, the vocal entrances are somewhat challenging.

Capers refers to “Autumn” as the most intimate piece in the cycle due to the absence of the cello. Although this song is the shortest of all four songs, it happens to be the composer’s favorite song in the group. The vocal line sits in the low middle range in this song even though there are a few blooming high notes such as G natural and A-flat. The piano accompaniment incorporates rolled, block chords and a few written out tremolos. The beginning of this song is

image driven and descriptive. “The syncopated rhythms of “Summer” return in measures 2 through 6 on the vocal phrase, “The fields of green, now brown and yellow” which immediately introduces the new autumn season. Capers paints its beautiful picture through imagery of the “silvery white moon, the mountains clothed in mist, and early frost the bloom has kissed,” which is very descriptive and different from the love filled summer days of the previous song. The melodic line, “The fields of green,” symbolizes the end of a great love and the pain associated with its ending.

### Octatonic or Diminished?

There are two specific moments in “Autumn” that seem atonal and materialize in measures 9 through 10 on the words “And early frost the bloom has kissed” and in measures 21 through 25 on the phrase “For autumn gentle Autumn is the promise kept.” In measure 9, Capers creates an extremely difficult entrance for the soprano voice which outlines a D sharp octatonic chord over a D sharp minor 7<sup>th</sup> chord in the piano. It is extremely difficult to begin singing the F natural against definitive F sharps in the harmony. The diminished quality of the chords in this measure alludes to an atonal feeling. In measure 10, the harmony changes to C half-diminished with an added 7<sup>th</sup> chord as the right hand takes over. This arpeggiation is in E-flat minor pentatonic which creates a subtle quasi jazz-like impression.

### Diminished Autumn

In measure 21, Capers creates a really beautiful moment on the words “For Autumn, gentle Autumn is the promise kept” which is in the Aeolian key of G-minor 9 with an F pedal tone in the bass. The voice enters on the extension note of A natural against B-flats in the

accompaniment. The next measure creates a fully diminished color with a G diminished 9<sup>th</sup> chord over an F pedal. The soprano line sustains a beautiful high A-flat which resolves to G natural in the same measure over a hypostasis chord structure. The harmony shifts to a C-minor pentatonic scale over the F pedal once again before it finally starts to cadence from a C-minor 7 to F 7, which is a sub 6 of B-flat major.

Capers changes from 4/4 to 2/4 on measure 26, which marks the beginning of the Coda. The next measure returns to 4/4 time. Capers ends the song on B-flat, which indicates the end of autumn.

### **Winter**

The final song, *Winter*, is depicted through dark images of night, cold temperatures, rain and snow, and the memory of youth and days gone by. The opening in 2/2 time requires a *Sostenuto* feel. Capers seems to silence the cello during sections with imagery and, at times, reflection.

### The Schubert Influence

The vocal line is written in a recitative-like manner above block chords. The pitch level remains the same from measures 5 through 10, which hovers around the tonal center of D. Capers attributes the inspiration of this recitative to Schubert's song, "Der Doppelgänger" from his set of six songs entitled *Schwanengesang*.<sup>83</sup> The effect of the cold, unsettled feeling of winter is produced in these chords. Capers wanted to recreate the cold, somber, feeling of death.

And I'm grateful to Schubert, for example. It's so wonderful to learn about things. How to color a poem or a concept of color... an idea when they're singing by how you are reflected in the accompaniment, very, very important. And I remember the "Der Doppelgänger" in *Schwanengesang* and how impressive and how oppressive it was. And

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83. Walker-Hill, "Valerie Capers (b. 1935)" In *From Spirituals to Symphonies*, 14.

how it really did exactly what it was supposed to do... that idea of singing the double image means death. And how he had opening fifths and octaves. It's all hollow. It's like skeleton. So I took that very idea to open up "Winter." I was inspired by Schubert's "Der Doppelgänger."<sup>84</sup>

The recitative-like section is centered around D natural while other notes move in various directions. Capers creates a chromatic scale that is connected through common tones in the lowest range of the piano accompaniment known as "chromatic planing."<sup>85</sup> These block chords sound dark and lifeless which prepares the listener for the D natural tonality within the vocal line which lasts for four and a half measures.

### The Wagner Influence

At the conclusion of the beginning part of the recitative, Capers uses the interval of a major 9<sup>th</sup> on the final words in the phrase "I listen to the Rain." This is an extremely wide interval that spans two vocal registers in the soprano voice. The block chord accompaniment enters on the word "rain" on a whole tone scale with the Lydian sound in the key of E-flat. Capers shifts tonalities on the next chord which takes place after the phrase "And I recall my youth" In measure 15, the key modulates to a D augmented chord, which then moves to a D augmented 7<sup>th</sup> in the same measure before settling on D half-diminished 7 over a G natural pedal tone. The final repeat of the phrase "A dream" releases the pedal and ends on a D half-diminished chord. This also marks the end of the introduction and recitative-like section. Capers explains the use of the major 9<sup>th</sup> interval in the following statement:

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84. Capers, interview, August 11, 2016. Capers mistakenly states "Der Doppelgänger" was from Schubert's *Winterreise*. During the interview, I made the correction when I found the accidental quote in Helen Walker-Hill's book, *From Spirituals to Symphonies: African-American Women Composers and Their Music* in a statement made by Valerie Capers. "Der Doppelgänger" is actually from *Schwanengesang* which was substituted for *Winterreise* in this quote.

85. Colligan, "What is harmonic planning and how do you use it?", 1.

You know, I just wrote it. Wagner can be an influence for me. But usually it would be in some instrumental work or in a larger work where I want to do something special. But there is one thing I took from Wagner. When she says, I listen to the rain, and I recall my youth. That's a major 9<sup>th</sup>. I found that to be so expressive. It's in the ring. It's when Siegfried penetrates the cycle and goes into the ring of fire and discovers Brünnhilde, and they sing and they have their duet... And there's a bit where Wagner uses a special ensemble to play under Sieglinde's window... The Siegfried Idyll. And some of the passages in the scenes where Siegfried and Brünnhilde have been discovering their love and all are the same. And there's an interval that I thought was so... (Valerie sings the interval of a Major 9<sup>th</sup> La da da da di) And somehow when I got to that line... I listen to the rain... and I said, and I recall my youth. So I have used what I thought was a very expressive interval of a 9<sup>th</sup>. It's something I thought was very important.

In measures 20-24, Capers creates a quasi-accompanied recitative-like atmosphere in section A.

The accompaniment, in block chord form in measures 20-21, changes to a syncopated block quarter note and eighth note rhythm while the vocal line sings several motif melodies that possess a spoken quality.<sup>86</sup> The harmony in these four measures modulates from E-flat to a C half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord.

### The Stiff, Cold Whole Tone

In measure 25, the composer creates a stiff, cold atmosphere with a written out tremolo in the piano and the eighth note half rest rhythm that sounds like a clicking tock. This may reference the fact that time is running out and death is coming. The composer uses a whole tone sonority to capture this moment. The soprano voice changes the tonality as the repetition of the harmonic texture spans 4 measures. The vocal line changes the harmonic texture from A diminished to C diminished 7 which finally settles on F diminished 9 in measure 31.

### The Return to Spring and Pentatonicism

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86. Taruskin speaks about Debussy's use of the "accumulation of melodic ideas (or motifs)" that are used to provide variety in harmonic development. Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 75.



Immediately following the interlude at measure 32, Capers immediately foreshadows the return of spring with the tempo marking of “*Allegro Vivace*.” The arpeggiated figures from the first song “Spring” have returned. This time, Capers establishes the key with pentatonic scales in D in measure 33 and D 11 in measure 34. The arpeggiations continue in the next measure with a skipping vocal line which exudes excitement and joy over the return of spring and the “death of the speaker’s once depressive state,”—which is further proven by the text “Heigh Ho! The snow has almost gone. No more I’ll sing my winter song!”

Measure 35 includes fragments of melodic material from “Spring” in the cello line. This leitmotief is more recognizable in measure 37, at the pick up into the 4<sup>th</sup> beat on the pitch of E-flat. The rhythm is dance-like and sounds like the opening vocal melody of “Spring” on the words “The snow has left the mountainside...” Only this time, the rhythm changes from eighth note, quarter to sixteenth, dotted eighth note, sixteenth. The tonality maintains the pentatonic scale in the key of D-flat, which also happens to be the key of the first song, “Spring.” The brilliance of spring has once again returned.

The second half of the final section accelerates, which is motivated by the text “tomorrow.” The piece climaxes on the words “tomorrow Spring” which is held in the vocal line for over 8 measures and indicated by the fermata in measure 52. The tonality in measure 49 is an E-flat minor pentatonic chord over an A-flat pedal tone which then moves to an A-flat octatonic scale in measure 50, then to D-flat in measure 51. Capers inverts the key of D-flat over the course of three measures while the soprano sustains a high A-flat on the word “spring.” Finally, Capers returns to the key of D-flat to indicate the return of spring in the cycle of the seasons.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

*Song of the Seasons* is a unique set of songs that highlights the “celebration of life.” Capers captures each one of these moments through the use of harmonic color, beautiful melodies, and the repetition of poetry. The uniqueness of writing the poetry and music for the cycle successfully creates a cohesive work that is relevant to all mankind. The exotic elements emphasize the connection of nature to the human condition which is illustrated in a few phrases from “Spring,” “The spring bird from its winter flight, returns to sing, its joyous song, of splendid dreams and things to be, so sweet this sound drifts down to me;” and the passionate story of two young lovers in “Summer.” And finally, the way in which the images are portrayed in “Autumn,” “The distant mountains clothed in mist, and early frost the bloom has kissed,” and the contemplation of death in “Winter.” These examples clearly illustrate the influence of Haiku, which highlights the human connection to nature. For, in the words of Robert Hass, Bashō might have said, “They have “the scent” of a particular human life.”<sup>87</sup>

Capers’s song cycle culminates into the celebration she intended. Even the sad undertones found in “Summer” with the loss of true love, and the contemplation of death in “Winter” is written as an embrace. This piece is the perfect length for a recital. Each voice has a solo quality. The soprano line “tells the story,” while the cello, represents the soul and landscape of the work. Capers mentions the word “soul” throughout the entire cycle which creates an atmosphere that is extremely heartfelt and rich.

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87. Robert Hass, ed., *The essential Haiku: Versions of Bashō, Buson, & Issa*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994, xv.

Capers meticulously notates the expressions in the music. The piano, which I like to refer to as “the glue” of the entire ensemble, paints every scene by providing harmonic color to the ensemble. Both the cello and the piano provide accompaniment while physicalizing their role as soloist, accompaniment, and the vast concept of time, which represents the seasons that return every year. The more I listen to this piece, the more I see the connection to Debussy’s tone poem “La mer.” One can hear the influence in the way the scenes are developed. The sound, color, and texture build to numerous climaxes that are paused before new ideas are developed. Each mood or atmosphere seems to be accentuated in this way.

Capers’s compositional style incorporates pedal tones, varying introductions and interludes, quartal harmony and chord extensions throughout. Capers creates a dense, orchestral feeling with three instruments, a technique that usually requires a fuller ensemble. Thus, illustrating one of the greatest appeals of the cycle, which requires solo playing from each voice.

In conclusion, the style analysis that is based on the critical interpretation of the composer’s setting of her own text and music and its overall effect on the performance is needed, which will introduce the classical world to a modern art song composition by a blind, African-American woman and provide other singers and vocal instructors with ideas for interpretation and programming of American song in English. This cycle is an American masterpiece that should be included in art song anthologies and performed more frequently. The slight influence of jazz enhances the colors and texture within each song, which extend beyond the seventh and move by 4ths and 5ths.

Capers’s *Song of the Seasons* is an important modern song cycle in English that deserves to be presented in American art song anthologies. Capers’s life mirrors the ideal human circumstance as she is blind and African-American. This cycle speaks to overcoming the

hardships of life by embracing nature and creating new hopes and dreams. The cycle of life continues just as this masterpiece should continue. Capers's work helps to establish the legitimacy of American song repertoire. It is eclectic, it is beautiful, and it is genius, and highly representative of the brilliance of American art song.

## APPENDIX A

### SONG OF THE SEASONS FIGURES

Figure 4-1. Valerie Capers, “Spring” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 1-3.<sup>88</sup>

**Allegro vivace con animato** [♩.=96]

Soprano

Cello

Piano

*f*

*Ped.*

Figure 4-2. Valerie Capers, “Spring” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 9-16.<sup>89</sup>

S

Vc.

Pno.

*f*

*Ped.*

The spring bird

88. Valerie Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ‘Cello Obbligato,’” unpub. MS score in hand of John Robinson, 1988.

89. *Ibid.*, 2.

11 12

S from it's win - ter flight

Vc.

Pno.

Ped. 3 3 Ped. 3 3 Ped. 3 3 Ped. 3 3

13 14 *f*

S Re - turns to sing

Vc.

Pno.

Ped. 3 7 *f* 3 3 Ped.

15 16 *ff* 4

S it's joy - ous song of

Vc.

Pno.

Ped. 3 3 *ff* 3 3 Ped.

Figure 4-3. Valerie Capers, “Spring” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 25-30.<sup>90</sup>

The musical score for "Spring" from *Song of the Seasons* by Valerie Capers, measures 25-30, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 25-27) features the Soprano (S) singing "The trees re-flect a sil-ver". The piano (Pno.) accompaniment consists of arpeggiated figures in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand, with triplets marked in measures 25 and 26. The second system (measures 28-30) features the Soprano singing "moon and dan-cing to a mer-ry tune". The piano accompaniment continues with similar arpeggiated figures, with a triplet in measure 30. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *cresc.*, and *f*, and performance instructions like *Ped.* and *\* Ped.*.

90. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 6.

Figure 4-4. Valerie Capers, “Spring” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 36-48.<sup>91</sup>

36 37 38 39

S

**Relax the tempo (Cantabile)**  
[♩=80]

Vc.

*f* *Dolce espr...*

Pno.

*mf*

40 41 42 43

S

Vc.

*mf*

Pno.

*p*

91. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 7.



**Poco Tranquillo** [♩=69]

44

S

Vc.

Pno.

*f*

*mf*

*ppp*

Ped.

45

S

*pp* A smil - ling sun a - waits the dawn

Vc.

pizz.

46

*pp*

Pno.

*ppp*

Ped. Sempre Legato

Ped.

47

S

*p* The dark and cold of win - ter

Vc.

*p*

Pno.

*pp*

Ped.

8va

48

S

48

Vc.

48

Pno.

8va

Ped.

Figure 4-5. Valerie Capers, “Spring” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 51-54.<sup>92</sup>

51

cresc.

f

'tis spring

51

f

cresc.

8va

10

Ped.

65. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 10.

52

'Tis spring

52

52

*Ped.*

3 3 10 10

8va

53

*ff*

'tis spring

53

53

*ff*

*Ped.*

5 9 9 3 3

8va 8va

54

55

54

55

54

55

8va

Figure 4-6. Valerie Capers, “Summer” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 1-3.<sup>93</sup>

**Moderato espressivo** [♩=92]

Soprano

Cello

Piano

*mf* *Dolce espr.*

*Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

Figure 4-7. Valerie Capers, “Summer” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 11-15.<sup>94</sup>

S

Vc.

Pno.

*Ped.* *Ped.*

The sea - son of our youth to start for - ev - er

93. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 12-14.

94. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

13 14 15

S young for - ev - er new for - ev - er love for - ev - er you

Vc. 13 14 15

Pno. 13 14 15

Ped. Ped. Ped.

Figure 4-8, Valerie Capers, “Summer” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 20-22.<sup>95</sup>

20 21 22

S *cresc.* *p* The fields were green The days were

Vc. 20 21 22

*p cresc.*

Pno. 20 21 22

*p cresc.*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

95. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 21-23.

Figure 4-9. Valerie Capers, “Summer” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 27-30.<sup>96</sup>

**Animato** [ $\text{♩}=116$ ]

S. 27 28 29 30

Vc. 27 28 29 30

Pno. 27 28 29 30

*p* *pizz.* *p* *8va* *8va* *Ped.* *Ped.*

And as the trem-bling trees looked on We loved in sweet ful - fill-ment of our time

Figure 4-10. Valerie Capers, “Summer” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 31-40.<sup>97</sup>

**Rubato**  
**Reflective in mood** [ $\text{♩}=76$ ]

S. 31 34 36

Vc. 31 34 36

Pno. 31 34 36

*mp* *p* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

For - ev - er young For - ev - er new For - ev - er Love

96. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 6-17

97. *Ibid.*, 21.

