



AMERICAN CLASSICS



RICHARD DANIELPOUR
Darkness in the Ancient Valley
A Woman's Life • Lacrimae Beati
Angela Brown • Hila Plitmann
Nashville Symphony • Giancarlo Guerrero

**V. Let's Majeste**

I sit a throne upon the times
 when Kings are rare and
 Consorts
 slide into the grease of scullery maids.

So gaily wave a crown of light
 (astride the royal chair) that blinds
 the commoners who genuflect and cross their fingers.

The years will lie beside me
 on the queenly bed.
 And coupled we'll await
 the ages' dust to cake my lids again.

And when the rousing kiss is given,
 why must it always be a fairy, and
 only just a Prince?

VI. My Life Has Turned to Blue

Our summer's gone,
 the golden days are through.
 The rosy dawns I used to
 wake with you
 have turned to grey,
 my life has turned to blue.

The once-green lawns
 glisten now with dew.
 Red robin's gone,
 down to the South he flew.
 Left here alone,
 my life has turned to blue.

I've heard the news
 that winter too will pass,
 that spring's a sign
 that summer's due at last.
 But until I see you
 lying in green grass,
 my life has turned to blue.

VII. Many and More

There are many and more
 who would kiss my hand,
 taste my lips,
 to my loneliness lend
 their bodies' warmth.

I have want of a friend.
 There are few, some few,
 who would give their names
 and fortunes rich
 or send first sons
 to my ailing bed.

I have need of a friend.

There is one and only one
 who will give the air
 from his failing lungs
 for my body's mend.

And that one is my love.

*from The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou,
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Richard Danielpour (b. 1956)

Darkness in the Ancient Valley · *Lacrimae Beati* · *A Woman's Life*



Award-winning composer Richard Danielpour, one of the most gifted and sought-after composers of his generation, has attracted an impressive array of champions; his commissioners include such celebrated artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Jessye Norman, Dawn Upshaw, Emanuel Ax, Fredericka von Stade, Thomas Hampson, the Kalichstein-Laredo-

Robinson Trio, Gil Shaham, Sarah Chang, Philippe Entremont, the Guarneri and Emerson String Quartets, the New York City and Pacific Northwest Ballets, the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia, Vienna Chamber and Stuttgart Radio Orchestra, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, and National Symphonies, Orchestre National de France, Chamber Music society of Lincoln Center, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and many more. With Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison he created *Margaret Garner*, his first opera, which had a second production at New York City Opera. He has received the American Academy Charles Ives Fellowship, a Guggenheim Award, Bearn's Prize from Columbia University, and numerous grants and residencies. A devoted mentor and educator who has had a significant impact on the younger generation of composers, he is on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music and Curtis Institute.

Darkness in the Ancient Valley (2011)

Darkness in the Ancient Valley is a symphony in five movements, commissioned by the Nashville and Pittsburgh Symphonies. The fifth movement, which includes a soprano voice, was written for Hila Plitmann. The text comes from an English translation of a Rumi poem (Divan 1559), and involves a woman who refuses to retaliate against her husband, or lover, in spite of his abusive and cruel behavior. The voice of this woman is for me a metaphor for the voice of the people of Iran who have endured much under the present regime, but who nonetheless refuse to retaliate with violence.

This 30-minute work was inspired by recent events in Iran, in particular the way its people, especially the women, have been brutalized. This is of particular interest to me because my parents were born in Iran and my family lineage on both sides goes back for well over 20 generations. Born in the U.S., I spent a year in Iran (1963-64), and although I was just a child, I remember much about that year. In addition to learning Farsi, that time laid the bedrock of my understanding about the world which deepened as I matured.

Sadly, the experience in Iran was for various reasons an unpleasant one, and I had fallen in love with Western music and culture, so as I grew into adulthood I kept my Persian heritage at a distance. In recent years, however, I have become engrossed in this ancestral legacy and deeply interested in the way the people of Iran and the whole of the Middle East are pleading to be heard in the face of oppressive regimes.

The work is in its way a kind of secular liturgy (Lamentation – Desecration – Benediction – Profanation – Consecration), with much of the music drawing on sources stemming from Persian folk melodies and Sufi rhythms. And while this is clearly the music of a 21st-century American composer, it is the music of an American composer with a Middle Eastern memory.

Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don't frighten me at all
Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won't cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Tough guys in a fight
All alone at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys all pull my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)
They don't frighten me at all.

Don't show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream,
If I'm afraid at all
It's only in my dreams.

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve,
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breath.

Life doesn't frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all.
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

9 III. They Went Home

They went home and told their wives,
that never once in all their lives,
had they known a girl like me,
But... They went home.

