JAMES SELLARS

Miscellaneous Songs

Is This a Love Song

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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Is This a Love Song — if there's a jot of doubt, it probably isn't. The real question here is whether sincere love can be declared in music at all, what with thousands of pop-rock songs intoning "Yea, yea, baby, baby!" from millions of loudspeakers. Music itself may still be able to declare love, but language, the linguists tell us, is a self-referential, closed, and well-worn system. Perhaps the answer is songs about love songs.

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** *Is This a Love Song* uses only one patch:

  1: Synth chiff ensemble/pan flute

- 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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Is This a Love Song

Music and text
James Sellars

Gliding, flowing
(♩=ca.96)

Voice

p

Is this a love song I'm sing-ing

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

p

Gliding, flowing
(♩=ca.96)

Keyboard

1

p legato

6

does it have a mean-ing or is it just the sounds of a song

mp

6

p

mp

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10

Is there a pat-tern or rhy-thm In thesewords of ex-pres-sion Is there a sense that one might un-der-stand

10

14

mf

Are these thoughts of mine free flow-ing or emp-ty form and pat-tern Are these feel-ings art - i - fi - cial

mf

14

mf

17

or im - age and il - lu - sion

Is this a love song I'm sing - ing does it have a mean-ing

17

21

or is it just the sound of a song

Is there a pat-tern or rhy-thm In these wordsof ex - pres-sion

21

25

mf

Is there a sense that one might un - der - stand

p

When I'm sing - ing what I'm say - ing

mf

pp

mf

pp

mf

pp

mf

pp

25

mf

28

When I'm say - ing what I'm sing - ing

mf

Is this a love song I'm sing - ing

p

mf

mf

mp

28

pp

p

31

Does it have a meaning or is it just thesound of a song—

f

31

f

36

f

A poem of in-for-ma-tion With-out in-ter-pre-ta-tion Dif-ferent words for eve-ry per-son

p

p

p

p

36

legato

40

no onelisten-ing mis - un - der - stand - ing Lines with dif-ferentmean-ings

flautando
p sul tasto
flautando
p sul tasto
flautando
p sul tasto
flautando
p sul tasto

40

44

songs of dif-ferent sounds Not com-mun-i-cat-ing nev-er com-pre-hend-ing

44

p

49

pp

Is this a love song I'm sing-ing does it have a mean-ing or is it just the sound of a song_

ord.

pp

ord.

pp

ord.

pp

ord.

