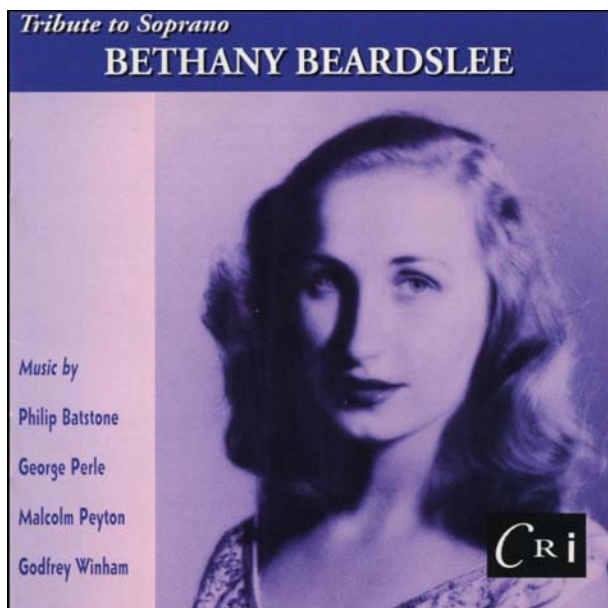


# A Tribute to Bethany Beardslee, Soprano



1. Philip Batstone: *A Mother Goose Primer* (1969) (10:27)  
Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Victoria Bond, echo;  
U.C.L.A. Chamber Ensemble: John Dare, conductor;  
Susan Greenberg, flute/alto flute/piccolo; Gary Gray,  
clarinet; Gary Foster, clarinet; David Atkins, bass  
clarinet; Natalie Limonick, piano; Jeffrey Solow,  
cello; Eric Remsen, Emily Just, percussion
- George Perle: *Thirteen Dickinson  
Songs* (1977-1978) ..... (36:40)
2. Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower ..... (1:43)

3. I Like to see it lap the miles ..... (2:08)
4. I know some lonely houses off the road ... (4:49)
5. There came a wind like a bugle ..... (2:06)
6. Beauty—be not caused—it is ..... (2:16)
7. The wind—tapped like a tired man ..... (3:11)
8. These are the days when birds come back (3:24)
9. The heart asks—pleasure first ..... (2:41)
10. What if I shall not wait ..... (1:58)
11. If I'm lost—now ..... (3:12)
12. The loneliness one dare not sound ..... (3:13)
13. Under the light, yet under ..... (2:47)
14. She bore it till the simple veins ..... (3:12)

Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Morey Ritt, piano

Godfrey Winham: *To Prove My Love* (1957–1960)

15. Lord of my love... ..... (3:31)
16. Accuse me thus... ..... (1:55)
17. Let me not to the marriage ..... (3:18)

Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Robert Helps, piano

Malcolm Peyton: *Songs from Walt Whitman* (1981) . (17:57)

18. Oh Me! Oh Life! ..... (1:32)
19. Roots and leaves themselves  
alone are these ..... (3:40)
20. Darest are thou now O soul ..... (4:26)
21. Scented herbage of my breast ..... (1:23)
22. Warble for lilac-time ..... (6:56)

Bethany Beardslee, soprano; Linda Quan, violin;  
Malcolm Peyton, piano

Total playing time: 74:07

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## Notes

For many of us the name Bethany Beardslee will forever be associated with the vocal music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern, and the achievement of an artistic standard that few have been able to match since. What is surprising is that her initiation into this literature occurred not as a seasoned professional but was established when she and fellow Juilliard student Jacques Monod gave of the world premiere of probably the wildest and seemingly most chaotic of contemporary vocal music, Webern's *Fünf Kanons* Op. 16. What is even more astonishing, however, is that on listening once more to this almost fifty-year-old performance, one immediately senses the consummate mastery of technique and style that leads the listener to the heart of this forbidding work. In my experience, Miss Beardslee is to date the only musician to have done so. One might then consider the date of that performance, May 8, 1951, the moment that Bethany Beardslee became a force in the performance of twentieth-century music. From that point on, Miss Beardslee's name has been indissolubly associated with the music of our time.

