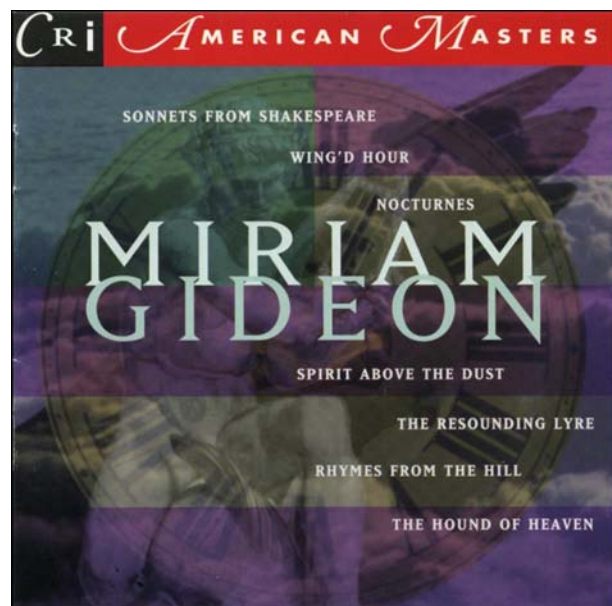


## Miriam Gideon



- Sonnets From Shakespeare* (1951) ..... (15:51)
1. Sonnet VIII (“Music to hear”) ..... (2:30)
  2. Sonnet XIX (“Devouring Time”);  
Ritournelle I ..... (2:54)
  3. Sonnet XXXIII (“Full many a glorious  
morning”); Ritournelle 2 ..... (2:28)
  4. Sonnet LXXI (“No longer mourn  
for me”) ..... (4:02)
  5. Sonnet CXXIII (“No, Time, thou shalt  
not boast”); Ritournelle 3 ..... (3:57)
- William Sharp, baritone; The Prism  
Orchestra; Robert Black, conductor
- Rhymes From The Hill* (1968) ..... (7:36)  
for mezzo-soprano, clarinet, marimba and cello
6. Bundeslied der Galgenbrüder (Chorus of  
the Gallows Gang) ..... (1:35)
  7. Galgenkinds Wiegenlied (Gallow’s  
Child’s Lullaby) ..... (1:44)
  8. Die Korfsche Uhr (Korf’s Clock) ..... (1:01)
  9. Palmstroems Uhr (Palmstroem’s Clock) ... (2:05)
  10. Der Seufzer (The Sigh) ..... (1:13)
- Jan DeGaetani, mezzo-soprano; Arthur Bloom,  
clarinet; Raymond DesRoches, marimba; Fred  
Sherry, cello; David Gilbert, conductor
11. *The Hound of Heaven* (1945) ..... (7:07)
- William Metcalf, baritone; Ronald Roseman,  
oboe; Isadore Cohen, violin; Karen Phillips, viola;  
Fred Sherry, cello; Fritz Jahoda, conductor

- Nocturnes* (1975) ..... (7:51)  
for soprano, flute, violin, cello, oboe, vibraphone
12. To The Moon ..... (2:34)
  13. High Tide ..... (2:19)
  14. Witchery ..... (2:58)
- Judith Raskin, soprano; Da Capo Chamber  
Players: Patricia Spencer, flute; Joel Lester,  
violin; André Emelianoff, cello; Ronald  
Roseman, oboe; Gordon Gottlieb,  
vibraphone; John DeMain, conductor
- The Resounding Lyre* (1979) ..... (11:52)  
for tenor, flute, oboe, bassoon, violin, viola and cello
15. Mutterbildnis (Portrait of a Mother) ..... (2:26)
  16. Wähebüf und Nichtenvint (Hey-pick-up  
and Find-nothing) ..... (3:16)
  17. Halleluja (Halleujah) ..... (6:11)
- Constantine Cassolas, tenor; Speculum  
Musicae: Susan Palma, flute; Stephen  
Taylor, oboe; Lauren Goldstein, bassoon;  
Stephen Burns, trumpet; Benjamin Hudson,  
violin; John Graham, viola; Eric Bartlett,  
cello; Robert Black, conductor
- Spirit Above The Dust* (1981) ..... (13:39)  
for mezzo-soprano, flute, oboe, bassoon,  
French horn, 2 violins and viola
18. Prologue ..... (1:21)
  19. Theory of Poetry ..... (1:01)
  20. The Two Trees ..... (1:38)
  21. The Linden Branch ..... (1:52)
  22. Black Boy ..... (3:44)
  23. My Caliban Creature ..... (1:54)
  24. The Snow Fall ..... (2:09)
- Elaine Bonazzi, mezzo-soprano; Contemporary  
Chamber Ensemble: Susan Palma, flute;  
Stephen Taylor, oboe; Donald MacCourt,  
bassoon; Paul Ingraham, French horn; Joel  
Lester, violin; Miohisa Takada, violin; Jacob  
Glick, viola; Arthur Weisberg, conductor
- Wing’d Hour* (1983) ..... (8:51)
25. Silent Noon ..... (3:44)
  26. My Heart Is Like A Singing Bird ..... (2:08)
  27. Autumn ..... (2:59)
- Constantine Cassolas, tenor; The Prism  
Orchestra; Robert Black, conductor

