

JAMES SELLARS

Miscellaneous Songs

Discontinuous

for Voice, String Quartet, and Keyboard

HOG RIVER MUSIC
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

PROGRAM NOTES

The ten *Miscellaneous Songs* are for unspecified voice (optionally amplified), keyboard (preferably electronic) and string quartet. They are decidedly postmodern in style, tending to deal with the present in terms of the past and the past in terms of the present. The musical idiom ranges from a crunchy chromaticism to a lilting diatonic sweetness. Despite a degree of unity in this stylistic disunity, the songs do not constitute a cycle or even a set: one to all ten may be sung in any order as the singer(s) choose.

The texts to the *Miscellaneous Songs* deal with various contemporary ideas, from our increasingly administrated robotic lives in *Function* and the constant interruptions brought on by technology in *Discontinuous*, to a pleasant dream of escape in *Dolce Far Niente*.

Sound in My Head and *I've Decided* are, in their self-absorption, songs to oneself. *Is This a Love Song*, if not exactly self-absorption, is a self-dialog, less about the impossibility of love than about the impossibility of yet another love song. *To Write a Song* carries our millennial skepticism a step further and questions the writing of any song — except, of course, one on the subject of writing a song. *I've Never Talked to a Tree* is a doubly-coded song, sincere and satirical at the same time.

I Have Nothing to Say, a modular song, is based on John Cage's famous statement, permuted into a poem by the Scottish poet Edwin Morgan. *JNNY* is a setting of a pop tune and lyric by composer Todd Merrell (with a word and note changed here and there).

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Discontinuous is a case study of the interruptions and discontinuity that flow seamlessly in our lives. This is reflected idiomatically in the use of various musical styles, from Weber and Webern to Webber. The words question the continuity of memory, the past, present, and future. There are allusions to the telephone, the answering machine, the digital computer and jet lag. When "the atoms jump up and down," pointillism comes into play. Finally the adverbial "-ly" is displaced from "discontinuous" by an eighth rest only to allow for a tetrachord of four quite individual (discontinuous) pitches. This song is dedicated to theater director Juanita Rockwell.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

- Voice part may be amplified
- Keyboard part may be performed on an acoustic piano, electric piano, or synthesizer. The various synthesizer patches are described below.
- Patches (and patch changes) are indicated in the Keyboard part by a number in a box **1**
 - 1: Synth guitar/synth harp
 - 2: Harp/acoustic guitar
- A reference cassette (or DAT) of synthesizer sounds (as part of a sequencer "performance") is available from the publisher. This recording may be used by the singer in preparing for performance.
- Parts are available from the publisher:

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Discontinuous

for Juanita Rockwell

Music and text
James Sellars

$\text{♩} = 112$

Voice

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Keyboard

1

5

Dis - con - tin - u - ous Dis - con - tin - u - ous Noth - ing starts Noth - ing stops

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In or out of time Words that nev-er rhyme Lines that nev - er scan Cir-cles that nev-er curve

pizz. *arco*
mp *mf*
pizz. *arco* *mf*
mp *arco* *mf*
pizz.
mf

Num-bers that nev - er stop In an in - ter - rupt - ed se-quence That is Dis - con-tin - u - ous

pp *f*
pp *f* *pizz.* *arco* *f*
pp *f* *pizz.* *arco* *f*
arco *pp* *f* *f*

2

16

$\text{♩} = 84$ ($^3\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

When I have a mo - ment

Musical score for measures 16-18. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, with lyrics "When I have a mo - ment". The piano accompaniment consists of four staves (treble and bass clefs). It features a series of triplets in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. Dynamics include *ff* and accents (*v*). The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 84$ ($^3\text{♩} = \text{♩}$).

16

$\text{♩} = 84$ ($^3\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

Piano accompaniment for measures 16-18. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs). The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a bass line. Dynamics include *f* and accents (*v*). The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 84$ ($^3\text{♩} = \text{♩}$).

19

And pick up the te - le - phone And dial up your num - ber 5 - 1 - 0 - 4 The

Musical score for measures 19-21. The vocal line is in 2/4 time, with lyrics "And pick up the te - le - phone And dial up your num - ber 5 - 1 - 0 - 4 The". The piano accompaniment consists of four staves (treble and bass clefs). It features a series of eighth-note patterns in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. Dynamics include *mf* and *pizz.*. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 84$ ($^3\text{♩} = \text{♩}$).

19

Piano accompaniment for measures 19-21. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs). The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a bass line. Dynamics include *mf*. The tempo is marked $\text{♩} = 84$ ($^3\text{♩} = \text{♩}$).

22

line is bus-y Try a-gain lat-er The an - swer - ing ma - chine

mp *sul pont.* *ord.* *f* *mf*

mp *ord.* *f* *mf*

pizz. *mp* *arco* *f* *mf*

sul pont. *mp* *ord.* *f* *mf*

22

mp *f*

26

Hears eve-ry-thing I say Then a con-tin-u - ous re - cord - ing tells me that eve-ry-thing is

p

p

pizz. *p*

p

26

p

29 Tempo primo (♩=112)

Dis - con - tin - u - ous Start - ing Stop - ping Start - ing

29 Tempo primo (♩=112)

32

With - out a mo - ment to lose Be - gin - ning a - gain and then end - ing and then be -

32

35

gin-ning a - gain and then end - ing and then be - gin-ning a - gain When were you here—

cantabile

sfz *mf* *pizz.* *mf* *mf*

2

38

Was it Tues - day or Fri - day— Sun - day or Mon - day I real - ly can't say

mf

41

f

First it goes this way Then it goes that way First it turns off Then it turns on

41

45

p

then it turns off on off on on off on off off on off on off

45

48 *(spoken)*

off off off on off on off on on on on off off off on on et - cet - er - a

48

51 *(sung)* *mf*

Is it pos - si - ble — That we've been here once or twice be - fore — That I've

mf *pizz.* *mf* *pizz.* *mf*

51

1 *f*

55

been a - round this way the day be - fore the oth - er day At night at sev-en— or was it ear-ly

55

55

59

in the morn-ing— Was I sleep-ing— Were you liv-ing then in town or in the coun-try— I don't know be-cause ev -

59

59

64

ery-thing— is rather Dis - contin - uous Mov-ing ver-y fast or ver - y slow

f *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *pizz.* *p* *ff*

64

2 *f* *p*

68

Or mov - ing not at all Is it time to start a - gain

p *mf* *mf* *p*

68

72

or stop a - gain Is it time to say hel - lo

p cresc.

pp ff p cresc.

pp pp ff p cresc.

pp pp ff p cresc.

pp pp ff p cresc.

72

p cresc.

77

or may - be you don't know _____ The

f

(non trem.)

(non trem.)

(non trem.)

f

f

f

f

3 3 3

77

f

Red. Red.

clocks whirl _____ The stars fall _____ The moon goes

in and out of phase _____ The earth spins a - round and a - round and a - round and a -

87 (falsetto)

round The a - toms jump

87

91 poco rit.

up and down Dis - con - tin - u - ous - ly

91 poco rit.