Figure 4-11 shows a musical score for three parts: Soprano (S), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Soprano part has lyrics "For - ev - er you" and measures 37, 38, 39, and 40. The Violoncello part has measures 37, 38, 39 (marked "arco" and "mp"), and 40. The Piano part has measures 37, 38, 39, and 40, with a "8va" marking at the bottom of measure 37. The score is in 4/4 time and features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 4-11. Valerie Capers, “Autumn” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 1-6.<sup>98</sup>

Figure 4-12 shows a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part has lyrics "The fields of green now brown and yel - low" and measures 37, 38, 39, and 40. The Piano part has measures 37, 38, 39, and 40, with a "pp" marking at the beginning of measure 37. The score is in 4/4 time and features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A tempo marking "Moving [♩=92]" is present above the Soprano part. Pedal markings "Ped." are present at the bottom of the Piano part in measures 37, 38, and 40.

98. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 24.

4

S

A sil-very white the Moon

Pno.

Ped.

\* Ped.

Ped.

Figure 4-12. Valerie Capers, “Autumn” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 7-10.<sup>99</sup>

7

S

The dis-tant moun-tains clothed in mist and ear-ly frost the bloom has

Pno.

Ped.

pp

p

Ped.

©

99. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 24.



10 *p* *cresc.*

S  
kissed from an-cient trees their gold and crim-son splen-dor

Pno. *pp* *cresc.* *p* loco

Ped. Ped.

Figure 4-13. Valerie Capers, “Autumn” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 19-28.<sup>100</sup>

19 *f*

S  
The har-vest stored and set For au-tumn gen-tle

Pno. *p*

Ped. Ped.

100. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 25-26.

23

S

Au-tumn is the pro - mise kept

23

Pno.

*Ped.*

28

S

28

Pno.

Figure 4-14. Valerie Capers, “Winter” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 1-20.<sup>101</sup>

**Sostenuto** [ $\text{♩} = 60$ ]

**Soprano**

**Cello**

**Piano**

**Ped.**

**S**

**Vc.**

**Pno.**

*p*

*mp*

Late at night as I

peer in - to the dark and end - less win - ter sky I lis - ten to the

101. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ‘Cello obbligato,’” 27-28.

13 14 15 16 17 *Poco accel*

S rain And I re - call my youth A dream

Vc.

Pno. *mp*

*Ped.*

18 19 20 *Adagio* [♩=66] *pp* 3 3

S A dream Was it mere-ly a dream This age of

Vc.

Pno. *pp*

*Ped.*

Figure 4-15. Valerie Capers, “Winter” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 21-38.<sup>102</sup>

**Moving [♩=76]**

**Measures 21-23:**

- Soprano (S):** Melody line with lyrics: "in - no - cence this time of truth of flee - ting pas - sions of worlds a -". Dynamics: *p*, *cresc.*
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Silent.
- Piano (Pno.):** Arpeggiated chords. Dynamics: *p*, *cresc.*. Pedal points are indicated.

**Measures 24-26:**

- Soprano (S):** Melody line with lyrics: "new And now in the". Dynamics: *p*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Melodic line. Dynamics: *pizz.*
- Piano (Pno.):** Arpeggiated chords. Dynamics: *pp*. Pedal points are indicated.

102. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 29-31.

27 28 29

S win-ter of my days I sit and con-tem-plate on things to come and things to be

Vc.

Pno.

*Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

30 31 32

S As sea-sons end draws near to me

Vc.

Pno.

*Ped.*

**Allegro Vivace** [♩=104]

33

S

Vc.

Pno.

*f* *12* *12* *8va* *12* *8va* *12*

*Ped.* *Ped.*

34

S

Vc.

Pno.

*Ped.*

*8va*

12

35

*f*

S

Heigh Ho!

*f* arco

Vc.

The

Pno.

*Ped.*

*8va*

12

36

S

snow has al - most gone No

Vc.

Pno.

*Ped.*

*8va*

12

37

S

More I'll sing my win - ter song

Vc.

*f*

Pno.

*Ped.* 12 *8va* *Ped.* 12 *f* 12 *Ped.*

38

S

Vc.

Pno.

*Ped.* 12 *8va* *Ped.* 12 *8va* *Ped.* 12 *8va* *Ped.* 12



Figure 4-16. Valerie Capers, “Winter” from *Song of the Seasons*, mm. 47-53.<sup>103</sup>

The musical score for "Winter" from *Song of the Seasons* by Valerie Capers, measures 47-53, is presented for Soprano (S), Violoncello (Vc.), and Piano (Pno.).

**Measure 47:** The Soprano part begins with the lyrics "To - mor - row". The Violoncello part plays a single note. The Piano part features triplet chords in both hands, marked *p* (piano). The tempo is marked *accel.* (accelerando). The Pedal point is indicated by *Ped.*

**Measure 48:** The Soprano part continues with the lyrics "to - mor - row". The Violoncello part plays a single note. The Piano part features triplet chords in both hands, marked *mf* (mezzo-forte).

103. Capers, “*Song of the Seasons*: song cycle for Soprano Voice and Piano with ’Cello obbligato,” 32-38.

49 *Poco rit...*

S To - mor - row 50 To - mor - row

Vc. 49 *f* 50 *f* *Poco rit...*

Pno. 49 50 *f* *Poco rit...*

*Ped.* *Ped.*

51 *ff* Spring 52 53

S

Vc. 51 *ff* 52 53

Pno. 51 *ff* 52 53 *8va*

*Ped.*

## APPENDIX B

### *SONG OF THE SEASONS* PERFORMANCE GUIDE

#### **Duration of Song Cycle**

10 minutes and 20 seconds

#### **Instrumentation**

Soprano Voice, Piano, and Cello Obbligato

#### **Brief Explanation of Criteria:**

The following performance demands are based on the overall form analysis in Chapter 5. The information is general and relative to the style and capabilities of the individual voice-type and instrumental ensemble. The performance demands are based on opinion only and may be used to assist with choosing repertoire, performing the cycle, or as a point of reference.

#### **Song 1: Spring**

Key: D-flat Major

Vocal Range: E4 – Ab6

Duration: 2:43

#### **Performance Demands and suggestions:**

“Spring,” which begins in 6/8 time, is challenging due to the animated tempo, syllabic text, wide leaps in the vocal line, and independent piano and cello obbligato accompaniment. The tempo changes to 4/4 in measure 36, which accompanies the cantabile tempo marking in the

same measure. Fluctuating tempo markings take place four times in various measures. The quartal and quintal melodic line makes it difficult to sing legato. The melodic leaps do not move in a consistent pattern. The leap combinations, whether ascending or descending, consist of 3rds, 4ths, 5ths, 6ths, 7ths, and octaves. The final notes of phrases are held for extended periods and the tessitura is extremely high. A wide vocal range and legato line are required of the soprano. The accompaniment provides color and at times, requires heavy pedal tones, legato or staccato figurations, arpeggiations, repeated figures and rolled chords. The cello uses its full range and idiomatic strengths such as staccato, plucked strings, and solo lyricism. A separate part for the cello is not provided. Therefore, the cello obbligato should be immersed in the fabric of each season. The nuances for the soprano are written according to the range. Legato and staccato is required from the piano in addition to other harmonic functions and colors. There are a few words in the vocal line that assists the singer such as the contraction “Tis spring” which is repeated three times. The soprano soloist is required to sing a high A-flat for 5 measures.

### **Song 2: Summer**

Key: A-flat Major

Vocal Range: Ab4 - Bb6

Duration: 3:30

### **Performance Demands and Suggestions:**

“Summer” should be performed moderately with expression in 4/4 time. The cello line is extremely sweet and expressive which sets the tone for a new love affair. The tempo markings fluctuate starting with animato in measure 27. In measure 31, rubato and reflective in mood is

required. This is the second repeat of The “Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you” motive although the musical setting is quite different here. The submission of the speaker to her lover completely satisfies and relaxes her. This reflection takes place after making love. The final change in tempo takes place in measure 46 which is *Pensive* and *Largamente* in mood. The piano accompaniment is syncopated and chordal like a heartbeat. It assists with the romantic setting along with the cello line. The cello provides counterpoint, imitates the vocal line, and shares melodic material with the soprano. Pizzicato figures are required of the cello along with tremolo figurations in the piano. The melodic line fluctuates between extreme highs and lows while maintaining a legato line. There are numerous varied leaps like in the first song “Spring.” In measure 46, the soprano must sing a high B-flat. The range begins in the *secondo passaggio* before descending to a high A-flat. There is adequate time to prepare for singing these notes as quietly as possible. The rest of the song is in the moderate range of every voice and ends with a perfect cadence.

### **Song 3: Autumn**

Key: B-flat

Range: C4 – A6

Duration: 2:01

### **Performance Demands and Suggestions:**

“Autumn” is the shortest song in the set of four songs and remains in 4/4 time. There is no cello in this song. Perhaps the cello represents the absence of her lover. This song symbolizes the beginning of a new season and the end of true love. This explains the opening melodic line

“The fields of green” that was heard in the previous song “Summer,” with slightly different words. In “Summer,” the words were “The fields were green.” But the speaker was happy. Now the speaker provides distant descriptions of the landscape and the harvest preparations. The music is extremely *avant garde* in this section. The descriptions and images of Autumn sound painful and strained both in the vocal line and the harmonic accompaniment. The pitches are challenging to find especially in measures 21-22 which provides dissonant support to the vocal line. The piano accompaniment varies between block chords, eighth notes moving in contrary motion and numerous rolled chords in the piano. This song has an impressionistic feel to it.

#### **Song 4: Winter**

Key: D-flat

Vocal Range: D4 – Ab6

Duration: 2:43

#### **Performance Demands and Suggestions:**

The final song, “Winter” begins with a sostenuto or sustained tempo marking, is written in cut time. The beginning passage maintains a D major tonal center. The soprano line sings the same note above various chords. The frequent change of tempo markings help create an unsettled feeling within the speaker. True to form, the accompaniment consists of rolled block chords and sparse sustained chords in the beginning. The cello creates a cold, depressed feeling by playing one note over a period of several measures. The piano and cello accompaniment begin to play more florid passages when the hope of spring returns at the sign of melting snow. The key returns to D-flat. The texture gets really dense and the vocal line soars to sustain a high A-flat on

the words “Tomorrow Spring.” This time the note must be held for over 9 counts in order to honor the fermata.

## APPENDIX C

### SOLO VOCAL WORKS OF VALERIE CAPERS (UNPUB. MSS-)

#### **Opera/Oratorio**

*O-1* Sojourner (1980) “Operatorio” (libretto by the Composer)

#### **Instrumentation**

SATB, soloists, jazz ensemble, and orchestra

#### **Performance Dates and Details**

Composed as an opera by Opera Ebony in 1985 and 1986 (directed by Duane Jones with Loretta Holkam in the title role) and 1988 (directed by Hope Clark for Opera Ebony with soprano Elvira Green) and by Von Washington at Calvin College Fine Arts Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1990 with soprano Claritha Buggs.

#### *SC-1* **Song Cycles**

*Song of the Seasons* (1987) (Text by the composer)

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter

#### **Instrumentation**

soprano voice, piano, and cello obbligato

*SC-2* *Ruby* (2013) (Docu-Cycle) Text by the Composer

Tableau 1 – Lullaby

Tableau 2 – Mardi Gras

Tableau 3 – Where are All the Children?

Tableau 4 – Narration and reflections

Postlude: Change (cello solo)<sup>104</sup>

#### **Instrumentation**

Ruby (Child Narrator), Soprano voice, piano, violin, and cello, trumpet, clarinet, trombone

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104. According to the oxford dictionary online, A “Tableau is a group of models or motionless figures representing a scene from a story or from history; a tableau vivant.” English Oxford Living Dictionaries, “Tableau,” Accessed September 18, 2016. [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/tableau](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/tableau)



### **Individual Art Songs**

*AS-1* *Bird Alone* (2012) Text and music by Abbey Lincoln

*AS-2* *Rainbow* (2012) Text and music by Abbey Lincoln

### **Instrumentation**

Voice and Piano

\*These songs were arrangements of jazz songs by Abbey Lincoln in the classical style.

### **Individual Jazz Songs**

*JS-1* "Always You" (1995) (Text by the composer)

### **Instrumentation**

voice, jazz ensemble

Duration: 5 min. 53 sec.

## APPENDIX D

### WESBSITE RESOURCES FOR VALERIE CAPERS'S MUSIC

Center for Black Music Research in Chicago  
<http://www.colum.edu/cbmr/>

Valerie Capers Website  
<http://www.valeriecapers.com>

Valerie Capers musician page  
<https://www.facebook.com/Valerie-Capers-278990545567225/?fref=ts>

Wikipedia Page  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valerie\\_Capers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valerie_Capers)

Valerie Capers YouTube Channel  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9aCCKpAwJU8pFmyQSUiHMg>

## APPENDIX E

### TABLES

Table E.1. Haiku Influence (Exoticism)



*SOURCE:* Bashō. *The Narrow Road To The Deep North: And Other Travel Sketches*, trans. Nobuyuki Yuasa (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 33.

Note: The late seventeenth-century poet Boshō, illustrates the essence of Haiku in the following quote. "However well phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural - if the object and yourself are separate - then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit."

Table E.2. Poetic Language Table

<i>Free Verse Form</i>	
<i>Figurative Language</i>	
Poetic Devices	Examples
Imagery	The snow has left the mountainside And cherry blossoms are in bloom. (Spring)  The distant mountain clothed in mist, And early frost the bloom has kissed. (Autumn)
Metaphor	Capers's uses youthful, passionate love as a metaphor for summer. (Summer)  The entire cycle is a metaphor life: birth, youth, maturity, death
Personification	The trees reflect a silver moon, And <u>dancing to a merry tune!</u>  The brook goes gaily gliding by  A <u>smiling sun</u> awaits the dawn  My <u>heart cries out</u>  My <u>soul doth sing</u> (Spring)
<i>Sound Devices</i>	
Poetic Devices	Examples
Rhythm	We will not discuss these since the poems are written in free verse form.
Repetition	'Tis spring, 'Tis spring, 'Tis spring (Spring) Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, spring
Alliteration	<u>So sweet</u> , this sound <u>drifts down</u> to me (Spring)
Assonance	Returns to <u>sing</u> , its joyous song, of splendid <u>dreams</u> and <u>things</u> to <u>be</u> , So <u>sweet</u> this sound drifts down to <u>me</u> .
Refrain	Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you (Summer)
Rhyme	My soul takes <u>wing</u> , Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow <u>spring!</u>

Table E.3. Poetic Language Table Continued.

Poetic Devices	Examples
The “non-rhyme scheme”	<p>“Spring” – The snow has left the mountainside and cherry blossoms are in bloom. The spring bird from its winter flight</p> <p>“Summer” – I gazed into your eyes and saw reflected there, The summer of my soul.</p> <p>“Autumn” – The fields of green, Now brown and yellow. A silvery white the moon.</p> <p>“Winter” - Late at night as I peer into the dark and endless winter sky, I listen to the rain, And I recall my youth.</p>
Perfect rhymes	<p>The trees reflect a silver <u>moon</u>, And dancing to a merry <u>tune</u>!</p> <p>A smiling sun awaits the <u>dawn</u>, The dark and cold of winter <u>gone</u>.</p>
Internal rhyme-scheme	<p>The trees reflect a silver <u>moon</u>, And dancing to a merry <u>tune</u>!</p> <p>A smiling sun awaits the <u>dawn</u>, The dark and cold of winter <u>gone</u>.</p>
<i>Diction</i>	
Syncope	‘Tis, (Spring)
Uncommon Phrases or words	<p>Doth (Spring)</p> <p>Heigh Ho! (Valküre Heralds of Spring)</p>
Diction	Alternates between poetic, middle, and familiar language

Table E.4. Style Characteristics of Each Voice

<b>Capers creates an orchestral feel with three instruments</b> <b>Uses the entire range and capabilities of each voice</b> <b>Tone Painting</b>		
Soprano Line	Cello Obbligato	Piano
Tells the story	Landscape and soul of the music	(The glue) Colors every scene w/ block chords & florid piano figurations
Operatic & Semi-Declamatory Vocal line	Quartal motion in the melodic line (leaps by 4ths and 5ths)	dense, chordal texture
Moves in stepwise motion	Trades solos or melodic material with vocal line	Lots of pedal
Extreme, wide leaps Ex. m. 9 “I listen to the Rain”	Provides harmonic movement	Extended chords (9ths, 11 <sup>ths</sup> , 13ths)
Lyrical and legato singing	Tone painting (orgasm) “And as the trembling trees looked on, we loved in sweet fulfillment of our time.”	Misdirection, Chord evasion,
Wide Range (Spans 3 registers)	“Adds robust, mellow color (striking and beautiful contrast to soprano voice)” —Valerie Capers	Pentatonic scales, Octatonic scales, Whole tone scales, blues scales, diminished scale
Syllabic	Orchestral feel	Final cadences at the conclusion of each song or season

SOURCE: Capers, interview, transcript, August 11, 2016.

