A Performer’s Guide to Richard Danielpour’s A Woman’s Life

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Carline Waugh, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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Abstract
This document serves as a guide to the song cycle A Woman’s Life composed by Richard Danielpour in 2007. The document presents relevant biographical information on the composer and a discussion on his influences and style. Each movement of the cycle has been selected by Dr. Maya Angelou from her poetry collections and collectively forms the narrative of A Woman’s Life. A brief discussion is presented on the life and some of the works of Angelou. Readers of this document will gain further insight into the life of soprano Angela Brown, for whom the cycle was composed. A discussion on the performance history of the work will also be presented. This will include suggestions and recommendations for the performance of each song within the cycle.

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Committee Chair
Sims, Loraine

Richard Danielpour (born January 28, 1956) is an American composer. Danielpour was born in New York City of Persian Jewish descent and grew up in New York City and West Palm Beach, Florida. He studied at Oberlin College and the New England Conservatory of Music, and later at the Juilliard School of Music, where he received a DMA in composition in 1986. His primary composition professors at Juilliard were Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin. Danielpour previously taught at the Manhattan School of Music. Danielpour said that his research on "Margaret Garner," the story of a fugitive slave, helped lay the groundwork for "A Woman’s Life." Both deal with the African-American experience, and he was able to draw from the musical language he had developed for the earlier piece. Mr. Boriskin, artistic and executive director of Copland House, said Mr. Danielpour’s score had “hints of jazz” and an “urban, spiky energy that is definably American.” This document serves as a guide to the song cycle A Woman’s Life composed by Richard Danielpour in 2007. The document presents relevant biographical information on the composer and a discussion on his influences and style. Each movement of the cycle has been selected by Dr. Maya Angelou from her poetry collections.