In the years that followed, Miss Beardslee, often in collaboration with Jacques Monod and Robert Helps, became famous for her performances of *Pierrot lunaire*, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* (*The Book of the Hanging Gardens*), and almost the entire vocal music of the Viennese, recording much of what was then a very specialist repertoire for a

variety of record labels. Such an understanding and mastery of "our" repertoire, however, could not fail to have attracted a great number of composers to write works for her, and in that she has been the most faithful and high-minded advocate a composer could wish for. It was for Bethany Beardslee that the young Milton Babbitt wrote one of his earliest pieces, the song cycle *Du*, beginning a collaboration that extended through two of his most celebrated works, *Vision and Prayer* and *Philomel*. Indeed, it is in the latter work that Miss Beardslee is commemorated in a way that very few performers have ever enjoyed. Commissioned by Miss Beardslee, the work is composed for solo soprano, recorded soprano, and synthesized sound, and in it, Babbitt has incorporated the voice of Miss Beardslee into the pre-recorded material itself. Thus, her presence is assured in every future performance of the work.

If we think of Miss Beardslee solely as the exponent and master of the music of our time, our memories are selective. One only has to hear her performances of Baroque cantatas, the German Lieder repertoire, or the chansons of Debussy and Ravel to realize that her mastery of "our" music did not solely rely upon her sense of pitch and ability to perform the "unperformable" rhythms that such music was said to solely consist. Rather, it has been her ability to mold a phrase, to project that meaning and emotion of a poem through her

subtle inflections as if she were speaking to us, and to produce a sound that is both extraordinarily beautiful and immediately identifiable as any of the great lieder singers of the past that has made her the great artist she is. We can only be extraordinarily grateful for having been able to hear her as she bestowed that artistry upon the works of past centuries and the classics of our own century. There is no doubt, however, that her composer-colleagues will be eternally indebted to her for bringing their own works to life. To have heard one's own work performed by Bethany Beardslee was to have received a once-in-a-lifetime performance.

I first met Bethany at the Marlboro Festival in 1967. I knew her by reputation as the prime diva of *Pierrot*, *Erwartung*, *Philomel*, and everything called "new music." I was delighted to learn that she loved "old music" with equal passion, and, in fact, that she made no distinction; it was all a labor of love. She listened to every note in the piano part, savored each harmonic nuance, and put her whole soul into everything she sang. Bethany enjoys searching for music as much as finding it, and working with her on Brahms, Schubert, Debussy, Schoenberg, was one of the happiest experiences of my musical life. Thank you Bethany!

—Richard Goode

The aura around Bethany that was always the most stimulating to me was her quality of total aliveness while singing, plus her obvious joy and dedication in presenting the composer's music. It all boils down to a "criticism" Bethany made as an aside to me during a performance of a particularly knotty dodecaphonic piece, "It doesn't swing." Bethany truly swung! I have personally never sensed this total involvement quite so much with any other singer. Her performances are unique, and it is good to see them preserved.

—Robert Helps

Bethany and I met frequently during the eight months it took me to write the Thirteen Dickinson Songs, and I was able to experience firsthand something that I already knew: that Bethany could make the most difficult problems of intonation and the most intricate rhythmic relations seem effortless and natural. But our collaboration actually began before I had even found a text, when I would prime myself for the composition of the song cycle that Bethany had asked me to write by reading through songs of Beethoven and Schubert, Debussy and Wolf, with her. And indeed, a perceptive reviewer of the original release of the present recording observed that "Perle can be said to be working within, even paying homage to, the Lied tradition," as Bethany herself had done in her performances of the "atonal" songs of Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg. In fact, Bethany's career has earned a place for itself in the history of music and is to be treasured above all for the connections it has given us. Without connections we would be without tradition, and without tradition we would have no language, neither of music nor of words. So it is worth noting that the same artist whose rare and special gifts we first came to know through her incomparable performances of the music of the second Vienna school, including the world premieres of several song cycles by Webern and the American premieres of Berg's *Altenberg-Lieder* and Schoenberg's *Three Songs*, Op. 48, and who showed us how this music is continuous with an earlier tradition, also gave the premiere performances of the works that are heard on this disc.