Table E.5. Capers's Original Text as laid out in McNary

<b>Spring</b>
<b>The snow has left the mountainside And cherry blossoms are in bloom! The spring bird from its winter flight, Re- turns to sing, it's joyous song of splendid dreams and things to be, So sweet the sound drifts down to me. The trees reflect a silver moon, And dancing to a merry tune! The brook goes gaily gliding by. A smiling sun awaits the dawn, The dark and cold of winter gone. My heart cries out, My soul doth sing! 'Tis spring, 'tis spring!</b>
<b>Summer</b>
<b>I gazed into your eyes and saw reflected there, The summer of my soul. Two people but a single heart, The season of our youth to start, Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you. We walked together you and I, Beneath the vast hot summer sky. The fields were green, the days were warm, The breezes cool, your kisses strong. And as the trembling trees looked on, We loved in sweet fulfillment of our time. Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you... But soon the summer days did fade Into a golden autumn shade that whispers Of what used to be. Forever! Now just a memory.</b>
<b>Autumn</b>
<b>The fields of green, Now brown and yellow. A silvery white the moon. The distant mountains clothed in mist, And early frost the bloom has kissed. From ancient trees, Their gold and crimson splendor rise, To mingle with the azure sky. All labors now at rest, The harvest stored and set. For autumn gentle autumn, is the promise kept.</b>
<b>Winter</b>
<b>Late at night as I peer into the dark and endless winter sky, I listen to the rain, And I recall my youth. A dream, a dream, was it merely a dream, This age of innocence, This time of truth, Of fleeting passions of worlds anew. And now, in the winter of my days I sit and contemplate on things to come And things to be. As seasons end draws near to me. Heigh ho! The snow has almost gone. No more I'll sing my winter song. The time has past, my heart beats fast! My soul takes wing, Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow SPRING!</b>

*SOURCE:* Qiana McNary, Program Notes. "Broadway United Methodist Church Proudly Presents An Evening of Aria and Art Song Performed by soprano Qiana McNary," Broadway United Methodist Church Chicago, April 29, 2011, Accessed November 26, 2016, <http://assets.communityspice.com/bumclakeview/assets/music/An%20Evening%20of%20Aria%20and%20Art%20Song%20pub.pdf>.

Note: The original Manuscript of Capers's text remains unseen.

## APPENDIX F

### SONG OF THE SEASONS PROGRAM NOTES BY VALERIE CAPERS

#### PROGRAM NOTES

##### *“SONG OF THE SEASONS” (1987)*

Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry that goes back several centuries. It consists of seventeen syllables. So, when the Smithsonian Institution awarded me a commission, I decided that I would compose a piece for voice, piano and ‘cello using several haikus for my text. However, I soon discovered that literally setting these seventeen-syllable poems to a sustained melodic line was not going to work. I then decided that I would create my own text as a means for developing those fleeting moments of joy, beauty and wisdom so uniquely expressed in haiku poems.

*Song Of The Seasons* is a celebration of life!

In *Spring*, the singer greets the coming springtime with joy and exuberance.

*Summer* is a love story. The enraptured lovers are caught up in the ecstasy of the “fulfillment” of [their] time as summer looks on in its full bloom and beauty. The song ends as summer wanes along with the love between the two lovers. Now it is time for autumn.

*Autumn* is the coming of age of spring and summer. It has yielded a good harvest, and enjoys the richness of its maturity. “For autumn, gentle autumn is the promise kept.”

*Winter* is old age—a time of reflection and wisdom. But winter, like death, is not the end of the story. The cycle concludes by exclaiming with great joy the anticipation of spring returning once again.

—Valerie Capers



## APPENDIX G

### SKYPE INTERVIEW WITH VALERIE CAPERS

August 11, 2016

3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

**Valerie:** Hi, how ya doin?

**Lillian:** I'm great! How are you?

**Valerie:** I just want you to know that here in the room there are some very special people. Maria is here and she is a musician. And John is my colleague. He's a wonderful cellist and bassist and composer.

**John:** Hi Lillian!

**Lillian:** Hi John!

**Valerie:** He's saying hi, but his mouth is full at the moment.

**Lillian:** Would you like for me to call you Valerie during the interview as well?

**Valerie:** Yes!

**Lillian:** I would like to read the interview consent before we proceed.

Hi my name is Lillian Roberts. I am conducting doctoral research at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I would like to interview you about your song cycle, *Song of the Seasons*, for soprano, cello, and piano. These are my guidelines. I'm going to be recording the interview. I'm going to transcribe the interview of which you will receive a copy upon completion. You will be able to make changes once you've received a copy of the transcript. I would like to ask for your verbal consent before we proceed. Do I have your verbal consent?

**Valerie:** Yes!

**Lillian:** Thank-you Valerie. I know it's been a really long time since you composed this cycle, but any information you give me is going to be quite helpful. My apologies in advance if I repeat myself in any way.

**Valerie:** Don't apologize. I'm just grateful. It's so nice that we've had contact during this difficult time of my life. It's just been horrible and I've tried to be nice. I have a feeling I was really very difficult when you needed to get things done. But, I'm happy that thanks to Linnie, we could get together today and do this interview.

**Lillian:** Thank-you so much. I really appreciate it. Now I'd like to begin with my first question. Would you mind describing your composition process for composing vocal music?

**Valerie:** Well yes, I love composing vocal music. I think I've composed more vocal music than instrumental music. And I think that when I get moved to compose vocal music it's because they have something I've read or some poetry or maybe particular characters in a story or something that's moved me that suddenly makes me feel it's a wonderful opportunity to write an interesting song. And that's what happens. Yes, I would say that's really what happens. I maybe could get attracted to the poetry or to a particular situation in a story. And, maybe that is the thing that moves me to set words to music.

**Lillian:** Oh that's great! And how long does it take you to compose?

**Valerie:** Oh I really can't say. I've been very blessed to have been around wonderful composers. And I always tell them you know, there are composers who compose all the time. And I always say, I'm a performer who loves to compose. And composing isn't something that I do 24 hours a day. But it's something that I'm able to do and I love to do. But I have to be mortised or something has to come from me or commissioned for me to do it. And it varies. Sometimes it will come quickly. Other times, it won't. And it's interesting because sometimes I'll get some words. I'll say that's really good. I like that! But then I'll rework it and it doesn't move me. I try to create the emotions that I would like the listener to feel when they hear the music. And so that takes a while. So there's really no way to state how. Sometimes it may take a week. Sometimes it takes months. And so there's really no set time. I've never done anything that's just been zip, zip, zip. So, you know it hasn't happened that way for me.

**Lillian:** Who or what inspired you to write a song cycle for soprano, cello, and piano?

**Valerie:** First of all, the human voice is the most wonderful instrument of all. Then I think, I would like to include the piano in accompanying the voice. And I love the cello. I think the cello is just a glorious instrument. And I thought that might be a beautiful combination: cello, piano, and voice. That's what inspired me to put those 3 things together.

**Lillian:** Did you have a particular voice type or person in mind when you composed it?

**Valerie:** No, I didn't. I felt it should be the soprano. I didn't have a particular person in mind. But I felt I would like to have it sung by a soprano because I felt the beauty of the soprano voice, the range of the voice and that with the contrast, robust mellow sound of the cello could be very moving and very striking at times. And that's why I thought they would work well.

**Lillian:** Oh that makes a lot of sense because the vocal range is quite wide. It's really high in "Spring." Does the high tessitura of the melodic line represent the excitement of spring?

**Valerie:** Well, I wasn't thinking that the soprano was going so high in particular. I just thought of it as the melody with the line when she says 'Tis spring, Tis spring, tis spring tis spring! So of course the excitement of it means naturally, physically that the music is going to go up. I didn't

think it was going to be high or anything. It's spring, it's spring, it's spring. You know and the chords at the end to emphasize the excitement and the joy of spring.

**Lillian:** Yes, ok, well that makes sense. You also have a really gorgeous, cello solo in "Spring."

**Valerie:** All the cellos I meet who ever play this thing say, "Well that's my favorite spot you know."

**Lillian:** Of course it is.

**Valerie:** Well that was sort of a miracle in a sense...because in writing this song...what is it? The trees reflect the silver moon, the brook is gliding by and so forth and so on. But then I felt that there should be a little bit of time before we pick up again celebrating...“it's spring.” And I thought that the idea of the nighttime slowly turning into dawn. You know that da di da di da da (Valerie sings the final cello part before the voice enters) And my apology to all cello players. I don't know how that came. It just hit me. And I was happy about those few bars because the time signature changed there. And it's very lyrical, and it's very peaceful and it's very quiet as the dark of night suddenly fades as the sun gradually comes up. You know, and then the significant, “It's spring” again. Now the darkness has disappeared and we can now celebrate spring. You know Debussy did that in his tone poem *La mer*. I wasn't thinking about it then, but it may have been subconscious. In *La mer*, the opening of that tone poem: the water is moving and it is still dawn. And gradually, gradually as the dawn comes up over the ocean very slowly, very gradually, and the darkness of night dissipates... Debussy is so wonderful with his instrumentation about bringing in the instruments suggesting that there are so many of these things of life that are coming and then finally they blend in and the darkness has gently been faded away and now are facing the dawn. And that's the kind of thing I was hoping to get in those couple of bars.

**Lillian:** Wow, it's absolutely stunning. You definitely accomplished that. Why did you dedicate the cycle to D. Antoinette Handy and what was her significance to you?

**Valerie:** Antoinette Handy was the director of the music unit for the National Endowment of the Arts. She heard my music and she heard me play with Dizzy Gillespie in California on television and she had seen my music and she got very interested in me. She invited me to be a panelist for the National Endowment of the Arts in passing grants for artists and for institutions like [the] Met and Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall... all those things. So I was there in Washington a couple of years... a couple of weeks at a time...being on the panel, listening to music and I stayed in her home. She was a flute player. She was such a lovely person. So it was because of her [that] I was encouraged to apply for a grant with the Smithsonian. And that's how all that came about. That's why I dedicated that to her—because she was a great inspiration to me. And I'll let you know Lillian. I was writing that in the tough time of my life... in the summer. And there were times when I had an electric piano next to my bed and I would lie on my side and I would be working out the melody and the chords and stuff like that. It was quite an experience. But as I said, it was a wonderful opportunity for me to compose this piece. And I loved doing it. And that's why she got dedicated to.

**Lillian:** Which art song or opera composers inspire you the most and why?

**Valerie:** I love opera. I love Grand Opera. I love Soap Opera. I just love all that stuff, you know. You can take it from *La Bohème* to ah... *The Young and the Restless*. I love it, you know. I just love it all. And I love Verdi, for example. I think that one of his greatest, greatest compositions is *Otello*. To me, it is absolute genius. The music and how he and Boito [wrote] the libretto together. It was interesting to read about how when they talked about words and things. It was interesting to read about how they discussed “how are we going to do in Italian the wonderful things and get across wonderful things that Shakespeare did in English?” And it's interesting how they chose to start the opera, which is in the beginning of the storm... which is the beginning of *Otello* at all on the stage. I adore Puccini. I just think he's wonderful. And one of the things I like about his writing that I like very much and I feel I am akin to that... He's often been referred to as an eclectic composer. And I feel I'm an eclectic composer because when I compose something and I think about how I want it to be done and how I want it to sound, I will use any kind of musical sources and any kind of musical sound that I need to get a situation across. For example, when I take my cantata, *Sing about Love*. It is a jazz cantata, but there are classical things there as well because there are things that needed the Eurocentric traditional style and sound that had been related to certain emotions and things like that. They're very important to know how to communicate with an audience and how to get them to understand. To get them to feel what you want them to feel emotionally and harmonies. And it was Eurocentric music of its age. [It] has a great feel ...just as jazz does, African-American music but these things I felt could be brought together. But my absolute craze is Wagner. Richard Wagner. I am a Richard Wagner nut. I have gone to Bayreuth. I met his grandson. I played loud and we spent the afternoon in Wagner's house and I played on the piano. And they allowed me to touch the books. And just to touch them... It was so interesting to see how their books were there. They were worn, and they were well read. And you know, it really fired my imagination about how they sat around and talked. And worked or things. They didn't have a television and they didn't have other things to distract them. And Wagner of course, is the great emotional manipulator of all times and his music is just overpowering, overwhelming. I just love it. I've learned so much from him. And ah, so those [composers] really. And any composer in general. Just a general composer...? Ah my God, I think really is Beethoven. For me, for many, many reasons—he's probably the greatest composer who walked on the earth. That's highly a personal thing of mine. I love Bach, I love Mozart. But Beethoven is extraordinary for many reasons. Because [of] his disability later on...because of the ideas that he created that literally changed the music. So I know you didn't ask me to get all this involved in it. But I guess I can shut up now about that.

**Lillian:** I think you mentioned that you were inspired by Grieg for *Song of the Seasons* as well as Schubert.

**Valerie:** Well now, Grieg. Now you mentioned “Varen,” you know. And I listened to it. I listened to that one in particular. And as I mentioned to you. You got my little email there that I listened. When I checked the translation, somehow, that wasn't [it]. I don't know if you want me to wait and talk about it when we talk about *Song of the Seasons* and “Summer” in particular. But, I love Grieg. He was my first composer passion when I was a kid. I loved him. I really loved it.

**Lillian:** Would you mind explaining why you said it was fine for a lirico-spinto soprano like myself to sing *Song of the Seasons*?

**Valerie:** Well, I think the *spinto* soprano has a lovely voice, has a very lovely voice. And that tessitura is very expressive. And I'm sure that being a *spinto* you have all the things you can do, the gymnastics and stuff...not that you have in *Song of the Seasons*. But also, the *spinto* has a solid enough lower part of the range in her voice to handle these things very well. I know this very low spot in "Summer." "Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you." That word, "you," way down there. It's like a death of a maiden note. I feel that certainly you can do it.

**Lillian:** Are there any art song composers that you like in particular?

**Valerie:** I realize when I talk to singers about singing...they know so many songs. They sing so many songs. They're so involved in this and that. You know, it seems like if you put all those songs together... And I know the songs aren't the length of a sonata or something unless you're singing a cycle or some special grouping. But they sing dozens and dozens of songs. And I'm afraid that my scope of singers is pretty narrow. I love Schubert songs...learn so much from them... I love Schumann songs...learn so much from them... Let me see... I know you're going to laugh but I've enjoyed some of the art songs of Leonard Bernstein for example. Some of them are very funny and amusing. Ah... Samuel Barber. And also...Charles Ives. I've enjoyed his songs. And I know that doesn't sound like I know an awful lot but these are the ones I've had a personal experience with.

**Lillian:** As I've been studying your music, I've found it has an operatic feel. It's easier to sing in that regard. And I don't have to hold back.

**Valerie:** Right

**Lillian:** How would you categorize the style of *Song of the Seasons*? Do you think it is written in a more Romantic style?

**Valerie:** Yes, it's romantic. It's certainly not twentieth-century contemporary. It's in the Romantic style. I use the sounds and the styles that have been traditional in music through the years, and the romantic 19th century and early twentieth-century. So yes, it's absolutely romantic.

**Lillian:** Why do you choose to write the poetry for the majority of your songs and in this case, "*Song of the Seasons*?"