pp

49

54

p

54

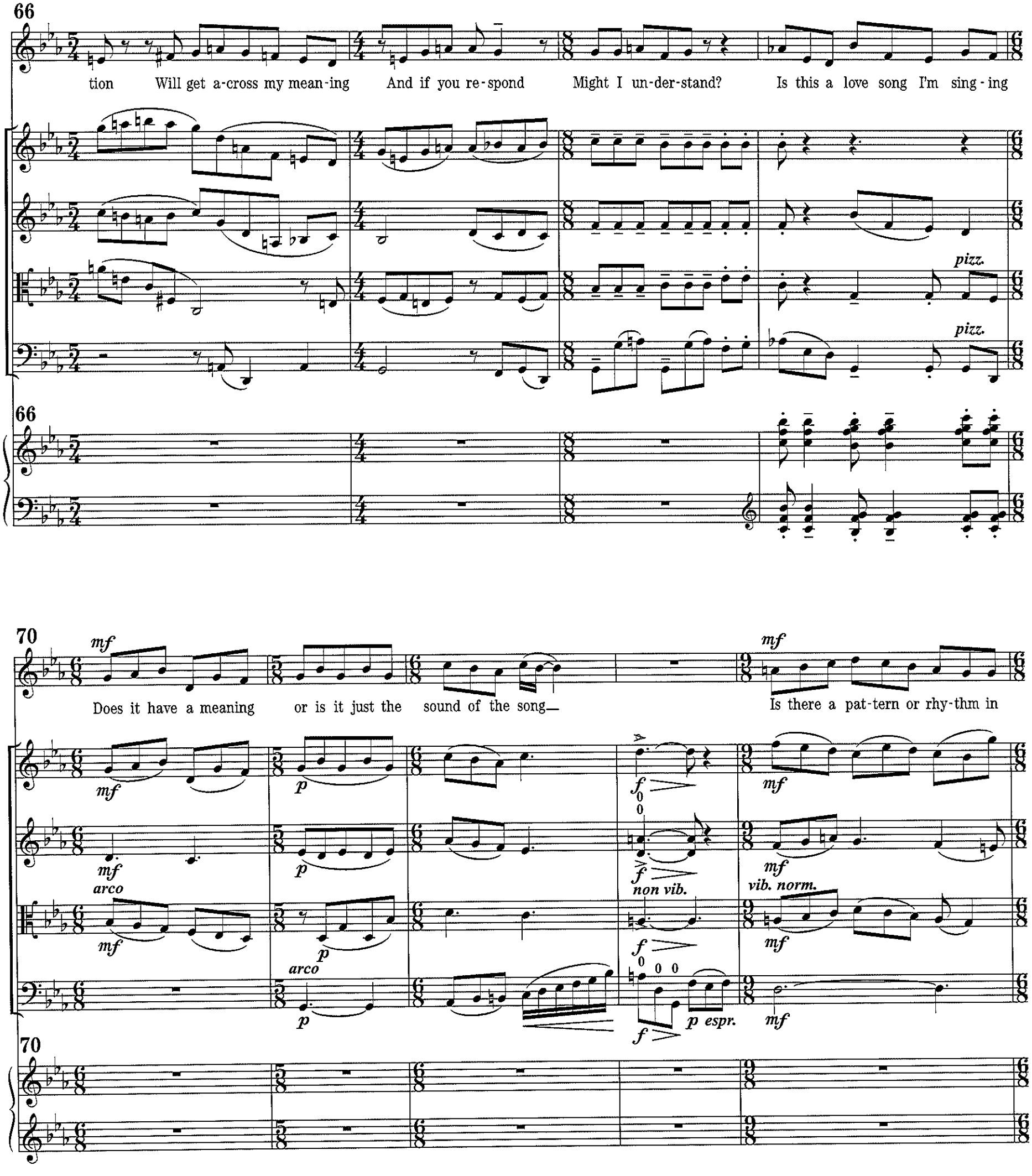
pp *p*

60

This song that I'm per - form - ing These sounds that I'm pro - duc - ing

63

These thoughts that I am dream - ing Can you un - der - stand What style and in - flec -


66
tion Will get a-cross my mean-ing And if you re-spond Might I un-der-stand? Is this a love song I'm sing-ing
pizz.
pizz.
66
70
mf
Does it have a meaning or is it just the sound of the song—
mf
Is there a pat-tern or rhy-thm in
mf
p
f
mf
mf
p
f
mf
arco
non vib.
vib. norm.
mf
p
f
mf
arco
p
f
p espr.
mf
70

75

these words of ex - pres - sion Is there a sense that one might un - der - stand

75

mp

78

p

When I'm sing - ing what I'm say - ing When I'm say - ing what I'm sing - ing

p

p

78

p legato

80

Is this a love song I'm sing - ing Does it have a mean - ing

p f

83

Or is it just the sound of a song— Ex - plain - ing those feel - ings

mp

87

De-scrib-ing my in - ten-tions The sense of my e - mo-tions Find-ing rea-sons de-fi-ni-tions

91

f

Is there a pat-tern or rhy-thm In thesewords of ex-pres-sion Is there a sense that one might un-der-stand

mp

95

pp

Is this a lovesong I'm sing-ing Does it have a mean-ing Or is it just the sound of a song

pp

pp

pp

95

p legato

100

poco rit.

poco rit.

100

Hartford, Connecticut
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