—George Perle

Were there no Bethany Beardslee, she could not have been invented; the innocent Michigan lass who went to Juilliard and sang in Mozart operas was soon thereafter to be hailed for her performance of works from the French repertory by the Francophilic Virgil Thomson, but soon after that to meet a

fellow student at Juilliard, a real Frenchman named Jacques Monod, who, at that time, reported to me with great excitement that he had discovered a young lady "from East Lansing who could sing anything," and soon she did. She sang the songs of Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Krenek, and a range of composers from here at home to abroad. These were often first performances, as of the Webern Opus 25 songs, of which Bethany gave the world premiere in New York in 1952, eighteen years after the songs were composed. Her repertory ranged not only across continents but across centuries, from that of the New York Pro Musica to the first work for soprano and synthesized tape, my *Vision and Prayer*.

All of this she performed with what Martin Bernheimer has described as a "silvery, lyric soprano" so effortlessly and punctiliously as to have been achieved only by sedulous effort, intense concentration, and musicianship invented by her.

Bethany had to be heard to be believed; surely this recording will make many, many more believers.

—Milton Babbitt

All composers and amateurs will remain most grateful to our wonderful American soprano Bethany Beardslee for the cultured handling of her historic contribution to the musical activity of our time, this is the context of a most significant repertoire, enclosing, in part, the work of Schoenberg-Berg-Webern, the introduction of Milton Babbitt's vocal music, and the numerous premieres of young composers' settings.

—Jacques-Louis Monod

If I were forced to choose one single recording that changed my life, I would unhesitatingly select the old Columbia Masterworks album devoted to music by Berg, Schoenberg, and Webern, conducted by Robert Craft and featuring Bethany Beardslee as soloist in the *Altenberg Lieder*. I discovered this disc when I was thirteen, in a listening room at the University of Connecticut music library. Hard to believe, but these scores were considered fearsome back then, and I listened with a heady sense of subversive glee, at first relishing mainly the forbidden dissonances and then, a little later, finding my way into the lambent, deeply expressive lyricism of this great music.

After that, Bethany Beardslee was my heroine. Through her recordings, she introduced me to further works by Berg and Schoenberg and carried me on to Krenek and Babbitt. She had the ability to sing music that was too often shrieked; to bring logical, linear consistency to the most angular passages; to caress not only the words but also the phonemes of whatever she sang.

I heard her in person only late in her career, in a Town Hall concert with Robert Helps, long after she was officially retired. Even then, she stood as eloquent refutation to those trice-to-be-damned pedagogues who tell their students that "modern music ruins the voice." Well into her sixties, Beardslee sounded fresh, eager, and sensitive to mood and manner, and her pitch sense was still as reliable as a keyed instrument. All singers could profit from such "ruin."

—Tim Page

**Philip Batstone** (1933–1992) was born in Boston on January 4, 1933. As a teenager, Batstone acquired facility as a jazz pianist and began undergraduate studies at the Massachusetts College of Art and Boston University. In 1954 he enlisted in the army, winding up in Berlin as a glockenspiel player in the United States Army Band.

On completing his military service, Batstone remained in Berlin, studying composition, theory, music history, and keyboard improvisation at the Hochschule für Musik.

Batstone received the M.F.A. degree in 1962 and the Ph.D. in composition from Princeton University in 1965.

Batstone was a slow and careful worker, and his output as a composer is correspondingly small, but his works are notable for their precise expression, especially in the relatively high proportion of texted pieces. Among his best works are *A Mother Goose Primer*, *Drei Lieder von Ivan Goll* for Soprano and piano, and *Five Movements for Soprano and String Quartet on Poems of Emily Dickinson*. His Piano Concerto, *Collage* for orchestra, and *The Phoenix and the Turtle* for solo voice and multichannel taped voice (text by William Shakespeare) remain unperformed.