**Valerie:** It's funny when you mention this poetry. When I write a lyric I really don't think of it as poetry. I think of it as a lyric. I think of it as the lyric that of course, I realize in many cases, it does have to rhyme. And it does have to have a form in many cases. And of course it has to be able to be [a] more creative musical form to accommodate what I like. But I never find my technique as being poetic. In *Song of the Seasons*, a couple of times when I've talked to people and they've pulled it out and read it. This is terrible to say but I've said, Wow, that's fantastic! You know!

That's wonderful poetry! But I didn't think that way [in] other things that I've written. It was just a matter of expressing how the character is feeling or what the character is doing or what is happening dramatically in this situation. That's really how I thought about it and really not as poetry.

**Lillian:** Oh that's interesting. Do you read a lot of poetry?

**Valerie:** No, I stopped reading poetry as a regular thing when I got frightened by a class in poetry of Byron and Shelley. I didn't know what was going on in the poetry. And I had a teacher that was very helpful in the metaphoric understanding of that poetry and she taught me. Oh I do go to poetry. This won't sound as dramatic as reading Byron and Shelly. But I've been very involved this summer in reading the poetry of Langston Hughes. In fact, I'm writing a jazz piece called tapestry, which is going to be performed in January inspired by reading this poetry. Which is so delightful. And don't laugh. But I love and enjoy the poetry of Longfellow and I enjoy the poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar. And I'm sure there are other poets that I really enjoy that I'm thinking of right now. I'm more of a prose person than poetry.

**Lillian:** Did you read a lot of Haiku?

**Valerie:** I discovered Haiku I think in grade school. And I just thought it was wonderful. I didn't make a career of Haiku. But I just knew it existed. I loved it. And, it's funny. Once and awhile I would read some Haiku or go someplace somebody would read some and that would be very enjoyable. But the very form of it, 17 syllables, the way it's written on the page. All of that really, really impressed me. It touched my soul really. I think that's one of the reasons why when I decided I was going to do *Song of the Seasons*. It's one of the reasons that I had taken to Haiku— because I remembered that the way the Haiku poets...create. The way they image nature. The way they image emotions. There is no equal to it. It is so delicate. It is so beautiful. This will be wonderful. And that's why I told you the explanation in the program notes...that I thought I was being a little simplistic. But I thought I could take a group of those Haiku and string 'em together. That's a little bit too casual to say it that way. But put 'em together and make a song out of it. And, it wasn't going to happen. It just wasn't gonna work. There wasn't any way. And successfully, I couldn't do it, really successfully work them into a musical form that would make sense. But they're just precious gems. They're very, very special. It's a very, very special form of poetry, a very special form of literature.

**Lillian:** What is the poetry in *Song of the Seasons* about? Is there a link between Japanese culture due to the influence of Haiku poetry?

**Valerie:** The Haiku is the inspiration as I said. And the cycle is more than just spring, summer, autumn and winter. Metaphorically, it is the cycle of life: your birth, your youth, your maturity, and your death. And that is not unique to any culture on the planet. We all experience the same thing. So it's the universal metaphor, concept of birth, of springing out... into developing... into blossoming into spring, maturing into the summer, and then maturing in the autumn. And then coming [into] the wintertime of your life, which is the winter of course, the simple metaphor of death.

**Lillian:** I asked about the inspiration of Japanese culture because I thought your cycle was influenced by the images Haiku poetry. You use words like cherry blossoms that are not traditionally found in the United States.

**Valerie:** But you go to Washington, it is found. Believe me, there is no connection to Japanese Culture or tradition. I realize Cherry blossoms are there. I just decided what I wanted to do was to take certain images that I thought were colorful and beautiful and just use them. I never even thought about anybody thinking anything about my saying the cherry blossoms. But I can understand that if they read the notes and say, you know this is Haiku. No this has nothing to do with Japanese anything. You know, it has to do with you and me and it just happens that I used Cherry blossoms. I don't know if "The apple blossoms are in bloom." da da da da da da da. (Valerie sings) I don't know about that. Cherry blossoms seem so wonderful to move along. What was the first line, I can't think of it?

**Lillian:** "The snow has left the mountainside and cherry blossoms are in bloom."

**Valerie:** The snow has left the mountainside, and apple blossoms are in bloom. I never even thought about apple blossoms. Let me see, the snow has left the mountainside and I probably read something about where they talk about cherry blossoms in spring. And I know I must've read Haiku where they talked about the snow leaving the mountainside. They wouldn't say it was just melting, you know, the snow leaving the mountainside. So I think that's all it is. It was just a literary image that I felt was expressive.

**Lillian:** It seems like the music is inadvertently influenced by Japanese culture because of the influence of Haiku poetry. Cherry blossoms are the Japanese national flower. Haiku poetry is based on themes of nature and their connection to human life.

**Valerie:** Well that's ok. I'm not going to kill you. I perfectly understand what you're saying about the cherry blossoms. The whole concept of nature and human life and our relationship to nature and so forth is not unique to the Japanese culture. It's everybody's culture. And you have wonderful poets and writers that write about culture in all languages, in all the cultures. So it's true. The cherry blossoms do bring you to the idea of the Japanese culture. But if you think about it, there is nothing else in the cycle that is strictly Japanese.

**Lillian:** This was my personal interpretation to the songs because they were inspired by Haiku. I feel like the poetry and the overall idea of the link between nature and the human condition is inside of the poetry. It's still your style. Like you said, you pulled from all styles. But I guess that's why I went that direction. I feel like this character develops throughout the year. She's happy about spring, she's young, and then she has this experience, and is matured, and then she's sad about it during Autumn. In "Winter" she continues to reflect about it but she's older and more mature. But I don't know if that's right.

**Valerie:** Well, that's a totally different idea. You were talking about a specific person right... Going through these things? Being happy about spring then going through the summer and the winter and all. That was not part of it. There wasn't any development of the character going from spring, through summer, through winter through fall, etc. etc. I thought as each one of those

moments specifically as the seasons themselves with metaphoric significances. In for example, the first one, the soprano singing so excited about spring being there. For me, what that was, simply, the excitement and the joy of this glorious season, "Spring," when life comes to be and there is so much to look forward to and the joy of it and energy of it and the expectation of it. Ah, that's your expectation of spring. And that's what I thought, the soprano was expressing it. But with each succeeding movement was not a development of the first person who Herald spring.

**Lillian:** Ah ok, so you don't think there's a link.

**Valerie:** No I don't think it's the journey of one person going through the seasons metaphorically, which is representing life. No, I didn't see that. That was not my idea. It was just the soprano was the heralding of spring. And what's better than a wonderful soprano who could sing with great beauty and great energy and that's it.

**Lillian:** Ok

**Valerie:** Well you can say, well I said such and such and she said such and such. You know, so make up your mind.

**Lillian:** Yes, exactly! So the character changes. It's really about the season. That's interesting.

**Valerie:** Oh I didn't mean to interrupt you. I had something I wanted tell you about "Summer."

**Lillian:** Yes, please tell me.

**Valerie:** Well, I listened to that song. And it's a beautiful song. And I've heard dozens of songs about spring. Schubert, Beethoven, and Schumann and you know everybody, Wagner and all this. And they talk about nature and the blooming of it and all. "Summer" is a metaphor of a romance between two people. The very opening line is "I gazed into your eyes and saw reflected there, the summer of my soul." That sets it up right there. And it's not about flowers blooming. It's not about the trembling trees, and the green fields, but the endless azure skies. That's all part of "Summer." But this is all part of the scene with this young couple. You know two hearts, da da da da da. Ah, "forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you." And while the trembling trees looked on. Something... I forgot all of the words. I can't think now. And then they said "Forever young, forever new, forever love, forever you." And summer is the maturity. It is the passion. The passion of love, and the beauty of love, related to the beauty of nature. And then you notice that in the end of the opera aria it says something. And soon at the end of forever young, forever love. And then the mood changes. It says something about the summer sun something gets into a "golden autumn shade that whispers of what used to be." And that's kind of ironic because these people were so in love. But you know, two hearts but a single heart. the man or the woman sees their mates' souls with their eyes. So many poets say the eyes are the window to the soul. And then this wonderful thing "Forever young, forever love." Oh I've been in this forever you business and it didn't work. But the thing is that: "Forever young, forever you." And then what happens, it says, even before autumn comes in the scene. Then it says that the summer,



the golden summer, becomes a golden shade that whispers of what used to be. And then she says, “forever, now just a memory.” So that's what that is. It is a metaphor of two lovers.

**Lillian:** Well since we're talking about “Summer”... I would love to hear your thoughts on how the composition, “Summer,” came about.

**Valerie:** I mentioned to you. This has happened years ago. It might have even been 15 or 20 years ago. This vocal teacher at the school, she did a new kind of vocal program for the students. I was there. And she sang this song. She said it was by Grieg. And I remember. I said, Oh God, Oh that's wonderful. And they were outdoors. They were in the meadow. I remember the lovers. And it was beautiful. And they were so in love, the emotion of that. And I told you. I love that stuff. You know, as I said, *The Bold and Beautiful*, *The Young and the Restless*, whatever... So I remember I was so impressed by it. I just felt it was so, so romantic. And that was it. I just thought it was so romantic. So now, fast forward. I'm ready to write this third song of the cycle. And I said, summer. And all I did was I just kept thinking about summer. And I kept thinking about green meadows and sunshine, and beautiful, endless blue skies, and two lovers very much in love. And I said I've gotta write something like that. And that's how I started working on it.

**Lillian:** That's beautiful. So then, you write attacca at the end of “Summer,” requesting that the ensemble goes right into “Autumn.” It suggests the journey of one character.

**Valerie:** I thought that not to wait too long before the autumn because the terrible last line. “Forever! Now just a memory.” You didn't think I was going to be a memory when you were in the throws and passion of love. You know, that was going to be forever. And sometimes, things are not forever. And, “forever, now just a memory.” Autumn is the only movement in the cycle that does not have the cello. So it becomes more intimate with the singer and the piano because you don't have the third party. And the autumn now represents full maturity. “The fields of green now brown and yellow.” A silver moon da da da da da da. I don't remember.

**Lillian:** “A Silvery white the moon.”

**Valerie:** Oh ok, alright. And then, all of sudden you have the green field and everything, and the blue skies. “The fields of green now brown and yellow.” And then it goes on to describe what autumn is. Which happens personally to be my favorite. And what happens, is that later... I'm just jumping. I'm just trying to remember. Now for example, I never would have thought about the image of the trees. “Their gold and crimson splendor rise. To mingle with the azure sky.” Now I never would have thought of that. I never would have thought of that in a million years. And when I read them, I said, Oh my God, that's wonderful. I'm going to have to use that because that's the image that I want. You know, that's the gold and crimson leaves. I remember that before I lost my sight. Seeing how the leaves changed in the autumn and how beautiful they were to mingle with the azure skies. Not the blue skies but the azure skies. And then the rest is what I decided to do. I thought about it. Thinking about even Bible stories. I said, “that mingled with the azure skies” and then there's a chord. “All labors now at rest. The harvest stored and set.” I thought about that. You read a lot of bible stories. And they talk about getting things and harvesting them. And in the fall, they store it you know. And then, so everything that's grown and flourished in the summer has come to its maturity. And so you have the “all labors now at

rest.” They did what they had to do in the summer. The harvest has been harvested. The harvest, stored and set for winter. And then, “for autumn, gentle autumn, is the promise kept.” And I felt that autumn is the sort of unspoken promise of the metaphorical fulfillment of life. Now, I’m not even thinking of tragedies of life [or] sadness of life. That farmers understand that they grow crops and they go and get them in the fall. They’ve accomplished it. And they get them set and stored for the winter. So what happens is autumn is the fulfillment of spring. “Summer,” which is the maturity and the fullness of your life. The wonderful part of life. And autumn, which is the mellowing of the life that you had and the maturity and the wisdom and the understanding of things that happen when you get old and hopefully wiser. So, as I said, when you had the harvest that is stored and set after you’ve gone all summer, the harvest has been harvested. It has been stored, set. The job has been done. The cycle of life has been fulfilled. “For autumn, gentle autumn is the promise kept.” So that is what I meant by that.

**Lillian:** Do you think the sadness of the soprano character is felt in autumn?

**Valerie:** Well I don’t think... no. The word, sadness. In fact, I think it’s a wonderful thing. It’s not a thing you’re going to go outside, Whippidy doo da, I think it’s a comforting thing. It is a very simple thing. It is a very gentle thing. It is a very reflective thing. You know, so it’s like. For autumn gentle, is the promise kept. That’s what autumn is supposed to be. The fulfillment of life. It’s a philosophical observation. Rather than a personal [one].

**Lillian:** Oh, yes, well that explains it because “Autumn” is the only song where you don’t mention the first person. You don’t mention, the term “me” in “Autumn.” Like in spring, the bird’s singing comes down to the soprano. And in “Summer,” you use first person again. “The summer of my soul.” But “Winter” also uses first person. But autumn does not. And so I’ve written that it’s more observational and reflective. In “Spring,” the birds are singing, “so sweet the sound drifts down to me.”

**Valerie:** It’s amazing. Sorry it’s amazing. It’s so interesting me. You’re bringing up things I’ve never thought about. It’s a narrative. It’s a narration. You know... the springtime. I didn’t say me or I or “gentle autumn, gentle autumn is the promise kept.” In the summer, where some of that would support what you thought. In the summer, I used two lovers. I didn’t mean it for anything else other than that. And I just figured that it would create a very romantic feeling. If I heard somebody say, “I looked into your eyes and saw reflected there, the summer of my soul.” I would say, Oh my God. That would be magnificent. But as I said, that’s a metaphor; A little story; A little interlude, A little incident. A little happening if you will—as a metaphor for summer. Then autumn is reflective because that’s maturity and that’s the fulfillment. Now are you ready to leave “Autumn?” Ah I see what you’re saying. As I gaze into the dark and endless winter sky. I’m starting to think now, I never thought about the significance of me and I’ll tell you that I thought winter was the metaphor for death. I sort of thought about an old person, a very old person... And it’s funny I was thinking about an old man. I don’t know why I didn’t think... It wasn’t an old woman in my mind. It was an old man. Um, you know, who has lived so long and he was contemplating and thinking about his life and can it possibly be? Have I lived this life? Was it a dream? My age of innocence and youth... And it’s sort of dark just like a reflection of living. A reflection of life. And you realize, as something draws near... as the end draws near.

**Lillian:** “As season's end draws near to me.”

**Valerie:** That's another way of saying when I'm going to die. It's just a sort of looking back from the standpoint of being old in the winter of their life. Looking back and thinking about their life and what it was. And what it means now as the inevitable ending is going to come. It's very sobering. And that is the reason why I said I can't end the cycle this way. And I'm so grateful to Schubert, for example. It's so wonderful to learn about things. How to color a poem or a concept of color... an idea when they're singing by how you are reflected in the accompaniment, very, very important. And I remember the “Der Doppelgänger” in *Winterreise* and how impressive and how oppressive it was. And how it really did exactly what it was supposed to do... that idea of singing the double image means death. And how he had opening 5ths and octaves. It's all hollow. It's like skeleton. So I took that very idea to open up “Winter.” I was inspired by Schubert's “Der Doppelgänger.”

**Lillian:** “Der Doppelgänger is from *Schwanengesang*. I looked it up. Are you referring to the one from *Schwanengesang*? It's not in *Winterreise*.”

**Valerie:** It's one of those.

**Lillian:** Yes, it's *Schwanengesang*. But I can see why you mixed it up. It's from a Schubert song cycle, but it's from *Schwanengesang*. Yes, I almost made that mistake when I was writing it in my paper. That's how I found it. I love that it's like a recitative at the beginning. It's just genius. And that also gives the cycle an operatic element as well. The recitative-like vocal line.

**Valerie:** Well you were going to say something before I interrupted.

**Lillian:** Oh yes, I'm so sorry. I was saying, the recitative-like vocal line is so fabulous in the beginning. It's kind of operatic. Were you inspired by Wagner's semi-declamatory vocal line?