Total playing time: 73:29

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## Notes

“When I was 19 I set a song—to an American poem I’ve  
now forgotten—and I knew I’d found my own idiom. I was  
hooked.”

By 1981, the year **Miriam Gideon** (1906–1996) made this  
statement, she had demonstrated that writing for the voice was

indeed a form of artistic expression well suited to her, having  
composed nearly forty vocal works. While she also composed  
a number of instrumental works (for solo piano, orchestra,  
and various chamber ensembles), the bulk of her *oeuvre*  
consists of music with text and includes choral compositions,

songs for voice with piano or chamber ensemble, a cantata, and an opera. The present disc, a collection of twenty-seven songs spanning nearly forty years of Gideon's compositional career, illustrates her elegant cultivation of the vocal idiom.

Gideon was born in 1906 in Greeley, Colorado, where her father taught philosophy and modern languages at a local college and her mother taught elementary school. In 1916, her family moved to Yonkers, New York, where she studied piano and music theory and felt a "compulsion to compose." Although Gideon's parents fostered her musical interests, her contact with music at home was limited, as her family did not have a phonograph or radio. To augment her musical training, Gideon's parents allowed her to move at the age of fifteen to Boston to live with her uncle, Henry Gideon, who was an organist, conductor, and the music director of Temple Israel. He supervised her study of the piano and organ and provided her with a rich and variegated musical environment. As a student at Boston University, she majored in French while taking music courses and studying piano privately with Felix Fox. After graduating in 1926, Gideon returned to New York and took graduate courses in music at New York University with Marion Bauer, Charles Haubiel, and Jacques Pillois, intending to acquire a teaching certificate. Martin Bernstein encouraged Gideon's compositional bent, and after a year at NYU, she discarded her plans to teach in the public schools, deciding instead to pursue a career as a composer.

From 1931 to 1934 Gideon continued her study of harmony, counterpoint, and composition with Lazare Saminsky, a Russian-born conductor and composer. Saminsky encouraged her to continue her work in composition with Roger Sessions. During the eight years that she studied with Sessions, from 1935 to 1943, her music abandoned its tonal underpinnings for a more independent, free atonal style. While completing her formal training in composition with Sessions, Gideon entered Columbia University's graduate musicology program in 1942, earning an M.A. in 1946. She began teaching at Brooklyn College, City University of New York in 1944; during the next five decades, Gideon would also teach at City College, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where she was elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and a retrospective concert of her music took place at the Academy in 1992.

The *Sonnets from Shakespeare* (1951) were premiered at a concert of the International Society for Contemporary Music in New York in 1951. George Perle wrote to Gideon that "I feel that you've hit something with your Shakespeare Songs that seldom happens more than once in a lifetime to a composer." Perle championed the *Sonnets from Shakespeare*, enthusiastically describing them in 1960 to William Glock, the Controller of Music for the British Broadcasting Corporation, as "the best American work of the last fifty years." Perle's advocacy resulted in a BBC broadcast performance of the *Sonnets* in 1961.

