

GWYNETH WALKER

No Ordinary Woman!

Mezzo-Soprano and Piano

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Total Duration: 14 minutes

Notes

These songs might have been subtitled “Songs of Self Reflection.” For they present the poet musing about her own life, and specifically her physical appearance. One imagines the poet looking in the mirror with amusement, horror and a strong sense of her own history. Thus, the songs range from an energetic first impression (“Bones, Be Good!”) to philosophical reflection (“Turning”) to humor and pride in the body itself (“Homage to my Hips/Hair”) to a more serious summation (“The Thirty-Eighth Year”). A strong and colorful woman emerges.

No Ordinary Woman! was commissioned by soprano, Denise Walker, and pianist, Estrid Eklof, for premiere at Brown University, Providence, RI in December 1997. The songs were composed at the composer’s home in Vermont during the summer of 1997.

About the Composer and Poet

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer **Gwyneth Walker** is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut and the musical communities of Sarasota, Florida and Randolph, Vermont.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 “Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities” from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Walker's catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

Lucille Clifton (poet) was born in 1936 in Depew, New York and educated at Howard University and the State University of New York at Fredonia. Formerly the Poet Laureate of the State of Maryland, she has taught at Goucher College and the American University in Washington, DC.

I. Bones, Be Good

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

Mezzo-Soprano

$\text{♩} = 88$
snap fingers

Piano

$\text{♩} = 88$

5

A

mf swing rhythm

9

p *mf*

mf **B**

I beg my bones to be good but

p **B**

they just keep click-iní mu - - - - sic,

mf

p *mf*

click, click. click, click, click - iní mu - - - sic.

p *mf*

C *p* *mf*

Bones, be good!

C *p* *mf*

29 *p* *mf* *p*

Bones, _____ be good! _____ Bones be good, be good, _____ be good.

33 *mf*

They just keep click-ini mu - - - - - sic. _____

37 **D** *rit.* - - - - - more freely *(mf)*

yeah! I

D *rit.* - - - - - more freely

41

spin _____ in the cen - ter of my - self, _____ a

fool - ish, fright - - - ful wo - - - - - man.

E

Mov - iní my skin a - gainst the wind, and

E

tap tap tap tap danc - - - iní, dan - ciní for my

a tempo *f* *p*

white-note gliss.

a tempo *f*

Red. *

F

life, for my life.

F

p

61 *percussive sound (mostly air)*

ta ta ta ta ta

mf

ped. ** sim.*

65

ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta ta

G

69 *mf*

tap tap tap dan - - ciní, tap tap tap dan - - ciní,

G

73

tap tap tap dan - ciní, tap tap tap tap dan - - - ciní,

91

95 **J** *mf* mov - iní my skin a - gainst the wind, *p* and

J

99

tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap

p

103

tap a tap a tap a tap a dan - - cini, *f* optional Ah

K

a tempo

dan - cini for my life, for my

mf

life. Mov - - - ini my skin a - gainst the

mf

wind, click click click - ini mu - - -

L

sic, a fool - ish, fright - ful wo - man, just a

II. Turning

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

gently flowing ♩ = c. 80

Mezzo-Soprano

gently flowing ♩ = c. 80

start slowly and accel. into a blur

Piano

p *delicato, una corda*

Red. stays →

5

9

p

Turn - - - - - ing, turn - - - - - ing,

Red. * *sim.*

13

in - to my own self at last.

17

Turn - - - - ing, turn - - - - ing,

21

in - to my own self at last.

mf

mf

Red. tre corde *

25

Turn - ing out of the white cage, turn - ing out of the

(mf)

p

mf

(mf)

mf

Turning

12
28

delicato *rit.* - - - - - *a tempo* *p* *mf*

la - dy, la - dy, la - dy cage, turn - - - - - ing at last.

rit. - - - - - *a tempo* *p* *mf*

31

p

The white cage,

p *mf*

34

rit. - - - - - *a tempo* *p* *mf*

the la - dy, la - dy, la - dy cage, turn - - - - - ing at

rit. - - - - - *a tempo* *p* *mf*

36

last.

p *mf*

Red. * *sim.*

40

Mm

44

Turn - - - - ing, turn - - - -

48

ing, in - to my own self at last.

mf

p

mf

Red. *

52

Turn - ing on a stem like a black fruit in my own sea - son at last.

mf

p

mf

poco rit.

mf

p

mf

poco rit. *

Turning

III. Homage to My Hips

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

♩ = 66 at a gently swaying tempo

Mezzo-Soprano

♩ = 66 at a gently swaying tempo

Piano

mf

poco R^{ed.} ad lib.

4 *mf*

These hips are

7

big hips. They need— space—

16

10

to move a - round in.

13

They don't fit

16

in - to lit - tle pet - ty pla - ces.

19

These hips are free

22

Musical score for measures 22-24. The vocal line consists of a whole note with a fermata. The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines in both hands.

25

p as an afterthought

Musical score for measures 25-27. The vocal line has a fermata over a whole note with the lyrics "hips." below it. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

28

These hips

Musical score for measures 28-30. The vocal line has a fermata over a whole note with the lyrics "These hips" below it. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

31

These hips these hips,

Musical score for measures 31-33. The vocal line has a fermata over a whole note with the lyrics "These hips these hips," below it. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

18

34

these hips, they

white-note gliss.