**Valerie:** I was not really clear on things that. Well there is one, I will say. No, I wouldn't be honest if I didn't tell her that. I will tell you as a general answer to your question, no. You know, I just wrote it. Wagner can be an influence for me. But usually, it would be in some instrumental work or in a larger work where I want to do something special. But there is one thing I took from Wagner. When he says, “I listen to the rain, and I recall my youth.” He jumps, ah yea, the old man. The music. “I listen to the rain.” La, la “and recall my youth.” (Valerie sings the interval of a ninth) Um, that's a major 9th. I found that to be so expressive. It's in the 3<sup>rd</sup> opera. When Siegfried goes up to the... It's in the ring. It's when Siegfried penetrates the cycle and goes into the ring of fire and discovers Brünnhilde. And they sing and they have their duet and all that sort of business. And there's a bit. And he also... What is that music that Wagner uses when he has that special ensemble to play under Sieglinde's window for her birthday or Christmas or something?

**John:** The Siegfried Idyll

**Valerie:** The Siegfried Idyll. That's right. The Siegfried Idyll. And some of the passages in the scenes where Siegfried and Brünnhilde have been discovering their love and all are the same. And there's an interval that I thought was so... La da da da di. (Valerie sings the Major 9<sup>th</sup>) And I always thought that was so expressive. You know. La da da da di (Valerie sings again.) And somehow when I got to that line. Valerie sings again, "I listen to the rain." And I said, "And I recall my youth." So I have used what I thought was a very expressive interval of a 9th. It's something I thought was very important.

**Lillian:** What kind of theoretical techniques do you use? Do you think you use misdirection and quartal harmonies within the cycle?

**Valerie:** Yea, but here they go when they start with these crazy, ridiculous theories and so on. Stacking chords in 4ths. You harmonize the chords according to what you hear. Like Ravel and Debussy for example. There was a great relationship between sections of music that were 3rd related that we did learn with the exposition, development, and recap and all those sort of things. I'm sure I've done chords that people have talked about stacking up. But, no, I just harmonize. Then they can just analyze. And they can do whatever the hell they want with it. I'm sure I do it in 4ths and 5ths. But it's all in how I'm voicing something.

**Lillian:** What draws you to compose music? Is it the harmony, the rhythm...?

**Valerie:** Well with composing, there are certain things I'm drawn to. And the things that I'm drawn to is the subject of what I'm going to do. So I think that um... I don't want to say, I don't want to use a word like serendipity cause that means a whole lot of things coming together accidentally. I know what I said. I said before, I'm an eclectic composer. And I can write something like *Song of the Seasons* that's romantic. Then I can write something else like *Sojourner* for example. But *Sojourner* has twentieth-century... It has other types of harmony in it. Harmony is one of those wonderful things. I'm so impressed by harmony. That's how Wagner can manipulate so many things. His harmony concept of things is... it's extraordinary. And he can use harmony to turn a villain into somebody who you can feel something for. Well, all of a sudden I never saw this side. I'm thinking of somebody, Hunding. We don't like Hunding. Hunding lived in a cave with Sieglinde. And Hunding comes from the storm and he comes in, and he violates the home. And when Hunding comes home and Siegfried stays. And they have the rule of the forest. You have to open your home, even to the enemy. But in the morning they go. And Wagner gives Hunding the very stern and rough kind of harmony and motif. His wife puts some Mickey Finn in his drink to knock him out so she has time to spend with Siegfried. And then she runs off with him. And yet, they have all this wonderful music. They start this wonderful music. They start this wonderful thing. Oh how can you do something like this? And look what you've done to Hunding. He's been home. And you don't care one bit that he's been home. Well because the story line is important to... Well harmony is important too. People respond to how you color a character and how you write a scene. It's very important. I might write something... I like this thing and I like this poem let's say. And I'd like to maybe have them hear something more impressionistic than atonal. You know something like that. That's all... because I know the kind of colorings I'm going to use. Maybe if I'm going to write something about water or something like that and I'm going to have a very wonderful kind of

flow and I want to have something very special. And I might want to write with the sounds that let's say that Debussy or Ravel might write...that impressionistic style that's so beautiful.

**Lillian:** The Washington Post reviewer compared your sound to Debussy. Would you say your sound is somewhat impressionistic?

**Valerie:** I'm not sure, No I don't think so. I'm not sure there's a sound in there that's Debussy or impressionistic at all.

**John:** Um Yes!

**Valerie:** Ok where?

**John:** Maybe "Winter... In measure 30, "As season's end draws near to me"

**Valerie:** Oh you mean the whole tones.

**John:** Yes, it has a feeling. It suggests that particular mode though you don't stay there very long. And when it goes bling blong, bling blong, "And now" It's just a suggestion.

**Valerie:** Ok, but the impression is necessary. But whole tone, they used it a lot. If that's so, I would say in my opinion, no. It could possibly be when he talks about the winter. As the season's drawing near. And the line becomes like a whole tone line and the accompaniment underneath could possibly suggest... Although I never thought about it. But it could possibly be that, yes.

**Lillian:** Yea, I think it's because of the textures because Debussy and Ravel use a lot of extended harmonies.

**Valerie:** When you have a jazz course and they talk about the 9ths and the 11ths and they use 13ths and they're all extended harmonies. And yes, they do use that...and they voice them extended beyond the 7th of the chord...And the voicings of them and the spacings of them. And they do something that we were never supposed to do in Bach's time. And that's to have parallelism in the movement of the chords. And that's very typical in the music of Ravel and Debussy.

**Lillian:** I do hear that in your music when I was just trying to analyze it lightly...you can say that it's impressionistic because of the 9ths, 11ths and 13ths.

**Valerie:** See this is what bothers me. When you've been in class. I've been teaching class and all this sort of stuff. And the students and the people that are studying that are coming start to put things into some kind of perspective as you were saying about using the 9ths and extension chords like things you hear in Ravel. That was used as I said, that was used in that particular spot because that's the sound that could evoke the emotion I wanted. And it wasn't necessarily stepping out of the romantic concept at all. I feel it was just the way I harmonized it.

**Lillian:** I do hear a little bit of jazz influence.

**Valerie:** Where? I can't think of one measure that is jazz-like.

**Lillian:** Let me tell you specifically. Hold on. Sometimes it's in the vocal line for me. (Lillian sings) Like Forever young, forever new, forever love to me sometimes the melody sounds a little jazzy. Not in a bad way. I think it's beautiful.

**Valerie:** I'm not saying. (Valerie hums the melody of forever young of "Summer") "Oh, di di di di di di di dum di di di di di di di di di.

**John:** In autumn. John sings, "A silvery white the moon" jazzy

**Valerie:** No that's more impressionistic.

**John:** There's a 13th chord.

**Valerie:** We're going to have jazz extension chord courses.

**Lillian:** There's another instance that my professor found specifically. But I have to find it. I think it was a minor 2nd or something. No, but I love it. There are so many composers who when they write they're influenced by multiple genres of music...lots of American composers especially.

**Lillian:** Do you think your piece contains any atonal elements?

**Valerie:** No, I don't think so.

**Lillian:** What is the significance of the word "Heigh ho" and how should it be pronounced?

**Valerie:** It's Heigh ho [Hi ho]

**Lillian:** So when you want ok. Cause when I looked it up, looked up the definition, the pronunciation says it's [Hey ho]

**Valerie:** It's "Heigh ho" it's what the Valkyries sing. You know the (Valerie sings "Heigh ho.") The greetings...

**Lillian:** Oops can you repeat that. I'm so upset that I missed that. You said Heigh Ho after the Valkyries said Lillian sings "Heigh Ho."

**Valerie:** Oh I just said that I use that as the start after we've had this song, you know, this solemn thing about his death grows near. The end grows near. The piano bursts out into these arpeggios and things. And then, "Heigh ho" is the greeting. Valerie sings "Heigh Ho." That "Heigh ho" that spring is coming. It's the heralding of spring returning. So that will complete the cycle of life and we don't end in death in winter.

**Lillian:** So you got it from the opera.

**Valerie:** I got the idea. “Heigh ho,” the greeting. Yes, “Heigh ho!”

**Lillian:** And what about the term doth. You use doth. I can tell you exactly where you use it.

**Valerie:** Oh “My Soul doth sing” you mean?

**Lillian:** Why did you use *doth*?

**Valerie:** I didn't want to say does. It doesn't sound...”My soul doth sing.” Rather than “my soul does sing.” Somehow *my soul does sing* doesn't work. Somehow *my soul does sing doth not work*.

**Lillian:** Yes, that was very interesting. And then of course, you make the contraction. 'Tis spring" It is spring.

**Valerie:** That right!

**Lillian:** Why did you use that particular contraction?

**Valerie:** I used it for balance. I'm building up "Tis spring, Tis spring, Tis Spring because it fits. Poets always contract words such words as ‘Tis wonderful, you know Valerie sings, ‘Tis marvelous. Instead of It is. It is wonderful! It is marvelous. No, ‘Tis wonderful! “Tis marvelous!" You know. “Tis wonderful. Tis spring. Other people use Tis spring. That's very common. That's not just me.

**John:** ‘Twas the night before Christmas.

**Valerie:** ‘Twas the night before Christmas.

**Lillian:** No, it's fabulous. I love it. I was only asking because I analyzed your poetry from scratch. So, these particular words stuck out to me. So I thought, “Oh I'm going to ask her why she used these.”

**Valerie:** Right, right

**Lillian:** Because most of the language like I said is conversational, familiar...in my opinion of course.

**Valerie:** Familiar

**Lillian:** Yes, like "I gazed into your eyes and saw reflected there, the summer of my soul. Two people but a single heart?" It's very familiar. Whereas, “My soul doth sing” or “Tis spring.” I love it. I just noticed this technique when I was analyzing the poetry.

**Valerie:** Doth has to do with mixing up and making the music work...and that's what's important in poetry in getting the music and lyrics to work. And I tell you, I think, "I gaze into your eyes and saw reflected there, the summer of my soul." I don't think that's ordinary.

**Lillian:** No it definitely isn't. I did not mean ordinary. That really wasn't the word I was looking for. I think all of it is poetic. I just had to use a word to kind of describe what I was trying to say about the language that you were using. Thank-you for saying that because I may go back and look for another word, to describe the language if I can find it.

**Valerie:** Are you thinking about 'Tis spring and my soul doth sing. That's such a minute thing. I think you're driving yourself crazy... 'Tis, doth. They're just tiny bits of stuff. And there are just no words that we can use. Thank God in our language where we don't have to say *does* or *it is*. It's just a functional word to help us move along in what we're singing and what we're saying.

**Lillian:** What made you think about spring birds and spring?

**Valerie:** One of the Haiku made me think about it. Because they had talked about it. I've read so many of the Haiku that have talked about the birds being the heralds of spring and that sort of thing. So that seemed like a natural thing to do.

**Lillian:** Do you have any suggestions for performance for the voice, piano, and cello, either as an ensemble or independently?

**Valerie:** For the voices, it's just hard to say. It's always easier for me to make suggestions if I'm working with an artist. And they do the music. And then I'll say, "Well think about this" You might want to do this. Just generally speaking. And this... I don't need to tell you because I know you know this already. Ah the first piece is spirited, not too fast... because you want them to be able to hear all of the words when you talk about the snow has left the mountainside and so forth and so on. I think that it should be bright and joyous. I forgot what I put in there. I don't know if I said, spirited, cantabile. I don't know. It's been so long.

**Lillian:** Yea it's a really bright tempo. It's fast.

**Valerie:** It's fast. But not so fast that you can't get through the words. And the audience can hear everything. They're listening to hear what you say...the excitement, the joy. I'm sure there's enough room in the tempo—whatever tempo some of you might feel that want to sing it. But the main thing about the first one is the joy. The joy of the coming of spring. And that innocent joy... that all of a sudden you wait along the snow and "Here comes spring." And they're so happy about that. Cherry blossoms, or the apple blossoms. (Valerie laughs) I'll never think about that the same way again.

And the second one: and to think about as I said. It's an episode. It's a love story. And as I said, the second one, a love story... It should be a passion... A romantic passion in the second one... And then "Autumn." It's reflective. It's mature. You see life. And you understand that's what life



is. And then I would say, again. The darkness in that last movement... In the last song. Again it's extremely (inaudible). And you know, just enjoy singing them... that's my thing.

**Lillian:** So, do you think the character in winter is about to die? "As season's end draws near to me?"

**Valerie:** No, there's a spot in the movie network. And William Holden said, And I wrote it down because it was on late at night one night. Yes, and he was talking about death. He was trying to tell this young woman that he'd fallen madly in love with and had just wrecked his life. And she's just crazy. Working for the networks and so forth and stuff. And he talked about death being the figure that he could see down the road that now it has discernable features. I wrote it down. If I find it, it will be very important in this significant thing about winter. He said that death now has discernable features. In other words, what he's saying. In looking ahead, he doesn't have the time that he's supposed to. No this person in the song is not dying. They are just thinking and reflecting about the fact that they're gonna die. That's it. And what has their life been? As they look back on it. What has their life been? And that's what that's all about.

**Lillian:** Ok that's wonderful!

**Valerie:** I'm going to look up that thing and get it to you because I'd like you to have it. I wrote it down. But I will definitely send that.

**Lillian:** Well that's great! It's best to e-mail it to me so I can have a record of our correspondence.

**Valerie:** Now I was going to tell you the other thing too. Um...when you were asking about the music...I know that it's interesting to have sketch books and things. Or pages that show you know how this was done. Or pages you could offer to show that this was done and how it's changed and all. Lillian everything I've done is in braille and it's in books at present. And braille books can take a lot of books. I can't even hold the braille books I have in my apartment because they're too big. They're huge. They're absolutely huge. And the braille... (inaudible). I can certainly get a page or a book that I have of *Song of the Seasons*. Would you want me to photograph it? Are you interested in showing what a page of that music looks like?

**Lillian:** Yes, I would love that...even if you took a picture of a page from each song...that would be lovely. But if you can only do one, I will accept that as well. Oh I would like to get the repertoire for "Bird alone," "Rainbow," and "Ruby," if at all possible. I'd like to take a look at those. And, I think that's it. Oh and these songs aren't published, correct?

**Valerie:** No they're not, but they belong to Valcap music. They're copywrited [sic] but they're not published. Valcap music will be the publisher.

**Lillian:** Yes, because I had to contact the Center for Black Music Research.

**Valerie:** Oh yes they know my music there in Chicago. Were you going to ask me about those choral pieces?

**Lillian:** Oh I was going to ask you about your solo vocal repertoire. The only ones that I know that you've written are *Ruby* which I think was written in 2012 um...

**Valerie:** 2013 or 2014. I'm not sure

**Lillian:** Ok and you wrote *Sojourner*, which is your operatorio. And you wrote "Bird Alone?"

**Valerie:** Well "Bird alone," the poetry was Abbey Lincoln's. The poetry isn't mine. I did that because everybody takes poetry and they set it to music. And I decided that I would take something that's poetry and set it to jazz. And I said, well let's take something that's jazz and set it to Eurocentric [music]. So I kind of did it as a lar—as to say it works both ways.

**Lillian:** Do you think these songs are difficult to perform for any of the performers?

**Valerie:** My songs in general or *Song of the Seasons* in particular.

**Lillian:** *Song of the Seasons*, and your other repertoire as well.

**Valerie:** Well there are some difficulties with it. Not the technical kind of difficulties you would run into in Strauss or Wagner or things like that. But there are difficulties that are general to their music that's general to mine as kind of well... and you really have to find an understanding of what you're singing and really feel for it and a kind of honesty about approaching it. Like in *Ruby*... The first song of that cycle is the *Lullaby*. And the *Lullaby*, it's so beautiful. It's a lullaby. The accompaniment is kind of like the rock of a cradle. And she sings. And you see the child... sleep, "Sleep well, say your prayers." That's a wonderful, comforting thing that you expect in a lullaby. You don't expect in the quiet movie of the lullaby the little girl is going to sleep and right before she goes to school this horrible situation [occurs]. We don't expect the mother to be prepared for the police crowds and all of that. So there's quite an irony. So really, understanding... I think it's important to see. But the singer... you have the double whammy because you have the words. We instrumentalists have to clearly do a lot to accomplish what we can because we don't have the words to go with the music. But you have to love what you do and you have to really have an understanding for it and sensitivity for it. And that's what I think is important.