*Rhymes from the Hill* (1968) demonstrates Gideon's mastery in deploying instruments to intensify a poem's drama. Her sensitivity to the sonorous qualities of the clarinet, cello, and marimba wonderfully underscores the ironic humor in Christian Morgenstern's poems.

Gideon identified *The Hound of Heaven* (1945) as "probably the first piece written in what I would call my own style." Its text is based on Francis Thompson's poem of the same name, which describes the narrator's conversion to Catholicism and the necessity of allowing God, the heavenly hound, to capture his soul so he can attain happiness. In discussing her decision

to set a portion of this text to celebrate the centenary of Temple Emanu-El in New York, which had commissioned it, Gideon eloquently argued for the poem's relevance to Jewish suffering.

Gideon composed *Nocturnes* (1975) at the request of "a parent who preferred to commission a composer than to spend money on parties for his children's important birthdays." Her setting of poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Jean Starr Untermyer, and Frank Dempster Sherman demonstrates her remarkable ability to gather together stylistically disparate texts that evoke a common theme—here, the mysterious and mystical qualities of night.

*The Resounding Lyre* (1979) sets three German poems from the thirteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries and is based upon an earlier work, her *Spiritual Madrigals* (1965) for chorus and chamber ensemble. To the original instrumentation of viola, cello, and bassoon, Gideon added flute, oboe, trumpet, and violin—the resultant version displays some of Gideon's finest writing for solo voice and chamber ensemble. It also stands as a rare musical collaboration between Gideon and her husband Frederic Ewen, who wrote the first poem, "Mutterbildnis."

*Spirit Above the Dust* (1981) was premiered at Yale University in 1981, and was later performed at the Library of Congress and Carnegie Hall. Gideon's selection and setting of the first text, by Anne Bradstreet, is suggestive in relation to a statement she made in 1970, that "I strongly believe a woman composer can have something special to say, in that there is a very particular woman's way of responding to the world—and this in some basic way is quite different and yet no less important than a man's."

*Wing'd Hour* (1983) was written during a particularly fruitful decade for Gideon. Its music and texts (by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, and Walter de la Mare) movingly meditate upon life, loss, and death.

—Ellie M. Hisama

#### Notes by the composer from the LP releases:

*Sonnets from Shakespeare* contains three sonnets concerned with the idea of Time: "Devouring Time," "No longer mourn for me," and "No, Time, thou shalt not boast." These stormy verses alternate with the serene "Music to hear" and "Full many a glorious morning." The cycle opens with voice alone, soon joined by the strings. Instrumental ritournelles are used as separations between the songs, and as a recall of moods and thematic ideas. The strings maintain a strong profile throughout, while the trumpet threads its way, and comments, almost like a second human voice.

*Rhymes from the Hill* is a song cycle, composed in 1968, comprising five poems from the *Galgenlieder* (Gallows Songs) by Christian Morgenstern, set in the original German for solo voice, clarinet, cello, and marimba. On the first appearance of these poems in Germany in 1905 a critic spoke of the "magnificent subtle humor of the heart behind these crazy verse fancies."

From this sardonic collection I have chosen five poems:

1 "Song of the Gallows Gang": nocturnal shrieks and sinister sounds of nature are heard in the clattering of the marimba and the wail of the clarinet.

2 "Gallows Child's Lullaby": a biting parody of the nursery rhyme "Sleep, baby, sleep," in which the rocking of the marimba, the sinister purring of the clarinet, and the lulling of the cello suggest a less than benign path to slumber.

3 & 4 "Two clocks": the first moving backward or forward, the second adjusting its pace as desired—a clockwork with a

heart. Brittle sounds from the marimba provide a mechanical, ticking background for the *espressivo* phrases of cello and clarinet.

5 “The Sigh”: —a tribute to Love. Skating on the ice, the sigh becomes so overheated by amorous thoughts that the ice melts and he disappears. Tremolos on the marimba, grace notes on the clarinet, and glissandi on the cello are used to depict this ironic tragedy.

*The Hound of Heaven*, composed in 1945, is a setting for solo voice and chamber group, a combination which I have used many times subsequently. This work, for voice, oboe, and string trio utilizes several lines from the poem of that title by Francis Thompson, expressing profound life experiences, which mar, in order to make, the human being: “Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?” Of this work George Perle has written: “The texture...is strikingly personal, characterized by lightness, the sudden exposure of individual notes, constantly shifting octave relationships...this is a technique that may be indefinitely expanded and within which a composer may grow.”