Ped. *

37

go where they want to go, and do what they want to

Ped. *

41

do do do do do do do do do do do do do do

play only to support voice

*

44

These hips are free

3

47

Musical score for measures 47-49. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line features a long note with a fermata and a slur, with a dynamic marking of *p*. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

50

Musical score for measures 50-52. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a dynamic marking of *p* and the instruction "hips." below it. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

53

Musical score for measures 53-55. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is mostly silent with rests. The piano accompaniment features a triplet in the bass line.

56

Musical score for measures 56-58. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the instruction "ad lib., col Piano" and the lyrics "la la la la la la la la la la la la la". The piano accompaniment features a triplet in the bass line.

IV. Homage to My Hair

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

Freely, as an introduction

Mezzo-Soprano

f

When I feel her jump and dance, —

Piano

f

8va

Red.

4

When I feel her jump up and dance,

8va

f

Red.

7

When I feel her jump up and dance, — I hear the

p sub.

f

8va

Red.

10

Lively ♩ = 112

mu - sic, my God!

Lively ♩ = 112

p

13

spoken (in a lively manner)

I'm talking about my hair, my

16

nappy, nappy hair. She's a chal-enge to your

19

hand, my man, she's as tas - ty on your tongue as good, good greens.

22

She can touch your mind with her e - lec - tric fin - gers.

V. The Thirty-eighth Year

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

Mezzo-Soprano

$\bullet = 80$ at a moderate tempo

Piano

$\bullet = 80$ at a moderate tempo

p reflectively

Red. * *Red.* * *Red.* *

5

poco accel. - - - - - *rit.* - - - - - *a tempo*

p

poco accel. - - - - - *rit.* - - - - - *a tempo*

The

mf *p*

9

reflectively *quasi recitative - free tempo*

thir - ty - eighth year of my life, plain as bread, as round as a cake an

3 3

13

rit. - - - - -

ord - in - ar - y wo - man, an ord - in - ar - y wo - man

16

a tempo

rit. - - - - - *quasi recitative*

mf

I had ex - spect - ed to be

18

small - er than this, more beau - ti - ful, — wi - - - - - ser in Af - ri - can

21

ways, more con - fi - dent, — more con - fi - dent, — I had ex - spect - ed

25

start slowly and accel. - - - - - ♩ = 92

more than this.

start slowly and accel. - - - - - ♩ = 92

p *mf*

28

rit. - - *mf* freely *p* reflectively

I will be for - ty soon. My moth - er once was for - ty.

rit. - - *p*

31

rit. - - - - - ♩ = 112 with motion

rit. - - - - - ♩ = 112 with motion

Red. *Red.*

34

mp

I have dreamed dreams for you

sim. *Red.* *Red.*

ma - ma, more than once. I have

Red. *Red.* *Red.* * *Red.* *

mf
wrapped me in your skin, and made you live a - - -

mf *Red.* *Red.* *sim.*

gain, more than once, more than once, I have

Red. *Red.* * *Red.* * *Red.* *

tak - en the bones you hard - ened and built daugh - - - - ters.

Red. *sim.* *

45

And they blos - - - som and prom - - - - ise

47

fruit like Af - - - - ri - - - can trees.

f

50

I am a wom - an now, an ord - in - ar - y

53

wom - - - - an. In the

f

rit. - - - - $\bullet = 92$

thir - ty - eighth year of my life, _____ sur -

mf *f*

rit. - - - - -

round - ed by life, a per - fect pic - ture of black - ness bles - sed,

mf *rit.* - - - - -

more slowly, freely *p* I had not ex - pect - ed this lone - - - li - ness. *Slowly*

more slowly, freely *p* *Slowly*

Red.

accel. - - - - - ♩ = 112 with motion

accel. - - - - - ♩ = 112 with motion

Red. * *Red.* * *Red.* *

69

p

If in the mid - dle of my life I am

72

turn - ing the fi - - nal turn in - to the shin - ing dark,

75

f

let me come to it whole and ho - - - ly. Let me

78

come to it un - - a - - - fraid, out of my moth - er's

81

accel. - - - - -

life, out of my moth - - - er's

accel. 5

Detailed description: This system contains measures 81 and 82. The vocal line starts with a whole note 'life,' followed by a half note 'out' and a dotted half note 'of my moth - - - er's'. The piano accompaniment features a continuous eighth-note pattern in the right hand, with a '5' fingering indicated below the notes. The left hand plays a simple harmonic accompaniment. An 'accel.' marking is placed above the piano part at the start of measure 82.

83

life, in - - - - - to my

Detailed description: This system contains measures 83 and 84. The vocal line has a half note 'life,' followed by a dotted half note 'in - - - - - to' and a half note 'my'. The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern in the right hand and harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. A '5' fingering is shown for the right hand.

85

♩ = 132

ff

rit. - - - - -

own.

♩ = 132

ff

rit. - - - - -

Detailed description: This system contains measures 85 through 88. The vocal line has a half note 'own.' followed by a dotted half note. The piano accompaniment features a strong 'ff' dynamic and a 'rit.' marking. The right hand plays a complex rhythmic pattern, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A '5' fingering is shown for the right hand. Vertical bar lines with a double bar line and a fermata-like symbol are present at the end of each measure in the piano part.

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