They said my house was licking clean,
no word I spoke was ever mean,
I had an air of mystery,
But... They went home.

My praises were on all men's lips,
they liked my smile, my wit, my hips,
they'd spend one night, or two or three.
But...

10 IV. Come. And Be My Baby

The highway is full of big cars
going nowhere fast
And folks is smoking anything that'll burn
Some people wrap their lives around a cocktail glass
And you sit wondering
where you're going to turn.
I got it.
Come. And be my baby.

Some prophets say the world is gonna end tomorrow
But others say we've got a week or two
The paper is full of every kind of blooming horror
And you sit wondering
What you're gonna do.
I got it.
Come. And be my baby.





5 Darkness in the Ancient Valley – Finale: Consecration

Text by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (13th century). English translation by Rafiq Abdullah

Again with burning lips I swore
An oath in last night's heart,
I confess with a sigh again I swore
An oath on your ruby blood.
I swore that I would fix
My longing gaze on your chaste smile.
I swore that I would not flinch
Even if you struck me with a blade,
My faith in you is green and strong
It would rise again unscathed. I suffer,
My heart is torn from your breast
Which none can cure but you.
You may willfully cast me into fire
But I am an ingot glowing for you.
I swear I am dust, dry powder
Rising from your path, as hapless atom,
A circling would held by your gravity
I turn and turn in your wake.

from *Words of Paradise*, with permission from Frances Lincoln Publishers, Ltd., London.

A Woman's Life

Texts by Maya Angelou (b. 1928)

7 I. Little Girl Speakings

Ain't nobody better'n my Daddy,
you keep yo' quater,
I ain't yo' daughter,
Ain't nobody better'n my Daddy.

Ain't nothing prettier'n my dollie,
heard what I said,
don't pat her head,
Ain't nothing prettier'n my dollie.

No lady cookinger than my Mommy,
smell that pie,
see I don't lie,
No lady cookinger than my Mommy.

8 II. Life Doesn't Frighten Me

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all
Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Lacrimae Beati (2009)

Lacrimae Beati means "Tears of the Blessed One," the blessed one in this instance being Mozart. The title also refers to the source material for this ten minute work – the *Lacrimosa* from Mozart's *Requiem*. It is generally assumed that the first eight bars of the *Lacrimosa* are among the last that Mozart wrote. For nearly 30 years I have thought about those bars, and the circumstances in which that music and most of the *Requiem* were composed.

In the second half of 2002 I was living in Berlin on a Fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin. At the time, I was orchestrating the first act of my first opera *Margaret Garner*. On Friday October 27th I flew to Vienna to see a performance at the Vienna State Opera that my friend and colleague Thomas Hampson was involved in; my plan was to stay in Vienna for the weekend and return to Berlin on Sunday evening. On the morning of Sunday October 29th I wanted to visit the cemetery in which Beethoven was buried, and had a taxi take me from my hotel. I wound up not at the Central Cemetery, where Beethoven is in fact buried, but at an 18th century cemetery named St. Marks. With the cab waiting for me outside, I walked up and down each row of graves, slowly realizing that I was in the wrong graveyard. In a frantic moment, I tripped over a tree stump and fell flat on my face. When I picked myself up, I found myself a few yards away from a single granite gravestone in a clearing with the name "Mozart" inscribed on it. (Obviously, this tombstone marked the general area in St. Marks where it was believed that Mozart was buried along with others in a mass grave in 1791.)

Later that evening I flew in a fifty-seat Lufthansa minijet that found itself in the midst of 200 mile an hour headwinds. The plane shook violently, the pilot issued a severe warning and I kept hearing, as if it were a tape loop in my mind, the *Lacrimosa* from Mozart's *Requiem*. We were indeed in the middle of a hurricane-like storm, but the two pilots in charge heroically brought the plan down safely. Driving back to the American Academy in Berlin, I saw several large trees which had been uprooted. I realized I was fortunate to be alive.

Lacrimae Beati is as much about the *Requiem* of Mozart and his struggle to complete the work as it is about my experience of it in the air on October 29th, 2002.

A Woman's Life (2007)

A Woman's Life was composed in the summer of 2007 for Angela Brown who premiered the rôle of Cilla in *Margaret Garner* (2005). While I was consistently impressed by her artistry and power onstage (she sang the rôle in Philadelphia and Cincinnati), I was especially taken with her graciousness and deep compassion for all of her colleagues. And so when she brought up the idea of my writing a cycle expressly for her I was immediately interested in finding the right combination of forces needed to bring such a thing into being.

When I asked Angela in 2006 if she had a preference of a poet who would provide texts for the cycle, she unhesitatingly named Maya Angelou. At that time she did not know that Dr. Angelou had been my friend and collaborator (in 1998 with *Portraits*) and that I had also wanted to create a new piece with her.

