

Lecture at Wesleyan July 22, 1981 American Women in Music

Since I am here as part of a study of American Women in Music, I shall speak briefly of what it means to me to be a woman composer. I must honestly say that I consider myself a composer rather than a woman composer. This is not a matter of semantics or even self-perception, but the result of how I have been received by others. I have been involved with music (essentially writing music) since I was a child. Perhaps it was my directness and focus--or my music itself--or the fact that I took myself seriously---the matter of sexual discrimination never interfered. This may be relatively unique to me. Many other women in music feel differently and perhaps you shall hear of their experiences today...but I come before you as Gwyneth Walker...a composer.

I understand that many of you have studied the relationship of poetry to music in a course last summer with Neely Bruce. Thus I feel it is especially appropriate that I present a set of songs to you, an 'informed audience.' As you will no doubt observe in my music, I value lyricism. Whereas e.e. cummings has often been perceived as humorous, even whimsical, I have found various of his poems to be exquisitely tender. The texts for songs I and III (which you should have) are examples of this type. You will notice that the title of my songs, "Though Love Be a Day", is notated within parentheses in the first poem. This text, to me, is a gentle affirmation of love.

The text for the 3rd song, "After All White Horses Are in Bed," is adapted from a longer poem. I find these lines especially lovely and I'd like to read them to you...

These 2 poems that I have mentioned are combined with several lighter ones, #^s II and IV, as well as one of my own, to make a set of 5 songs.

The style of my music borders between tonal and non-tonal, generally lyrical and direct. My interest lies in communication of expression. And I believe that if one writes simply, in a language of one's own, people will listen. Thank you.