

WERE I WITH THEE

© Anne Bradstreet © Julia de Burgos © Emily Dickinson © Anita Escudero © Ruth Bader Ginsburg © Gabriela Mistral © Dorothy Parker © Edna St. Vincent Millay © Elizabeth Barrett Browning



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MICHELLE AREYZAGA, SOPRANO
DANA BROWN, PIANO

WERE I WITH THEE

MICHELLE AREYZAGA & DANA BROWN

Edouard Lippé | Text by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

1. How Do I Love Thee (3:33)

Wayland Rogers | Text by Anne Bradstreet

From *I-Thou*

2. To My Dear and Loving Husband (2:10)

Richard Pearson Thomas | Texts by Emily Dickinson

From *At Last, To Be Identified!*

3. Wild Nights – Wild Nights! (1:18)
4. I Never Saw a Moor (2:35)
5. At Last, To Be Identified! (4:18)

Wayland Rogers | Texts by Gabriela Mistral

Tres Poemas de Gabriela Mistral

6. El Aire (1:56)
7. El Ángel Guardián (3:04)
8. Apegado a mí (4:34)

Gwyneth Walker | Texts by Gabriela Mistral

From *La Ternura (Tenderness)*

9. La Luz (2:49)

Lee Hoiby | Texts by Emily Dickinson

From *The Shining Place*

10. The Shining Place (1:44)
11. A Letter (2:57)
12. How the Waters Closed (2:17)
13. Wild Nights (2:08)
14. There Came a Wind Like a Bugle (2:41)

Lee Hoiby | Text by Dorothy Parker

From *Three Women*

15. The Waltz (4:52)

John Duke | Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

16. What Lips My Lips Have Kissed (3:04)

Patrice Michaels | Text by Anita Escudero

From *The Long View: A Portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Nine Songs*

17. Anita's Story (4:18)

Patrice Michaels | Text by Ruth Bader Ginsburg

From *The Long View: A Portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Nine Songs*

18. Epilogue – The Long View, Questions Answered (3:52)

Leonard Bernstein | Text by Julia de Burgos

From *Songfest:*

19. A Julia de Burgos (3:48)



Gwyneth Walker | Texts by Emily Dickinson
Emily! (from New England)

20. My Letter to the World (2:32)
21. The Moon and the Sea (2:18)
22. The Frog in the Bog (1:41)
23. Hope (with Feathers) (1:50)
24. Passion (2:39)
25. Joy (2:58)
26. All I Have to Bring (1:45)

Album runtime: (73:44)

Produced by Aaron Gottl

Cover art by Kandice Dickinson



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Roosevelt University, Chicago, IL, July 1-5, 2019**

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Pianist: Dana Brown

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The selections on this album appear courtesy of the following publishers:

1. **Lippé:** "How Do I Love Thee" • **Music Sales** (o/b/o Boston Music Company)
2. **Rogers:** "To My Dear and Loving Husband" (from I-Thou) • **Estate for Wayland Rogers**
3. - 5. **Thomas:** Three selections from At Last, To Be Identified! • **Lauren Kaiser Music**
6. - 8. **Rogers:** Tres Poemas de Gabriela Mistral • **Estate for Wayland Rogers**
9. **Walker:** "La Luz" from *La Ternura (Tenderness)* • **ECS Publishing**
10. - 14. **Hoiby:** The Shining Place • **Southern Music Pub. Co. Inc.**
15. **Hoiby:** "The Waltz" (from Three Women) • **Estate of Lee Hoiby**
16. **Duke:** "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed" • **Previously unpublished, 1984**
17. - 18. **Michaels:** Two selections from The Long View... • **Patrice Michaels**
19. **Bernstein:** "A Julia de Burgos" (from Songfest) • **Universal Music** (o/b/o Polygram Int'l Publishing, Inc.)
20. - 26. **Walker:** Emily! (from New England) • **ECS Publishing**

ABOUT THIS ALBUM

by Dana Brown

Featuring world premiere commercial recordings of these works:

- John Duke: "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed"
- Wayland Rogers: *Tres Poemas de Gabriela Mistral*
- Wayland Rogers: "To My Dear and Loving Husband" from *I-Thou*
- Gwyneth Walker: *Emily!* (from *New England*)
- Gwyneth Walker: "La Luz" from *La Ternura* (voice and piano version)

This recording project showcases the masterful efforts of distinguished American composers setting the words of eminent women. The idea began with a recital we undertook in 2007—a program of all Spanish-language music that included the beautiful "Apegado a mí" by Chicago composer Wayland Rogers. Michelle and I committed to recording this song one day, only to be graced by our friend Wayland with settings of not one, but *three* Mistral songs—now known as the *Tres Poemas de Gabriela Mistral*. We were taken with the story of Gabriela Mistral (the first Latin-American author to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature and an icon in the history of Latin-American women), known internationally not only as a writer but as a great orator, humanist, and diplomat. Mistral's words and Rogers's settings are the cornerstones of this recording. To the Mistral settings, we also added Rogers's setting of Anne Bradstreet's "To My Dear and Loving Husband," part of his 2018 song cycle *I-Thou* (for SATB vocal quartet and piano).