I went to see Maya Angelou at her New York townhouse with my wife Kathleen in early July 2006; I wanted ask her if she would write texts that would show the trajectory of a woman's life, from childhood to old age. She said she had already such a suite of poems and that she would read it to us.

And so without hesitation, holding our hands at her dining room table, she read beautifully and yet calmly eight poems which made a perfect cycle, fulfilling my intention. It was honestly one of the greatest performances I have witnessed in my life and it was all I needed to write this cycle of songs. The première performance was with the Pittsburgh Symphony in October 2009, with Leonard Slatkin conducting and, of course, Angela Brown singing.

Richard Danielpour





Angela Brown



Photo: Roni Ely

The American dramatic soprano Angela Brown made her highly successful Metropolitan Opera debut in the title rôle of *Aida*, capturing instant attention from international print and broadcast media and marking her appearance on the world's prestigious opera and symphonic stages. She immediately followed that success by collaborating with Richard Danielpour for his American opera *Margaret Garner* in the rôle of Cilla. The result was a triumph and led Richard Danielpour to set the poetry of visionary Maya Angelou for Angela Brown's voice. Also noted for her inspired musical show *Opera... from a Sistah's Point of View*, she dispels the myths of opera through lively commentary, show-stopping arias, poignant art songs, and moving spirituals. Her vehicle to promote arts education, the show has been presented in concert halls, recital series, schools, and has also featured on CNN and in print media nationwide. Angela Brown performs globally for opera, symphonic, and recital engagements as well as recording projects ranging from classical to pops to gospel.

www.angela-brown.com

Nashville Symphony



Photo: Mickey Dobo

The Nashville Symphony has established an international reputation for its recordings and innovative programming. With 140 performances annually, the 85-member orchestra is the largest performing arts nonprofit body in the state of Tennessee, offering a broad range of classical, pops, jazz and family programs, along with extensive community outreach efforts. One of the most active recording orchestras in the country, the Nashville Symphony has received far-reaching acclaim for its numerous recordings on Naxos. These recordings have received a total of fourteen GRAMMY® nominations and seven GRAMMY® wins, including two for Best Orchestral Performance – one awarded to Joan Tower's *Made in America* (Naxos 8.559328) and the other to Michael Daugherty's *Metropolis Symphony* (Naxos 8.559635). Schermerhorn Symphony Center, the home of the Nashville Symphony, opened in September 2006. Notable for its remarkable acoustics and distinctive architecture, this 197,000-square-foot facility has become an integral part of cultural life in Music City and is regarded as one of the finest concert halls in the United States.

Giancarlo Guerrero



Giancarlo Guerrero is Music Director of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra (NSO) and concurrently holds the position of Principal Guest Conductor of The Cleveland Orchestra Miami Residency. In 2012, he led the Nashville Symphony to a GRAMMY® win with their recording of American composer Joseph Schwantner's *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra* (Naxos 8.559678). His previous recording with the orchestra of Michael Daugherty's *Metropolis Symphony* (Naxos 8.559635) won three 2011 GRAMMY® Awards, including Best Orchestral Performance. As a guest conductor he has appeared in Europe with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin, London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Norwegian Radio Orchestra, and in North America with the orchestras of Baltimore, Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Seattle, Toronto and Vancouver, and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. Also in demand in Central and South America, he conducts regularly in Venezuela with the Orquesta Sinfónica Simón Bolívar, with which he has had a special relationship for many years. Guerrero holds degrees from Baylor and Northwestern universities. He was previously Music Director of the Eugene Symphony in Oregon. From 1999 to 2004, he served as Associate Conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra. Prior to his tenure in Minnesota, he served as Music Director of the Táchira Symphony Orchestra in Venezuela.

Hila Plitmann



Photo: Marc Royce

GRAMMY® Award-winning soprano Hila Plitmann is known worldwide for her astonishing musicianship, versatile and beautiful voice, and the ability to perform challenging new works. She has worked with many leading conductors, including Leonard Slatkin, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Thomas Adès, appearing as head-liner with the likes of the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the London Symphony Orchestra. Her varied recording career includes work on film soundtracks such as *The DaVinci Code*, *New York, I Love You* and *Pirates of the Caribbean IV*. In 2009 she won the GRAMMY® for 'Best Classical Vocal Performance' for Corigliano's song cycle *Mr. Tambourine Man* (Naxos 8.559331). Hila Plitmann has also released a recording of *Yiddish Songs, The Ancient Question*, on Signum Classics to high critical acclaim. Born and raised in Jerusalem, she received her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from The Juilliard School of Music.

