

Program Notes

Seven Poems by Walt Whitman was composed as a collaboration project with soprano Mela Dailey. She suggested several poems by this great American poet, and I found a few more to complete the cycle.

A Clear Midnight is soft and tranquil, an artist's reflection after a day of creative activity. The piano starts with the notes A-B-C#-A, which are the musical letters of Walt Whitman's name, a device I enjoy using when setting poetry. This four-note idea appears in the other songs too and was also one way for me to tie the whole cycle together as the pitch centers of the first, third, fifth, and seventh songs form this motive (the pitch centers of the second, fourth, and sixth songs form the inversion). *Roaming in Thought* has a perpetual eighth note rhythm in the piano to create the movement on which the thoughts of the poem rest. *Thought* is meant to be scary. Whitman seems to be troubled by the idea of large groups of people following others who do not have their best interest in mind. *As I ponder'd in silence* is a conversation between a poet and a phantom who tells the poet that in order to be great, he must write of war and soldiers. The poet demurs, and elects to pen thoughts about a different type of conflict. *I Dream'd in a Dream* is a bright and sunny picture of a time when conflicts are resolved and when love is the chief attribute reflected in the actions of people. *Portals* is a short reflection on life and death. *Whispers of Heavenly Death* concludes the cycle with a return to the tranquil mood of the first.