

Gwyneth Walker

Three Songs for Lucille
on the poetry of Lucille Clifton

for Soprano and Piano

1. *"fantastic hands"*
2. *"what the mirror said"*
3. *"different sisters"*

total duration: five minutes

These three songs were composed as a special "surprise gift" for Lucille Clifton on the occasion of the Artist Co-Residency of Lucille Clifton and Gwyneth Walker at the State University of New York – Fredonia – on April 2, 2007. The songs were premiered by Lori Johnson, Soprano, and Jannis Peterson, Piano.

The poems are autobiographical – the first referring to the poet's special hands (she was born with six fingers, a trait which she has traced back to her African-Dahomean ancestors). Then, in the mirror, she affirms herself as a "city of a woman," overcoming negative self-images from her past. And, her favorite childhood memories are those associated with her sister – similar girls/women, and yet different. Whereas her sister is a singer ("only where you sing"), Lucille is a poet ("i poet").

Three Songs for Lucille

for Soprano and Piano

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

1. "fantastic hands"

Singer admires her fingers, moving them in time with the music

Quickly ♩ = 120

The musical score is written for soprano and piano in 4/4 time, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The tempo is marked 'Quickly' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute. The score begins with a piano introduction (measures 1-3) featuring a piano (*p*) accompaniment in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The piano part consists of chords and triplets, while the right hand has a melodic line with triplets. The dynamic shifts to mezzo-forte (*mf*) in measure 4. The piano part continues with a steady accompaniment of triplets. The vocal line begins in measure 7 with the lyrics 'If our grand - child be a'. The piano accompaniment continues with triplets in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand. The dynamic for the piano part is marked *p* in measure 7.

with pedal

And. sempre (through m. 18)

2

10

girl, i wish for her fan - tas - tic hands,

simile

(*And. sempre*)

13

twelve spi-key fin - gers

16

ritard. **Slower** *p* 3

sym - bols of our tribe. She will do ma - gic with them,

ritard.

*

19 *mf* *p* *f* *mf*

she will turn per-son-al ab-ra-ca - da - bra, ^{15^{me}} ab-ra-ca-da - bra, re -

(p)

Red.

22 *f*

mem-bered from da - ho-me-an* wom-en wear-ing ex - tra - va - gant

f

Red.

25 **Tempo primo** *ritard.*

gloves.

ritard.

(Red.)

Singer moves fingers in time with the music *poco accel.*

Slower *p*

p

Red.

*Dahomey is Lucille Clifton's ancestral home, now located in the Republic of Benin, West Africa.

2. "what the mirror said"

Singer admires herself in the mirror

$\text{♩} = 72$

p

with pedal

She primps

8^{va}

3

ritard.

loco

5

a tempo

p

a tempo

lis-ten, you a won - der. — you a ci - ty of a wo - man. — you got a ge -

7

mf *p*

o - gra - phy of your own. lis - ten, some - bod - y need a map to un - der -

10

(p)

stand you. some - bod - y need di - rect - ions to move a - round you.

13

mf *p* *echo*

lis - ten, wo - man, you not a no - place a - non - y - mous girl, a

15

ritard. **Slower** *f*

no-no-no-no-no-place a-non-y-mous girl; mis-ter with his hands on you_

p *ritard.* *f*

18

Triumphantly *spoken, not on pitch*

he got his hands on some damn bod-y!

p *f*

21

Singer once again admires herself in the mirror

Singer assumes a particularly flattering pose, with "attitude"

mf a tempo *gliss.* *p*

with pedal

3. "different sisters"

Quickly, playfully, as young schoolgirls

Piano introduction in 4/4 time. The right hand features a playful melody with slurs and accents, starting with a *p* dynamic and moving to *mf*. The left hand provides a simple accompaniment. The piece concludes with a *ritard.* and a *poco* *Ad.* marking.

5 As a gentle tango $\text{♩} = 60$

Piano accompaniment in 2/2 time, marked *mf*. The music is characterized by a steady, rhythmic accompaniment with slurs. A *Ad.* marking is present, followed by a *simile* instruction.

9 *mf*

Vocal line and piano accompaniment in 2/2 time. The vocal line is marked *mf* and includes the lyrics: "me and you be sis - ters. we be the same." The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous section.

13

Vocal line and piano accompaniment in 2/2 time. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "me and you com - ing from the same" and ends with a *glissando* marking. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern.

place. _____ me and you be greas - ing our legs

touch - ing up our edg - es. *random dyads up the keyboard*

me and you be scared of rats _____ be step - ping on roach - es,

f *ritard.*

roach - es, roach - es, roach - es, roach - es.

molto ritard. *a tempo*

(*ped.*) _____

30 *mf*

me and you come run - ning,

33 *f*

run - ning high down pur - dy street one time

37 *mf*

and ma - ma laugh and shake her head at me and you_

41 *poco ritard.* , *Slightly slower* , *p* , *mf*

me and you got ba - bies got thir - ty - five got

10

45

black, black, let our hair go back be lov - ing ourselves be lov - ing our -

49

selves be sis - - - - - ters. , Slower on - ly where you

ritard.

53

sing i po - et.

8va

p \triangleleft *mf*

57

a tempo *ritard.* dots an "i"

mf a tempo *ritard.* *p*

8va

8vb

Red. *simile*