#### Notes on the Music

*A Mother Goose Primer* is a dramatic music-word poem. It contains no music that is independent of the words; no words—beyond merely individual lines—that can in any way be thought of as independent of the music. The creation, the arrangement, the composition of the words, the music, and the staging were simultaneous and interdependent.

“A small bell calls the singer (mother, bird, witch, girl, child) on to the stage. The players, playing their usual role in the concert hall, are musicians, grouped to one side and mute at first until, after being recognized, they begin playing tentatively, as pupils. As the flight begins, their role is more active (although they never really supply support to the voice in the usual sense; rather, their role is one of commentary and obbligato). Finally, one of them is moved to join in the singing.

“After the game is over (“Bandbox!”), and the bedtime prayer is sung (“Night!”), the players again become mute, save this one who provides the echo from across the lake. After delivering a short speech at the apron of the stage, our Phoenix/-housewife moves nonchalantly toward the wings, having left the drama in the hands of the audience. Finally she is called away by the same bell which called her in the beginning.

“This work is strictly serial with regard to both pitches and rhythms. It is dedicated, with admiration and respect, to Miss Bethany Beardslee.”

—Philip Batstone

In 1996 **George Perle** (b 1915) was awarded both the Pulitzer Prize in composition and a MacArthur Fellowship. He is the author of six books, including an award-winning two-volume study of *The Operas of Alban Berg*. He is a member of both the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the National Academy of Arts and Sciences. His most recent orchestral composition, *Transcendental Modulations*, was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for its 150th anniversary.

“Though every beginner in composition tries his hand at it before anything else, it has always seemed to me that the art song is the most subtle, sophisticated, and difficult of musical genres. Out of all the possible ways of reading and interpreting a poem, the musical setting fixes just one, and it must do so in the most spontaneous and authentic way, without seeming to encroach upon the prerogatives of the poet and the listener. Not only must it seem right and seem to do so at once without also seeming coercive and demanding, but it must go beyond this and enhance and elucidate the words; otherwise, why bother to put music to them at all? But then, what about the music itself, which has its own logic, its own proportions, its own kind of coherence? And what about the problem of combining two such uniquely characteristic and individual means of musical expression as voice and piano in such a way that the special personality of each is realized and even heightened by contrast and association with the other?

“Obviously, my concept of what an art song should be was formed by the achievements of the great German composers of Lieder in the nineteenth century, so it is not surprising that

I should have chosen, for my first songs, composed in 1941, German verses that evoke, in their simplicity, immediacy, and self-contained lyricism, the world of the Lied—poems of the sort that inspired the early romantic composers, though their author, Rainer Maria Rilke, was a very late Romantic. When Bethany Beardslee asked me to write some songs for her I again decided that what I wanted to write were lieder, but in my own language, rather than in German. Many months passed before I found the verses that could lead my musical thoughts in the direction that I had decided upon—the English romantic poets didn’t work for me at all on this respect. The *Dickinson Songs*, commissioned for Bethany Beardslee by the National Endowment for the Arts, were composed in 1977–78 and were first performed by Ms. Beardslee and Ms. Ritt at the Fifth Annual Arts Song Festival of the Westminster Choir College in Princeton on June 19, 1978. The Rilke and Dickinson song cycles are my total output in the genre.”

—George Perle

**Godfrey Winham** took his early formal education at the Westminster School and the Royal Academy of Music, and he worked privately with Matyas Seiber in composition. In 1954 he came to the United States to study with Roger Sessions as an undergraduate. In 1963, he was awarded Princeton’s Ph.D. in composition. From 1948 until his death of Hodgkin’s disease, Winham worked extensively in music criticism, theory, and composition. In the 1960s he became interested in electronic music, first with the R.C.A. Synthesizer and later with computer sound synthesis. He was a pioneer in computer music and originator of the computer music program 4B. The Center for Computer Music at Princeton University was named in his memory.