*Nocturnes* was composed in 1975 on a commission from Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Siegel of New York City, in celebration of the eighteenth birthday of their daughter, Rena. The poems I chose, and their transmutation into music, seemed an appropriate evocation of youth and its awakening to the magical forces of nature: the quiet traversing of the sky in “To The Moon”; a serene control over turbulent forces in “High Tide”; and the dream-like spell of “Witchery.”

*The Resounding Lyre*—a metaphor for the human heart—consists of three settings of German poems ranging from the thirteenth century to the present. The first, “Mutterbildnis,” by Frederic Ewen, is the portrait of a mother, a symbol of compassion for all humanity. The second, “Wähebüf und Nichtenvint,” in Middle High German, is the complaint of a

thirteenth century Jewish Minnesinger who vows to leave his patrons because they lack respect for his art and withhold his proper reward; he will join his persecuted people. The third poem, by Heinrich Heine, “Hallelujah,” is a celebration of glory and wonder at the masterpiece of creation—the human heart.

*Spirit Above the Dust*, commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation of the Library of Congress to honor the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Music Library Association, is a setting for voice and eight instruments of verses by three American poets: Anne Bradstreet, Archibald MacLeish, and Norman Rosten.

The poems chosen represent a variety of interpretations of American life. Anne Bradstreet (1612–1672) was the first American woman poet to be published. Her “Prologue” states with elegant irony her creed of woman’s independence. Archibald MacLeish served as Librarian of Congress from 1939 to 1944; “The Two Trees”, “The Linden Branch”, and “The Snow Fall”—the poems used in this cycle—reveal his humanistic attitude. Norman Rosten’s “Black Boy” is a searing indictment of a lynching, while “Caliban” exhibits a sardonic wit, one of the poet’s characteristic traits.

*Wing’d Hour* was composed in 1983 in memory of a dear friend, who, with his wife, read and loved poetry. The poems chosen were among their favorites, and constitute a kind of cycle: the awakening of love, love’s fulfillment, and death and loss. In “Silent Noon,” after palpitating figures in winds and strings, the vibraphone announces the tentative start of the drama which is to follow, becoming more outspoken and joyous in “My heart is like a singing bird.” All instruments are whittled down and laconic in the brief but ominous “Interlude,” and become poignant with loneliness in “Autumn.”

—Miriam Gideon

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## Production Notes

Digitally remastered by Joseph R. Dalton and Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Music Studios, NYC.

From CRI SD 527:

*Sonnets from Shakespeare* and *Wing’d Hour*: Recorded by Elite Recordings inc.; produced by Joanna Nickrenz; Marc Aubort, engineer. *Sonnets from Shakespeare* recorded at the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, NYC, April 4, 1985. The *Wing’d Hour* recorded at Rutgers Presbyterian Church, NYC, September 24, 1985. Original recording was made possible by grants from The Tyrrel Fund, the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Fund through the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

From CRI SD 401:

*Nocturnes*: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, September 1978. Original recording was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc., the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, and the Tyrrel Fund.

From CRI SD 286:

*Rhymes From The Hill* and *The Hound of Heaven*: Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, September 1978. The original recording of *Rhymes from the Hill* was made possible by a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc.; *Hound of Heaven* was made possible by a grant from the Tyrrel Fund, in memory of Jerry Tyrrel.

From CRI SD 493:

*Spirit Above the Dust* and *The Resounding Lyre*; Produced by Carter Harman. Recorded by David Hancock, New York, October 1981, December 1982, and June 1983; associate producer: Carolyn Sachs. Original recording was made possible by grants from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc., the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University and the Tyrrel Fund.

CRI *American Masters*

Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

Publishing: *Sonnets from Shakespeare*, *Hound of Heaven*, and *Rhymes from the Hill*: American Composers Alliance; *Wing’d Hour* and *Spirit Above the Dust*: C.F. Peters; *Nocturnes*: ACE; *Resounding Lyre*: Mobart Music (BMI).

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