The inherent musicality and vibrant imagery of Emily Dickinson's poems have not gone unnoticed by composers, giving rise to over 1600 musical settings. One of her works, the evocative "Wild Nights – Wild Nights!" and its line "**were I with thee,**" is the source for the title of this recording. The poem belies Dickinson's shy, quiet, introspective nature and instead is daring in its boldness and sensuality. Three settings are included here, by composers Richard Pearson Thomas, Lee Holby, and Gwyneth Walker—and each setting of "Wild Nights" conveys the composers' own sense of "wildness."

Thomas's settings of Dickinson are both remarkably efficient (his "Wild Nights" teases us with its buttoned-up, spare setting) and profound: "I Never Saw a Moor" is the composer's self-described "hit tune", a perfect, noble pairing of music and words. Dickinson's poem anchors the questions of life with deep faith. Emily's lifelong desire to identify is idealized in "At Last, To Be Identified!" Thomas provides a Straussian meditation filled with orchestral sonorities and spun-out melismas, giving relief to the yearning to know oneself.



The vocal and piano works of Lee Hoiby became widely known through the recitals of Leontyne Price. Hoiby's musical language reveals the influence of neo-romantic approaches championed by Gian Carlo Menotti (his teacher) and Samuel Barber. Hoiby sees his artistic connection with Dickinson as an organic musical invitation: "[Dickinson] *summons feeling in such few words; in one line the picture is complete; she leaves room for the music.*" In his cycle *The Shining Place*, he provides five songs of marvelous contrast: the rhapsodic nature of "The Shining Place" and "Wild Nights," the nostalgic simplicity of "A Letter," the mournful lament of "How the Waters Closed," and the grandeur of the closing lines of "There Came a Wind Like a Bugle." As an antidote to all of the imagery in the Dickinson poems, "The Waltz" is an excerpt from Dorothy Parker's longer poem of the same title. Hoiby matches Parker's wit and sass with virtuosic turns for singer and pianist. You can hear him struggling to keep the waltz going, just as our dancers do!

Michelle and pianist Jamie Shaak released the recording *The Sun is Love*, a collection of Gwyneth Walker's song cycles for voice and piano in 2004 (Proteus Records). Since then, Michelle has premiered several other

works of Dr. Walker, including *La Ternura*, (songs from mother to son on poems of Gabriela Mistral). The third song from the cycle, "La Luz," is recorded here in a voice and piano version. Walker sets the heartfelt poem in her signature style: short but very lyrical vocal lines, piano trills, descending five-note roulades, long pedal points and motives shared between voice and piano. This approach is also heard in Dr. Walker's *Emily! (from New England)*. The capriciousness and staccato lines of Dickinson ("The Frog in the Bog" and "Hope (with Feathers)") are contrasted with the curiosity and longing of "My Letter to the World," "The Moon and the Sea," and the rhapsodic nature of "Passion," which is Walker's version of "Wild Nights – Wild Nights," complete with piano tremolos matched by unbridled vocal tremolos! Throughout the score, Walker provides stage directions to complete the imagery and personal nature of the poems: *"singer pretends to write a letter, singer tosses one last page out on the breeze."*

Known for a provocative view of the female experience, Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "What Lips My Lips Have Kissed" has been set many times, and is the text of John Duke's colorful and mysterious setting. In contrast to the inherent sadness of the Millay poem, "How Do I Love Thee" is set ablaze in a passionate outburst by composer Edouard Lippé on the well-known text by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Puerto Rican poet Julia de Burgos's writing centers on feminism and eradicating injustice, and, in Bernstein's "A Julia de Burgos," which was composed for vocal quartet and orchestra as part of his *Songfest* (1977), we hear the writer's fierce independence. The music is filled with jagged percussive effects, stark contrasts of texture, dancing time-signature changes, and a growing intensity from beginning to end.

Speaking of eradicating injustice, composer and singer Patrice Michaels premiered her cycle *The Long View: A Portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg* in 2018. Michelle has sung various songs from the cycle in concerts with Michaels and others, and two are included here: "Anita's Story" tells the first-hand account of a law clerk meeting the formidable Ginsburg. Quoting Ms. Michaels from the liner notes: *"Many of the essential components of RBG's life are vividly described through Anita's eyes: most compelling for me is the personal transformation and empowerment flamenco dancer turned typist Anita herself experiences, thanks to the work of a little woman with a soft-spoken voice, wearing something wonderful."* The last song of the cycle, "Epilogue – The Long View, Questions Answered," is a setting of Ginsburg's own words: *"RBG offers candid observations on the requirements of the job, details the challenge of maintaining high-level functioning decade after decade, and even pokes a bit of fun at herself. Her fantasy profession, 'grand opera diva,' melds with her famous ability to defuse tension and sidestep deliberately provocative questions, as the song and the cycle wing her away on a high note."*

For further information, including poetry texts and translations, please visit wereiwiththee.com.