The settings of these Shakespeare sonnets were composed between 1957 and 1960. They are dedicated to Bethany Beardslee Winham and were premiered by her in 1960.

**Malcolm Peyton** began early musical training with the piano and trumpet. He studied composition with Edward Cone and Roger Sessions at Princeton University and with Wolfgang Fortner while on a Fulbright Fellowship in Germany. Piano studies were continued with Edward Steuermann in New York. In 1980 Malcolm received an award and citation from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters for *Songs from Walt Whitman*. These songs were also included on the repertory list for the Rockefeller International vocal competition. At present he is acting co-chairman of the composition department at the New England Conservatory of Music, where he has been teaching since 1965.

“Ideas based on poems and excerpts from *Leaves of Grass* have occurred to me as far back as 1965. At the time, the poetry, intriguing as it was, was too overwhelming and diffuse for me to handle. Several projects lie abandoned. These songs are, therefore, for me, a coming-to-terms with Walt Whitman.

“A few poems I have committed to memory but most often only a few lines would remain with me. *O Me! O Life!* uses excerpts for which I had indelible musical associations and which flowed from one to another, so I left them as such.

“*Roots and leaves themselves alone*, however, is set entirely. The strength and flow of onomatopoeia through a variety of invocations and scenes, encircled as they are by the words. ‘Roots and leaves... tall branches and trees,’ inspired the complete setting of this magnificent poem. I have placed the voice in the center of a multi-faceted accompaniment. Many different formations and relationships are associated by the interval E-flat 4 to E-natural 5 from beginning to end.

“As with all of the songs, the vocal line was composed before the accompaniment in *Darest thou now O soul*. Nevertheless, here the harmonic issue is of paramount importance. The note

D on the word 'Darest' as well as the octave Ds in the accompaniment are heard as solemn and foreboding signals and all other tones are heard in various modifying relationships to these. Triadic reference gives way to two whole-tone groups spaced in different registers at the words 'Then we burst forth, we float,' suspending and masking the return of more specifically tonal syntax and the Ds at the ending.

"*Scented herbage of my breast*, the most intimate song of the group, is excerpted from a much larger poem. Gentle chords, rhythmically in and out of phase with the voice, form the primary idea. The Coda is a prelude to the Finale to which it is thematically related.

"A progression implied between the first two songs, within the third, and now again between the fourth and fifth, is one of retention or contraction followed by release. Inward-looking, pensive poetry is followed by outward-looking, ebullient poetry. And so, musically, *Warble for lilac time* is the release for the entire group and was conceived as such. Here is a much bolder sweep of line and accompaniment, sustained sequence and variations of material, new harmonies and, of course, as a surprise, a new instrument.

"I will continue to set Whitman texts. The discovery and completion of these songs suggest the wherewithal to go on."

—*Malcolm Peyton*

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## Production Notes

From CRI SD243:

Philip Batstone: *A Mother Goose Primer*: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded January 27, 1969, in Schoenberg Hall, UCLA, Los Angeles, California. Published by APNM

From CRI SD 403:

George Perle: *Thirteen Dickinson Songs*: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded 1977-78. Published by Gunmar Music Inc. (ASCAP)

Godfrey Winham: *To Prove My Love*: Recorded live 6/26/74 at Westminster Art Song Festival, Westminster Music School, Princeton, New Jersey. Digitally re-mastered by Baird Winham at The Trees Studios, Rhinecliff, N.Y. Published by Boelke-Bomart Inc. (BMI)

From CRI SD 466:

Malcolm Peyton: *Songs From Walt Whitman*: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, New York, April 1981. Published by Association for the Promotion of New Music (BMI).

Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

Digitally re-mastered by Robert Wolff at Sony Music Studios, NYC.

Other performances by Bethany Beardslee on CRI include: Lerdahl: *Wake* CD 580; Babbitt: *Vision and Prayer*, CD 521; Helps: *Gossamer Noons*, CD 717; and Shapey *Incantations*, CD 690.