**Lillian:** What would you say the difference is between composing for art song and opera?

**Valerie:** Well, I'm not a person that has a whole lot of art songs, opera, or vocal repertoire. You know I don't have that much of it to say that I'm distinctive. But let me say this. I do know this. I always look upon art songs as special, small gems. And so they're very special. When I work on something that's a little longer in length... then my attitude changes a little bit because, with that, I'm developing character. Character in the subject of the piece. And how the character is going to behave or what the character would be saying or what the character would be doing. And I guess that's a little bit more. There's a little bit more concentration on the characters. How they behave and what they say and what's happening to them. As opposed to an art song which I don't think functions that way. An art song, I think it's more reflective of things. It's not developing plot and

it's not developing characters. Many art songs are observations about things—about spring, about people, about love, about fun. You know all that sort of thing. I think art songs are a lot of observations and a lot of them are a personal expression about what the artist is singing and things about life.

**Lillian:** What is your composition process when you compose songs as a blind person?

**Valerie:** My composition process is hell. It's like digging ditches. And harder that is, because when I think about something, I write it down. And it doesn't look anything like music or anything. And to write choral pieces, it has so many parts. And you have line-by-line and measure-by-measure. And when I finish writing something I can't see the whole phrase because I can't feel the whole phrase. I can only feel a measure at a time. And I can do something. And then I write it down in braille. What I've been doing is I had to dictate the music to someone. In this case, It's to John. He has a beautiful hand. I dictate the music, so it takes 2, 3, 4, 5, months longer for me to get a piece written and out so that somebody sighted can do it than it takes an ordinary person. I haven't had the money and the facilities to get the kind of equipment let's say than somebody like Stevie Wonder has. And so I don't have any current digital computers or anything that I'm able to work with. So I'm kind of still working with my music in the dark ages. And I tell you...it's exhausting. It's very hard and it's very time consuming. And the other thing is one of the reasons why I don't play my own music more. I play my music. I have sometimes, when I play through something. I've played it once or twice soon after it's been written. I Do it. I accompanied the singer at the Smithsonian. But I haven't really played it since then. Another reason I don't play my piano pieces that Oxford University has published is because what happens is that right after I finish doing it, that's the end of it. A person who can see can get the score, sit down [and] look at it. Remember to look and review it and so forth. So, I have to relearn the music. Even though I wrote it, even though I'm the composer. I have to literally learn the music and start from scratch. And it's like putting a jigsaw puzzle together. And read a couple of bars of right hand, read a couple of bars of left hand. Then put it together, go on to the next bars, and it's like that. And it would take me as much time to learn that piece as it would to learn a Beethoven sonata or something like that. And I don't have the time to learn those pieces and play them. So other people are playing them. And I write them and that's it. So it's been very difficult, very, very difficult and very hard to write the music and get it and print it and all of that business. So it's been very hard. You know. It is hard. It's very difficult. Braille music is extremely cumbersome. It's extremely cumbersome. But Thank-God for it because without it we wouldn't be able to [write]. I mean can you imagine... I mean maybe you're not a pianist. I don't know. Maybe you play. I mean can you imagine? For example, I know you've studied fugues in school. Can you imagine being able to see? You can look at a phrase [of] the fugue and you can even see one in the voices like the alto and the tenor and things like that and any other thing. But they are holding the notes in time. And you can look at a phrase and you can see. There's nothing like that. We have a little sign after the note that says tie, and you have to remember that tie when you get to that note again. And you never see a phrase of music at one time. You can't do [anything] with fingers. You can only see a measure at a time.

**Lillian:** Wow that is incredible.

**Lillian:** Valerie, how big are the braille books? Do you know the dimensions?

**Valerie:** Let me give you an idea. I'll give you two ideas. When I was in the library in high school at the New York Institute for the Blind, they had a wall that was about a block long. And this wall had about 4 full shelves. And from the floor to the ceiling was Webster's unabridged dictionary. A block long. Marie you saw those books at the institute. The books were maybe about five inches wide with heavy kind of cardboard covers. And the braille lines were written on both sides of the page. And I bought myself a pocket edition of a dictionary. And it came in 5 volumes in braille. It was no pocket anything. It was a regular big [braille book]. So it takes up a lot of space. And that's why so many young people today are not learning braille or they're not dealing with it. They've got sort of digital things now. When I went to Juilliard and we were reading books. We were getting ready to read *War and Peace*. This is no exaggeration. And you know that's a humungous book by Tolstoy. And I was getting the talking books. Reading the red books from the American Printing house for the blind in Louisville. And I remember the mailman coming with a truck with these wooden boxes with maybe 3 or 4 albums in long plain albums in that box. And I remember one day I was standing up and I had boxes up to my knees. Oh thank-you Lynette. There's one (Valerie shows 1 volume of the book then reads runs her hands over the braille to read the title of the book) *Hells Bells*. Ok. And not only that, and you can see the braille is written on both sides. This is an average book. So when I tell you that you can't store this in your apartment, you know... and it's just too much. Marie, I'm so glad you can bring that so she can see I wasn't exaggerating.

**Lillian:** So how do you write the braille on that? You wrote *Song of the Seasons* in braille? Wow, how do you get the dots in the book?

**Valerie:** Ok let me show you. (Valerie asks for her purse.) I brought something kind of small so you can see just a little bit. Cause I thought maybe I might have to make some notes in case you ask me something embarrassing and I couldn't figure it out. See this thing I have in my hand. That's called a stylus. This stylus is old. I've had it since grade school. So you know that's old. So then now, I just have a notebook that has heavy file that's 5 by 7. You have to use the heavy paper to hold the braille dots. And you can see I have written things on these pages. I've written them down myself. And so forth and so on. Like you would take a pen and pencil and write your notes and so forth and so on... And what I'm using is a slate. This is the slate. Valerie holds the slate up. Can you see this ok? On this side, you'll notice the little blocks. And these little blocks have 6 little bumps [or] dots. Bump, bump, bump, bump, bump, bump. And on the other side this is open. Now braille, I'm not even gonna talk about the computer braille. Braille consists of six dots. So I would take that and write with this. And what I do is open up the slate and I put the paper (in this case the card)—between the front and the back. So, you see this is space there and when I turn it over, there's the thing right there. So I write again. I know you're gonna say but you're writing from right to left instead of left to right. Everybody else does. And so I write (Valerie demonstrates writing braille). I write like that. When I write my music.

**Lillian:** Wait I can't see that. Can you write again but maybe on the arm of the chair Valerie, so I can see it?

**Valerie:** Yes, alright! Ok. (Valerie demonstrates braille writing on the arm of the sofa) Alright, now I take the slate, remove it from the paper, and while there's something else there...the lower line. The last line you see is where I said I'm writing on the arm of the chair.

**Lillian:** Wow!

**Valerie:** I'm writing on the arm of the chair. And what is so difficult about braille music is that it's not an upraised staff situation like a lot of people think. It's based on the alphabet and the contractions. And just to give you something for example, the letter... because it's so many instances. *Do* is always considered C in music unless you're working with fixed do which I hate. Do you sing with fixed do or moveable do?

**Lillian:** Movable *Do* is the one I would choose.

**Valerie:** Yea, movable *Do* makes more sense. I can't. And anyway, don't even get me started. Since C is *Do*. Then see what the logic is? Then E in the alphabet becomes D and F in the alphabet becomes E. And G in the alphabet becomes F. And H becomes G. And I becomes A and J becomes B. So that's what happens with that. And I mean it's crazy. And when you write them just as C, D, E, F, G, A, B, You're actually writing D, E, F, G, H, I, J. Now if you add a dot 6 to it, it becomes quarter notes, if you add dot 3 to it, it becomes half notes. If you add dot 6 and 3, it becomes whole notes, or they can become sixteenth notes. If for example I was reading a book and I wanted to do this. I could write "sing" for example. They have an "ing" contraction because braille takes up a lot of room as you can see, even with contractions. It just takes up a lot of room. And so you have "s" and you have an "ing" sound. So if I'm reading a book and I read the word "sing" I read it as "sing" Otherwise, in braille music, "s" is "A" a half note. And what happens is the "ing" sign becomes [the] 3rd interval. So if I was playing the "s" ing sign. So that would be A 3rd interval so that would be A up to C. You play those two together but could be C sharp depending where it is. But now they've done a really ridiculous thing. They've decided that in the left hand. I have to find that. This is universal now. At one time when they were revamping the music. They made the idea of A being the top note of the interval—that inverted to move up from A would be F below the word F#. I'm trying to say to you that it is extremely cumbersome. And it's really an accomplishment to be able to read braille. And I had Ms. Toyu who scared the hell out of me. And I learned to read braille like a champ. And I know braille music. And I know how difficult that is. So as you can see, it's a memorization process. For example, going to Juilliard. When the end of the semester came. I had to sit down with my piano teacher and decide on what I would like to learn the next year. Because as you know you always have those damn juries at the end of the year. And we always sat down and decided what pieces [I would prepare]. But they didn't have everything in braille like they have now. But I had to make sure that I could order them whether it was an American Greenhouse or get a transcriber to transcribe the music or send to England to do the music. But I had to spend my summers learning the music. Because when I got to school I was taking a degree course. I had Social Sciences, and Philosophy and History and all that stuff. There was no time to learn anything else...to sit down and memorize music. So if I didn't start the year with pieces. If I didn't have the summer to memorize my pieces, I'd be um...up the creek. I wouldn't be able to function. It's a bit much I can tell you.

**Lillian:** Do you write the music down right away when you compose? Is it just in your head? Or do you play it and then write it down?

**Valerie:** Well I can hear things when I play. But well, Stravinsky and I compose at the piano. Mozart didn't have to do it. Handel didn't have to do it. But I hear it, then I go to the piano. I hear it when I'm sitting at the piano. Sometimes I don't know what I want then I sit at the piano and experiment more with it. And then what I do is I write it down. And I have an old board slate. It's like those boards when you go the doctor... the thing they want you to fill out. It's like a clipboard. And it's a little thicker than this, and it has wholes on the right and left side where it has a slate like this except a little bigger, with 4 lines, then you just bring the slate down and they've got another 4 lines until you've taken up the whole paper. So I use that board with a slate that's bigger than this that has little things on it at the end so that when you run out of the four lines all you have to do is open the slate and bring it down to the next four lines, lower than those four lines they were secured with. The holes rather, I should say.

**Lillian:** So it's not staff music. Do you have to write your own lines?

**Valerie:** There are no lines or spaces...if we want to talk about registers. There are no lists. We have what we call octave slides. It's nothing that's similar at all to anything you do. Middle C is called 4th octave C. The 4th octave is the fourth C going from the left to the right. Middle C and any note between that C and the next C which is the third space of the treble clef are all considered 4th octave. Ok 4th Octave C. And then when you get to third space C. That's the 5th octave so anything between that and the next C above is considered to be 5th octave above and anything lower than for example the C that is the second space of the bass clef...that's considered to be third octave C. So anything between that C and middle C. (C, C#, D, D#, E, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B) They're all third octave. And if you talk about the C grand, the second C, that of course winds up being the second ledger line before the bass clef...and that is second octave C. So you see, and below that, they call it the sub contra octave. For above the low B above that low C two ledger lines down to the A at the bottom. Right John?

**John:** Right, I gave you some

**Valerie:** He gave me some clues. He gave me some ways of dictating that to him so I wouldn't have to be saying "The alto was singing 4th octave A and the soprano was singing 5th octave F. What did we talk about?"

**John:** C1, C2, C4

**Valerie:** C1, C2, C3, C4. That kind of thing. And that's how you can get the registers for everything. Bass singers, sopranos, tubas, bassoons, violins, cellos. So that's how you can write and have the registers.

**Lillian:** Wow! So John is the one who writes all of the music down? He wrote "*Song of the Seasons*" for you?

**Valerie:** He did. Every note.

**John:** That was my handwriting.

**Valerie:** From my dictation

**Lillian:** Wow, it's beautiful! Wow, incredible. Well, I know you have to go so thank-you so much.

**Valerie:** Aren't you glad just think about it. Next time you pick up a score and say, "Oh I'm so glad I can see it."

**Lillian:** Oh my goodness, yes. Wow I think you're just incredible Valerie. You inspire me.

**Valerie:** Oh my goodness.

**Lillian:** Thank-you, thank-you. I mean really! It's just an honor.

**Valerie:** And thank you guys—Maria and Lynette for lending us your home. It was special.

**Lillian:** Well you guys have a great day. I'm sorry I took up so much of your time today.

**Valerie:** Oh that's alright. You take it easy. I'll get that quote so you'll have that...and anything else you're finishing up for the scores and pages. I'll be working on that, ok?

**Lillian:** Oh I appreciate that.

**Valerie:** You're very welcome!

**Lillian:** Ok so have a great day! I will contact you soon.

**Valerie:** Take Care!

## APPENDIX H

### PERMISSIONS



Lillian Roberts <onelillyvocal@gmail.com>

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#### consent

1 message

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**Valerie Capers** <valcapmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Lillian Roberts <onelillyvocal@gmail.com>

Fri, Nov 25, 2016 at 4:46 PM

To Whom it May Concern:

I have given Lillian Roberts permission to use excerpts from my composition "Song of the Seasons" for her dissertation

Sincerely,

Dr. Valerie Capers.



Lillian Roberts <onelillyvocal@gmail.com>

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#### "PERMISSION"

1 message

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**Valerie Capers** <valcapmusic@gmail.com>  
To: Lillian Roberts <onelillyvocal@gmail.com>

Thu, Nov 24, 2016 at 10:55 AM

Dear Lillian Roberts:

This E-MAIL is from John Robinson via Valerie's E-MAIL:

"I give Lillian Roberts my permission to use our interview of August 11,2016 at 3 p.m. for her dissertation and/or her presentation."



## APPENDIX I

### GLOSSARY<sup>105</sup>

**alliteration.** The repetition of the same beginning sound that is in close proximity to one another.

**assonance.** The use of identical vowel sounds that are surrounded by differing consonant sounds with words that are close to one another

**docu-cycle.** A term used by the composer to describe the documentary style of her song cycle, *Ruby*.

**free verse poem.** Non-traditional poem preferred by twentieth-century poets which is free of strict meter or rhymes. The meanings of the words are stressed according to the natural pattern and pauses of the words.

**figurative language.** Non-literal language used to describe objects and people. These descriptions are generally based in imagination and creativity and are sometimes referred to as a figure of speech.

**haiku.** An ancient Japanese poetic form that requires a strict formula of 17 syllable lines. The subject of these poems usually consist of subjects related to nature, objects, and human life.

**half-rhymes.** This rhyme scheme is sometimes referred to as approximate rhyme and takes place when the final consonant sounds of rhyming words are identical whereas the beginning vowel or consonant sounds differ

**herald.** When a person or object is used as an omen that something is about to happen

**imagery.** The imaginative identity of people and objects that consist of images and pictures that is described in terms of our senses.

**low Diction.** Informal diction that uses familiar, relaxed, or conversational language

**metaphor.** An analogy or comparison between objects that creates a contrast and vivid description of a specific object

**middle diction.** Neutral language that is correct, direct, and simplistic

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105. The definitions in this glossary are drawn in paraphrase from the following sources: Matthew Boyden and Nick Kimberly, *The Rough Guide to Opera* (London: Penguin, 2002); Valerie Capers, *Ruby*. MS Score, 2014; *English Oxford Living Dictionaries*, accessed September 18, 2016, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/recitative>; Poetry Terms, Brief Definitions, 2; Kimball, Art Song, 102. Reaske, *How to Analyze Poetry*.

**narrative poem.** A poem that tells a story

**non-rhyme scheme.** A term I created to describe the lack of rhyme scheme that begins each of the four poems in “*Song of the Seasons*.”

**high diction.** A term used to describe formal language which incorporated multiple syllables, and elaborate and proper language. This form was once considered the most appropriate form of language for poetry

**perfect rhymes.** The stressed identical vowel sounds of the preceding varied consonants. The sound determines the identity of the rhyme not the spelling. Identical sounds make exact or perfect rhymes.

**personification.** A term used to describe a common poetic device that assigns human characteristics or traits to non-human objects or ideas.

**recitative-like.** Quasi-dialogue in the form of a declamation that is sung in the natural rhythm of ordinary speech.

**refrain.** A phrase that recurs more than once in a song or poem and is usually found in the interior body of a poem or at the end of a verse or stanza

**rhyme.** Identical syllables that are repeated and usually found at the end of a verse

**semi-declamatory.** A vocal line that is quasi-speech based

**sound device.** The musical aspect of a poem which usually consists of rhythm, rhyme, and repetition of varied repetitions of vowel or consonant sound combinations.

**versification.** The study of the structure of a poem

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Lillian Roberts, D.M.A.

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E-mail address: [onelillyvocal@gmail.com](mailto:onelillyvocal@gmail.com)

Website: [www.onelilly.com](http://www.onelilly.com)

YoutTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFQoAaBqnRI>

### EDUCATION

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada  
D.M.A., Vocal Performance, December 2016

University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky  
D.M.A., Vocal Performance, Coursework, 2006

University of Nevada Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Master of Music, Vocal Performance, 2003

University of Nevada Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Bachelor of Music, Vocal Performance, 2000

### CERTIFICATION

Transitional A – Music Grades 7-12, New York State, 2009

Music Substitute, New York State, 2008

Para Professional License – Music, Nevada, 2012

Certification - CPR/AED Las Vegas, NV, 2012

### VADDITIONAL STUDIES

**Britten - Pears Young Artist Program Aldeburgh Music Festival, Aldeburgh, England**  
Slavic Song with Bernarda Fink (Russian, Czech, and Slovenian)  
Young Artist, 2016

**La Voce Totale Performance Festival, Las Vegas, Nevada**  
Training through performance 2013

**Martina Arroyo Foundation for Singers, New York**  
Performing Young Artist Summer 2007

**Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**  
Resident Artist 2002-2004

**International Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS), Graz, Austria**  
Young Artist Summer 2004

**Portland Opera Performing Institute (Director Tito Capobianco), Portland, Oregon**  
Young Artist Summer 2003

**Chautauqua Opera Young Artist Program, Chautauqua, New York**  
Studio Artist Summer 2002

**Las Vegas Opera, Las Vegas, Nevada**  
Studio Artist 2002

**Aspen Opera Theater Center Music Festival, Aspen, Colorado**  
Opera Young Artist Summer 2001

**International Institute of Vocal Arts, Chiari, Italy**  
Young Artist Summer 2000

**California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), Valencia, California**  
Theater 1999 & Summer School 1997

#### PRINCIPAL VOICE TEACHERS

**Dr. Alfonse Anderson:** Voice Instructor, American Institute of Musical Studies, Professor of Voice & Vocal Department Coordinator, University of Nevada Las Vegas; Professor of Voice, Big Bear Lake Song Festival

**Vinson Cole:** Metropolitan Opera Tenor, Aspen Opera Theater, Professor of Voice, New England Conservatory & Cleveland Institute of Music

**Ruth Golden:** New York City Opera Soprano, Voice Instructor, Academy of Vocal Arts

**Helen Hodam:** Professor of voice, New England Conservatory, Oberlin Conservatory

**Dr. Everett McCorvey:** Director of American Spiritual Ensemble (ASE) Professor of Voice, University of Kentucky

**Steve Smith:** Voice Instructor: Aspen Opera Theater, Glimmerglass Opera

## PRINCIPAL VOICE COACHES

**Gayletha Nichols:** Director, Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Director, Metropolitan Opera Young Artist Program, Former Director, Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Program

**Sherill Milnes:** Baritone, Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Professor of Voice, Northwestern University

**Mark Rucker:** Baritone, Metropolitan Opera & New York City Opera, Administrative Director, Martina Arroyo Foundation for Singers

**Warren Jones:** Assistant Conductor, Metropolitan Opera & San Francisco Opera, Collaborative Pianist Program Director, Manhattan School of Music

**Bernarda Fink:** Mezzo-Soprano, Czech National Opera, operas of Montpellier and Innsbruck, Barcelona, Netherlands Opera, Featured Artistic Director of Britten-Pears Young Artist Program/Slavic Song

**Howard Watkins:** Assistant Conductor, Metropolitan Opera; Vocal Arts Coordinator, Tanglewood Music Center

**Willie Anthony Waters:** Conductor, Connecticut Opera; Conductor, Martina Arroyo Foundation for Singers

**William Hobbs:** Assistant Conductor, Washington National Opera; San Francisco Opera; Aspen Music Festival; Chicago Lyric Opera

**Richard Bado:** Music Director, Houston Grand Opera, Artist – Teacher, Rice University Shephard School of Music; Music Staff, Metropolitan Opera & Opera Theater of St. Louis

**Tim Long:** Associate Conductor, New York City Opera, Assistant Conductor, Brooklyn Philharmonic; Artist - Faculty Member, Stony Brook College & Aspen Music Festival, Julliard School, Yale University

**Rick Cordova:** Conductor, Oper der Stadt Bonn, Opera North, Florida Grand Opera; Program & Music Director, Sarasota Opera

**Danielle Orlando:** Principal Opera Coach, Curtis Institute of Music, Master Coach, Academy of



Vocal Arts; Former Artistic Administrator & Head of Music Staff, Philadelphia Opera; Former Music Staff, Metropolitan Opera & Washington National Opera

**David Anthony Lofton:** Vocal Coach, Academy of Vocal Arts; Artistic Director, Opera North (Opera Ebony)

**Cameron Stowe:** New England Conservatory Collaborative Piano Chair, Faculty, The Juilliard School, Aspen Music Festival, Former Faculty, University of Toronto, The Steans Institute for Young Artists (Ravinia)

**Lada Valesova:** Pianist, Vocal Coach, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Coach, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Hamburgische Staatsoper, Glyndebourne Festival, Masterclasses, Paris Central Conservatoire, Conservatoire de Lyon, Casa da Musica, New Zealand Opera

#### PRINCIPAL DIRECTORS

**Jay Lessenger:** General/Artistic Director Principal Stage Director Chautauqua Opera

**Linda Brovsky:** Stage Director, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera

**Edward Berkeley:** Artistic Director, Willow Cabin Theater Company, Director, Aspen Opera Theater, Metropolitan Opera's Lindeman Young Artist Program, Director, Juilliard Undergraduate Opera Studies

**Ken Kazan:** Chair, Vocal Arts & Opera Program, USC, Resident Stage Director, USC Thornton Opera

**Sally Stunkel:** Stage Director, Sacramento Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Theater of St. Louis

**Ron Himes:** Founder & Producing Director, Black Repertory Theater St. Louis

**Fred Martell:** Artistic/Executive Director New York Opera Project; Affiliation, Metropolitan Opera's Lindeman Young Artist Program

#### PRINCIPAL CONDUCTORS

**Eduardo Müller:** Conductor, La Scala, Metropolitan Opera, San Diego Opera, Cincinnati Opera

**James Conlon:** Music Director, Los Angeles Opera, Ravinia Festival & Cincinnati Opera, Former Principal Conductor, Paris National Opera

**Christopher Macatsoris:** Music Director, Academy of Vocal Arts; Conductor, Philadelphia Lyric Company, Pennsylvania Opera Company, San Francisco Opera Center

**Willie Anthony Waters:** General Artistic Director & Principal Conductor, Connecticut Opera, Former Artistic Director & Principal Conductor, Florida Grand Opera, Conductor, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera

**Joseph Colaneri:** Conductor, Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera

**Ron De Fesi:** Artistic Director & Principal Conductor, Hudson Opera, Delaware Opera

**Scott Shoonover:** Artistic Director & Principal Conductor, Union Avenue Opera

#### MASTER CLASSES

**Martina Arroyo, Mignon Dunn, Cynthia Munzer, Shirley Verett, Dawn Upshaw, Doug Alstedt, Tito Capobianco, Edward Berkley**

#### AWARDS & HONORS

Winner	<b>National Opera Association Opera Scenes</b>	Greensboro, NC	2015
Finalist	<b>National Opera Association Opera Scenes</b>	Greensboro, NC	2015
Winner	<b>National Association of Teachers of Singing</b>	St. George, UT	2013
Honor	<b>Great Leadership Award &amp; Outstanding Services, Bronx Conservatory High School</b>	Bronx, NY	2009
Winner	<b>Mobile Opera's Rose Palmai – Tenser Competition</b>	Mobile, AL	2006
Semi - Finalist	<b>Elardo International Competition</b>	New York, NY	2006
Finalist	<b>Classical Singer Competition</b>	New York, NY	2005
Finalist	<b>Concert Artist Guild Competition</b>	New York, NY	2005
Winner	<b>Regional Macallister Awards</b>	Lexington, KY	2005

**for Opera Singers**

Finalist	<b>Metropolitan Opera National Regional Auditions</b>	Lexington, KY	2004
Winner	<b>Metropolitan Opera Kentucky District Auditions</b>	Lexington, KY	2004
Winner	<b>Meistersinger Competition</b>	Graz, Austria	2004
Winner	<b>International Hans Gabor Belvedere Competition -Prelim</b>	Vienna, Austria	2004
Winner	<b>Fritz &amp; Lavinia Jensen Foundation</b>	New York, NY	2004
Finalist	<b>George London Foundation for Singers</b>	New York, NY	2004
Finalist	<b>Orlando Opera's Heinz Rehfuss Singing Actor Awards</b>	Orlando, FL	2004
Winner	<b>Marian Anderson Emerging Classical Artist Prize</b>	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Winner	<b>Mario Lanza Scholarship Competition</b>	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Winner	<b>Opera Index, Inc. Encouragement Grant</b>	New York, NY	2003
Winner	<b>Oreste A. Giargiari Bel Canto Competition</b>	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Finalist	<b>William C. Byrd Young Artist Competition</b>	Flint, MI	2002
Winner	<b>Palm Springs Opera Guild Competition</b>	Palm Springs, CA	2002
Finalist	<b>San Francisco Opera Merola Auditions</b>	Los Angeles, CA	2000
Winner	<b>Metropolitan Opera San Bernardino District Auditions</b>	San Bernardino, CA	2001
Winner	<b>Metropolitan Opera Western Regional Auditions</b>	Los Angeles, CA	2000
Winner	<b>Palm Springs Opera Guild Vocal Scholarship Competition</b>	Palm Springs, CA	2000

Recipient	<b>Theater Arts Scholar</b>	Los Angeles, CA	1999
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### SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

Aldeburgh Music and Enoa – Full Travel, Accommodation, and Subsistence	2016
University of Nevada Las Vegas Part-Time Graduate Assistantship	2014
University of Kentucky Full Graduate Assistantship	2004-2006
Aims MET Sponsored Scholarship	2004
Melisse Pinto, TTEE Heinz & Suze Rehfuss Memorial Fund	2004
Full Scholarship to Academy of Vocal Arts	2002-2004
Joseph Cairns Memorial Foundation Fellowship Award	2002-2004
Black Republican Round Table Scholarship Dinner	2002
UNLV Graduate Teaching Assistantship	2002-2004
National Association of Negro Musicians	2000
Undergraduate Scholarship	1998-2000
California Institute of the Arts Scholarship	1996-1997
California Institute of the Arts Summer School	1994

### PROFESSIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Vocalis, LLC**

**June 2012 - Present**

**Founder/Artistic Director**

Oversee all business activities that include coordinating performances, hiring, and schedules. Maintain promotions and Website Design, and meetings and producing and directing shows as necessary.

**College of Southern Nevada,**

**August 2012 – Present**

***Part-Time Instructor***

***Muse 1001 Sec 003***

Teach ensemble repertoire of varying styles to beginning students. Students will learn to sing with proper vocal technique and posture, improve musicianship by learning to accurately execute pitches, rhythms, dynamics, style, phrasing, blending. Performance opportunities will increase their knowledge of performance excellence.

**University of Nevada Las Vegas,**

**August 2012 – Present**

***Adjunct Professor of Voice***

***Private Voice Studio***

Teach private voice to undergraduate majors and non-majors to improve technique, musicianship, diction, and interpretation as it relates to vocal performance. In addition, research and assign all music for students based on voice type and skill level; prepare students for juries and recitals/program notes, auditions, competitions as necessary; Corresponded daily with the heads of the music departments to discuss student academic assessments.

**College of Southern Nevada,  
Part-Time Instructor Music 103 and Private Voice Studio  
Music 103 and Private Voice Studio**

**August 2012 – Present**

**Music 103**

Teach group voice to 12-25 students or more based on a textbook “Adventures of Singing” by Clifton Ware; students learn to sing by utilizing efficient and effective tone production, diction skills, musicianship, and interpretation; In addition, student prepare for a final performance in Horn Hall which is in conjunction with the Vocal Department Head and the voice/choral department

**Private Voice Studio**

Teach private voice to undergraduate voice majors and non-majors how to improve vocal production and overall musicianship skills as required by the vocal department; Students learn how utilize proper vocal technique, breath management, musicianship, diction, and interpretation; repertoire is chosen based on voice type and skill level; Students are prepared for recitals, auditions, and competitions as necessary

**University of Nevada Las Vegas, NV  
Part-Time Graduate Assistant Music 103**

**August 2014 – January 2015**

Taught vocal technique to a group voice class of 15 students; chose textbook with repertoire, musicianship, and pedagogical content appropriate for an undergraduate course in singing, taught breath management, diction, interpretation, and performance skills and prepared students for a recital which was a requirement for a final grade in the course; students were required to perform both contemporary and classical repertoire

**Nevada School of the Arts  
Voice Faculty**

**August 2013-2014**

Taught private and group voice lessons to children and adults and maintained an adequate schedule for weekly lessons, students learned the elements of basic vocal technique through breath management, diction, and overall vocal production

**Lillian's Studio For Vocal Arts (LSVA) - (NY, NJ)  
January 2009 – July 2012**

***Founder/General Artistic Director/Voice Teacher***

Oversaw all business activities for voice lessons; maintained weekly schedule, studio promotions and website; collaborated with intern to generate more students, taught breath support as it relates to overall vocal production

**MS 127 Castle Hill Middle School, Bronx NY  
Tenure/Full-Time Music Teacher**

**October 2010 – August 2012**

Created and implemented vocal and choral program for grades 6-8 (includes ordering vocal music and equipment for classes); recruited, taught and developed vocal curriculum which consisted of vocal technique, music reading skills and performance practices; coordinated fundraising events for vocal program; selected uniforms for newly created

choral ensemble (Bella Voce Concert Choir); choreographed certain dance routines for choir; arranged contemporary repertoire to accommodate Bella Voce Concert Choir Voices; produced, developed, and directed musicals, variety shows, and concerts both in and out of school; performed and won 1st place in first competition at Six Flags Music Festival; Created & Designed all programs for Shows; Created vocal music/performance assessments for students and school; coordinated and collaborated with outside schools such as Brooklyn High School for and other surrounding Bronx Schools.

**R600 Ralph McKee Career and Technical High School September 8 – October 17, 2010  
Staten Island, NY**

***F Status Music Teacher (Per Diem)***

Created and implemented vocal and choral programs for grade 12 (includes ordering vocal books and equipment for classes); Taught and developed vocal technique, music reading skills, and performance practices; recruited students for choral ensemble; recruited students for vocal ensemble and performances

**X262 Performance Conservatory High School 2008 - June 2009  
Bronx, NY**

***Long Term Substitute Music Teacher***

Created and implemented vocal and choral programs for grades 9-12; Taught students basic music theory and vocal technique as an introduction to vocal music and choral singing; Taught choral songs and parts and how to vocalize for specified songs; coordinated fundraising events for student trips; selected uniforms for newly created Vocal Ensemble; Prepared and directed shows; adjudicated vocal juries at the end of each semester; coordinated trips and master classes, adjudicated auditions for school CD and assisted singers with CD of 12 songs

**Bronx Arts Ensemble, Bronx, NY September 2007 - 2008 Bronx  
International High School & Academy of  
Scholarship and Entrepreneurship**

***Vocal Instructor and Chorus Director***

Taught students basic music theory and vocal technical skills as an introduction to choral singing Grades 9 – 12; Taught general music terms and theory; Taught choral songs and rounds to improve musicianship; Developed healthy voices for solo and choral repertoire

**North Star Academy, Newark, NJ March 2007  
*Voice Class Instructor***

Created and taught voice class for 5 year olds; taught students how to produce a healthy vocal tone and basic musicianship skills like rhythm recall & repetition; music notation, and basic music terms; Students were taught basic rounds and sing-a-long songs in order to improve their skills for singing

**Hetrick - Martin Institute, NY February 2007 - June 2007  
*Seasonal Education Specialist***

Taught private and group lessons as well as beginning music theory, sight-reading, and interpretation to LGBTQ youth Developed initial stage of vocal music program as it relates to early performance education; Initiated performance based repertoire for

students who took an interest in a vocal performance career; prepared and advised students on vocal repertoire for variety shows during the semester

**University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY**

**2004 - 2006**

***Graduate Teaching Assistant***

Taught private lessons to voice majors; students learned to sing by utilizing proper breath management skills, correct posture, diction, and interpretation skills for juries, auditions, competitions, and recitals; repertoire for students was chosen in a timely manner and based on the requirements of the voice faculty; prepared one student for their senior recital and assisted with the preparation of their program notes

**University of Nevada Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV**

**2000 - 2002**

***Graduate Teaching Assistant  
and Studio Voice Instructor***

**Music 103**

Created and prepared a curriculum for 3 credit non-voice major group voice class which consisted of a technique supported by the required textbook, "Adventures in Singing;" Students learned to sing with proper breath support, posture, diction, and interpretation skills for performance.

**Studio Voice Instructor**

Taught private voice lessons to non-voice majors and musical theater students; students learned to sing with a well-produced tone while maintaining proper breath support, posture, vocal technique, and diction

**Lake Mead Bible Church Henderson, NV**

**2000 - 2001**

***Worship Arts Director***

Taught and directed church choir during rehearsals and services; hired theater, dance, visual artists, and vocal artists/musicians for services; coordinated rehearsals and visual artist events during services; coordinated & Stage Managed all music and artistic events during Sunday Morning services; attended weekly meetings with the Pastor in regards to Sunday Services; sang solos during Sunday Services

**St. Joseph Catholic Church, Barstow CA**

**1991-1995**

***Choir Director (Youth Gospel Choir)***

Taught and directed church choir during rehearsals and services; Ordered and prepared choral and solo repertoire for services; Recruited youth for Choir

**Union Missionary Baptist Church, CA**

**1991-1995**

***Choir Director (Sunshine Band)***

Taught and directed church choir during rehearsals and services; Taught vocal technique and proper performance practices and discipline; researched proper solo/choral repertoire for children's choir; coordinated and taught private lessons to students for services

**ADDITIONAL CAREER EXPERIENCE**

**La Voce Totale Summer Opera Festival****Summer 2013*****Assistant Stage Manager (Schedule)***

Assisted with the production, schedule, and programs for concerts, recitals, and rehearsals; was required to attend weekly meetings with program director; created the organization and style of the schedule and sent correspondence of emails to staff and festival participants; also assisted with the development and promotions for the festival in addition to maintaining a Facebook page for staff and participants

**MASTER CLASSES AND SEMINARS****Taught a master class at the following schools:**

Greenspun Junior High School	Henderson, NV	2013
Rancho High School	Las Vegas, NV	2013
Clark High School Choral Department	Las Vegas, NV	2013
Bronx High School for Performance and Stagecraft	Bronx, NY	2008
Brooklyn High School of the Arts (BHSA)	Brooklyn, NY	2007
Parkway North High Performance and Master Class	Carson City, NV	2007
Yell Coalition Vocal Seminar, Puente	Brooklyn, NY	2007
Legacy High School Master Class and Vocal Coach	Las Vegas, NV	2006
University of Kentucky	Lexington, KY	2006
University of Nevada Las Vegas Audition	Las Vegas, NV	2006
Readiness Seminar		
University of Nevada Las Vegas	Las Vegas, NV	2006
Pleasantville Public Schools Master Class Session	Pleasantville, PA	2004

**ADJUDICATION**

National Association of Teachers of Singing Regional Auditions	San Diego, CA	2016
National Association of Teachers of Singing District Auditions	Las Vegas, NV	2015
Legacy High School Choir	Las Vegas, NV	2015
National Association of Teachers of Singing Regional Auditions	Sacramento, CA	2014
National Association of Teachers of Singing District Auditions	Cedar City, UT	2013
National Association of Teachers of Singing Regional Auditions	Las Vegas, NV	2013
National Association of Teachers of Singing District Auditions	St. George, UT	2012
Brooklyn Philharmonic Chamber Ensemble Festival	Queens, NY	2011
Castle Hill Middle School <i>Bella Voce Choir</i> Auditions	Bronx, NY	10-12
Bronx High School for Performance and Stagecraft Auditions	Bronx, NY	08-09
University of Kentucky Voice Juries	Lexington, KY	04-05
Clark County Public Schools Solo and Ensemble Competition	Las Vegas, NV	1998

**DIRECTOR & PRODUCER OF SHOWS****Castle Hill Middle School, NY**

Annie	Bella Voce Choir	2012
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**Bronx High School for Performance and Stagecraft, NY**

12th Grade Commencement Ceremony	Vocal Ensemble	2009
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Brooklyn School of the Arts Choral Clinic	Vocal Ensemble	2009
12 Grade Commencement Ceremony	Vocal Ensemble	2008
Six Flags Music Festival	Vocal Ensemble	2008
Winter Celebration Concert Spring Concert	Vocal Ensemble	2008
Choral Exchange Concert with BHSA	Vocal Ensemble	2008
Various Assemblies		
<b>Bronx Arts Ensemble, NY</b>		
Bronx International High School	Spring Concert	2007
The Academy of Scholarship &Entrepreneurship	Winter Concert	2007
<b>Hetrick - Martin Institute, NY</b>		
Vocal Show	Concert	2007
<b>Lake Mead Bible Church, NV</b>		
All Sunday Services	Solos, Dance, Theater 00-01	
	Art, Band	
<b>St. Joseph Catholic School, CA</b>		
Drill Team (won 1st place Victorville Parade CA)	Various Performances	92-95
Catholic Gospel Choir	Services	1995
Black History Show	School Assembly	1994
<b>Barstow High School, CA</b>		
Gamma Gerti's Needle	Theater Production	1995
<b>Union Missionary Baptist Church, CA</b>		
Sunshine Band Children's Choir	Sunday Services	92=95

#### CLASSES PREPARED TO TEACH

Studio Voice  
 Basic Musicianship for Singers  
 Diction for Singers  
 Vocal Literature  
 Vocal Pedagogy  
 Group Voice for Non Majors and Majors  
 Audition Preparation

#### PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

##### ***Operatic***

##### ***\*Partial Role***

Sandman/Hansel and Gretel	Sin City Opera	Las Vegas, NV	2015
Contessa/Le Nozze di Figaro	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	2015
Ariadne/Ariadne auf Naxos	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	2014

Susanna/Sancta Susanna	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	2013
*Aida/Aida	La Voce Totale	Las Vegas, NV	2013
*Thais/Thais	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	2013
Serena/Porgy and Bess	Union Avenue Opera	St. Louis, MO	2007
Serena/Porgy and Bess	Black Repertory Theater	St. Louis, MO	2007
Fiordiligi/Così fan tutte	Martina Arroyo Foundation	New York, NY	2007
The Mother/Hansel & Gretel	New York Opera Project	New York, NY	2007
Blake Opera Excerpt	Opera America	Seattle, WA	2007
Aida/Aida	Hudson Opera Theater	New York, NY	2006
Suor Angelica/Suor Angelica	UK Opera Theater	Lexington, KY	2006
Cio Cio San/Madama Butterfly	UK Opera Theater	Lexington, KY	2005
*Fidelia/Edgar	Academy of Vocal Arts	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Marguerite/Faust	Philadelphia Chamber Orch.	Philadelphia, PA	2003
*Donna Anna/Don Giovanni	Portland Opera Performing In.	Portland, OR	2003
Alisa/Lucia di Lammermoor	Philadelphia Chamber Orch.	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Second Apparition	Chautauqua Opera	Chautauqua, NY	2002
Little Women Dodo/Merry Widow	Chautauqua Opera	Chautauqua, NY	2002
*Suor Angelica/Suor Angelica	Aspen Opera Theater	Aspen, CO	2001
*Micaela/Carmen	Aspen Opera Theater	Aspen, CO	2001
*Rusalka/Rusalka	Aspen Opera Theater	Aspen, CO	2001
Contessa/Le Nozze di Figaro	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	2001
Mona/Bandanna	Las Vegas Opera	Las Vegas, NV	2000
Lucy/The Telephone	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	2000
Adina/L'elisir d'amore	UNLV Opera Theater	Las Vegas, NV	1999
*Liu/Turandot	IIVA	Chiari, Italy	1999

### CONCERTS/RECITALS & ORATORIO

Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme: Soprano Soloist		Aldeburgh, ENG	2016
Slavic Song w/ Bernarda Fink			
Final Concert Programme			
<i>Te Deum</i>	Soprano Soloist	Las Vegas, NV	2016
Art Song Recital	Soprano Soloist	Las Vegas, NV	2016
<i>Voices of Love and Longing</i>			
<i>A Concert of African American Song</i>	Vocalis/Tessitura	Las Vegas, NV	2016
Guitar Doctoral Recital	Soprano Soloist	Las Vegas, NV	2016
Vocalis/Tessitura	Abundant Life	Las Vegas, NV	2015
<i>A Celebration of Spirituals</i>			
Vocalis/Tessitura	Mountain View	Las Vegas, NV	2015
<i>A Celebration of Spirituals</i>			
Piano Doctoral Recital	Soprano Soloist	Las Vegas, NV	2014
<i>We Sing! A Sacred Celebration</i>	Soprano Soloist	Las Vegas, NV	2014
Vocalis	Mountain View	Las Vegas, NV	2014
Mountain View Church Artist Series	Mountain View	Las Vegas, NV	2013
Green Valley Presbyterian Con. Series	Green Valley Pres.	Henderson, NV	2013
Opera Las Vegas	Sergio's Restaurant	Las Vegas, NV	2013
Lillian Roberts Benefit Recital	Christ The Servant	Henderson, NV	2013
"I Feel Pretty"	UNLV Opera WkSh	Las Vegas, NV	2013
UNLV Chamber Players	Sun City Club	Summerlin, NV	2013

Ephesus 7th Day Adventist Church	Soprano Ringer	New York, NY	2006
1st Presbyterian Church	Soprano Ringer	Mount Vernon, NY	2006
A.M.E Zion Church	Soprano Ringer	New York, NY	2006
1st Presbyterian Church	Holiday Concerts	Mount Vernon, NY	2006
Beethoven <i>Mass in C</i>	Hampton's Choral So.	Hamptons, NY	2009
Tribulation Suite (Premiere)	Hampton's Choral So.	Hamptons, NY	2009
A.M.E. Zion Church	Afr. Amer. Concert	New York, NY	08, 09
The Ephesus Ensemble	Soprano Ringer	New York, NY	06-08
Carson City Symphony	Invited Opera Artist	Carson City, NY	2008
Martina Arroyo Foundation	Preview Concert	New York, NY	2007
A.M.E. Zion Church	Christmas Concert	New York, NY	2007
Avava Artists Presents	The Blake Suite	Queens, NY	2007
PBS Televised Opera Gala	Rusalka	Lexington, KY	2006
Avava Artists Presents	The Blake Suite	New York, NY	2006
Chamber Music Live Series	Salute to Black Comp.	Queens, NY	2006
Santander International Festival	A.S.E. Natl Radio	Santander, Spain	2005
Church of Christian Science	Soloist	Las Vegas, NV	2005
A.S.E. Spain Tour (soprano soloist)	Festival Euromusica	Alicante, Spain	2005
A.S.E. American Tour	Lexington Arts Con.	Lexington, KY	2004
A.S.E. American Tour			
A.S.E. American Tour/CD Recording	State of KY Tourism	Lexington, KY	2004
Mario Lanza Foundation	Winner's Concert	Philadelphia, PA	2004
Kentucky Opera Theater	Televised Opera Gala	Lexington, KY	2004
Kentucky Governor's Mansion	Soloist	Lexington, KY	2004
Lexington Society of Arts & Letters	Solo Donor Concert	Lexington, KY	2004
AIMS Festival Orchestra	Italian Opera Concert	Odilien Institut, AT	2004
AIMS Festival Orchestra Meistersinger	Finals Concert	Odilien Institut, AT	2004
Ocean City Pops Orchestra	A Night at the Opera	Ocean City, NJ	2004
Academy of Vocal Arts	Fidelia/Edgar	Philadelphia, PA	2004
Jeff Uhlig Concerts	Soloist Concert	Philadelphia, PA	2004
George London Finals	Finalist Concert	Philadelphia, PA	2004
Delaware Philomusica Chorale	Rutter Magnificat	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Zion Baptist Church Saint-Saëns	Christmas Oratorio	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Academy of Vocal Arts	An Evening of Verdi	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Marian Anderson Award	Oprah Winfrey Award	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Marian Anderson Award	Winner's Concert	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Academy of Vocal Arts Concert	Edgar Excerpts	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Academy of Vocal Arts	Russian Song	Philadelphia, PA	2003
Opera Index	Winner's Concert	New York, NY	2003
Philadelphia Chamber Orch.	Sacred Concert	Philadelphia, PA	2003
A.S.E. Spain Tour Festival	Euromusica Prod.	Alicante, Spain	2003
A.S.E. American Tour	Corinthian Church	Louisville, KY	2003
Governors KY Center for the Arts	Awards Concert	Louisville, KY	2003
A.S.E. Concert	First Presbyterian	Lexington, KY	2003
Academy of Vocal Arts	French Song	Philadelphia, PA	2002
Academy of Vocal Arts	Russian Romances	Philadelphia, PA	2002
Academy of Vocal Arts	French Grand Opera	Philadelphia, PA	2002
Academy of Vocal Arts	Opening Season	Philadelphia, PA	2002

Chautauqua Opera Bernstein	Musical Review	Chautauqua, NY	2002
Chautauqua Opera	Studio Artist Recital	Chautauqua, NY	2002
California Opera Association	Evening of Mozart	Las Angeles, CA	2001
UNLV Graduate Recital	Summer Garden	Las Vegas, NV	2001
Palm Springs Opera Guild	Opera In The Park	Palm Springs, CA	2001
Metropolitan Opera	Finalist Showcase	Palm Springs, CA	2001
UNLV Opera Theater	Opera Scenes Concert	Summerlin, NV	2001
Las Vegas Opera	“Opera Goes Primetime” w/ Doug Alstedt	Las Vegas, NV	2000
UNLV Senior Recital	Reasons We Love	Las Vegas, NV	2000
Women of Diversity “Shower of Stars”	Benefit Show	Las Vegas, NV	2000
Macaroni Grill	Contracted Singer	Henderson, NV	2000
Luxor Casino and Hotel	Aids Benefit Show	Las Vegas, NV	1999
Reed Whipple Cultural Center	Young Artist Concert	Las Vegas, NV	1999
Borders, Books, Music & Cafe	Contracted Singer	Summerlin, NV	1999
<u>A.S.E. Spain Tour</u>			
Auditorio Municipal Vilajoirosa	Estiu de Cultura	Spain	2004
Castell De Bellver	Palma De	Mallorca, Spain	2004
Teatro - Auditori Municipal	San Feliu de	Guixois, Spain	2004
Festival De Musica	Municipal Pau Casals	Guixois, Spain	2004
Festival De Musica II	Municipal Pau Casals	Guixois, Spain	2004
Fundacio de Orgue de Mao	Teatro Principal	Mahon, Menorca	2004
Festival Internacional de Santander	Palcio de Festivals	Santander, Spain	2004
Spanish Government (televised)	San Gines Church	Madrid, Spain	2004
Moia de Bages	Church Parroquial	Barcelona, Spain	2004
Festival De Musica	Municipal Pau Casals	El Vendrell, Spain	2002
Festival de L'Orgue de Mao	Amigos de la Opera	Menorca, Spain	2002
Festival De Musica	Municipal Pau Casals	El Vendrell, Spain	2002
XXII Festival de la Vila De LLIVIA		Livia, Spain	2002
Festival Euromusicia Productions		Ceuta, Africa	2002
VI Festival Internacional de Música		Sigüenza, Spain	2002
Festival de Lluçmajor		Mallorca, Spain	2002
<u>RECORDINGS/VIDEO</u>			
Albany Records	<i>Bandanna   Female Spirit</i>	Las Vegas Opera	2006
PBS Video	<i>Televised Opera Gala</i>	Lexington, KY	2006
A.S.E. DBH (Released in Spain and USA)	<i>Recording Lily of The Valley</i>	Lexington, KY	2005