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Total Duration: 14 minutes

## Notes

These songs might have been subtitled “Songs of Self Reflection,” for they present the poet musing about her own life, and specifically her physical appearance. One imagines the poet looking in the mirror with amusement, horror and a strong sense of her own history. Thus, the songs range from an energetic first impression (“Bones, Be Good!”) to philosophical reflection (“Turning”) to humor and pride in the body itself (“Homage to my Hips/Hair”) to a more serious summation (“The Thirty-Eighth Year”). A strong and colorful woman emerges.

**No Ordinary Woman!** was commissioned by soprano, Denise Walker, and pianist, Estrid Eklof, for premiere at Brown University, Providence, RI in December 1997. The songs were composed at the composer’s home in Vermont during the summer of 1997.

## About the Composer and Poet

Widely performed throughout the country, the music of American composer **Gwyneth Walker** is beloved by performers and audiences alike for its energy, beauty, reverence, drama, and humor. Dr. Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) is a graduate of Brown University and the Hartt School of Music. She holds B.A., M.M. and D.M.A. degrees in Music Composition. A former faculty member of the Oberlin College Conservatory, she resigned from academic employment in 1982 in order to pursue a career as a full-time composer. For nearly 30 years, she lived on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. She now divides her time between her childhood hometown of New Canaan, Connecticut and the musical communities of Sarasota, Florida and Randolph, Vermont.

Gwyneth Walker has been a proud resident of Vermont for many years. She is the recipient of the Year 2000 “Lifetime Achievement Award” from the Vermont Arts Council as well as the 2008 “Athenaeum Award for Achievement in the Arts and Humanities” from the St. Johnsbury (VT) Athenaeum. In 2012, she was elected as a Fellow of the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Walker's catalog includes over 300 commissioned works for orchestra, chamber ensembles, chorus, and solo voice. A special interest has been dramatic works that combine music with readings, acting, and movement. The music of Gwyneth Walker is published by E. C. Schirmer (choral and vocal music) and Lauren Keiser Music (orchestral and instrumental music).

**Lucille Clifton** (poet) was born in 1936 in Depew, New York and educated at Howard University and the State University of New York at Fredonia. Formerly the Poet Laureate of the State of Maryland, she has taught at Goucher College and the American University in Washington, DC.

Catalog No. 5728

Commissioned by Denise Walker (Soprano) and Estrid Eklof (Pianist)  
Premiered at Brown University, Providence RI, December 5, 1997

# No Ordinary Woman!

for Soprano and Piano

Lucille Clifton

Gwyneth Walker

## I. Bones, Be Good!

$\text{♩} = 88$   
*snap fingers*

Soprano

Piano

5 **A**

**A**  
*mf swing eighths*

9

*p* *mf*

2

13

**B**

*mf*

I beg my bones to— be good— but

**B**

*p*

17

they just keep click-in' mu - sic,

*mf*

21

*p* — *mf*

click, click. click, click, click - in' mu - sic.

*p*

*mf*

25

**C**

*p* — *mf*

Bones, be good!

**C**

*p*

*mf*

45

fool - ish, fright - ful wo - - - man.

49 **E**

Mov - in' my skin a - gainst the wind, and

53

tap tap tap tap danc - in', dan - cin' for my

*f* *a tempo*  
*p*  
*a tempo*

white-note gliss.

57 **F**

life, for my life.

6

77 **H**

*p* ————— *mf*

*p* ————— *mf*

Bones, be good! — Bones, — be good! —

**H**

*p* ————— *mf* ————— *p* ————— *mf*

81

*p* ————— *mf*

Bones be good, be good, — be good! They just keep

*p* ————— *mf*

84

click - in' mu - - - - sic. —————

*f* *scat singing ad lib. with Piano*

87 **I**

*f* *scat singing ad lib. with Piano*

ba ya ba ya ba ba ba ya — ba ba ba ba

**I** *f*

91

95

J

*mf*

mov - in' my skin a - gainst the wind, and

*p*

J

*mf*

*leg.*

99

tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap

*p*

*leg.*

103

*cresc.*

*rit.*

optional Ah

*f*

tap a tap a tap a tap a dan - cin',

*rit.*

*cresc.*

*f*

*leg.*



123

fool - ish, fright - ful wo - man, just a fool - ish, fright - ful wo - man, - just a

*mf*

*p* *cresc.*

127

fool - ish, fright - ful wo - man. ba da ba da da

*f* **M** *scat singing ad lib.*

*(cresc.)* *f* *mf*

*Red.*

131

*(Red.)*

135

ya ba ba

*f*

## II. Turning

Gently flowing ♩ = 80

Musical score for the first system of 'Turning'. It consists of three staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Gently flowing' with a quarter note equal to 80 beats per minute. The piano part features triplet eighth notes in the right hand and rests in the left hand. The first two measures of the piano part are marked *p delicato*. The third measure of the piano part is marked *start slowly and accel. into a blur*. The vocal line has rests in all three measures. Below the piano part, the instruction *Ped. una corda* is written.

Musical score for the second system of 'Turning', starting at measure 5. It consists of three staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats and the time signature is 3/4. The piano part continues with triplet eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The vocal line has rests in all three measures. The instruction *Ped.* is written below the piano part.

Musical score for the third system of 'Turning', starting at measure 9. It consists of three staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats and the time signature is 3/4. The piano part continues with triplet eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The vocal line has the lyrics 'Turn - - - ing, turn - - - ing,'. The first measure of the piano part is marked *p*. The instruction *Ped. simile* is written below the piano part.

13

in - to my own self at last.

17 **B**

Turn - - - ing, turn - - - ing,

21

in - to my own self at last.

*mf*

*Red. tre corde*

25 **C**

Turn - ing out of the white cage, turn - ing out of the

*(mf)* *p* *mf*

14

56

*a tempo*

**H**

*(mf)*

*poco rit.*

**Slightly slower**

Musical notation for the first system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, quarter notes A4 and Bb4, and a half note C5. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

like a black, black fruit,

*a tempo*

**H**

*poco rit.*

**Slightly slower**

Musical notation for the second system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with a half note D5, quarter notes E5 and F5, and a half note G5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

59

*mf*

*rit.*

**More slowly**

Musical notation for the third system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

in my own sea - son, in my own sea - son, in my own

*rit.*

**More slowly**

Musical notation for the fourth system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with a half note D5, quarter notes E5 and F5, and a half note G5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

62

*a tempo*

Musical notation for the fifth system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, quarter notes A4 and Bb4, and a half note C5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

sea - son,

at

last!

*a tempo*

Musical notation for the sixth system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with a half note D5, quarter notes E5 and F5, and a half note G5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

65

*rit.*

Musical notation for the seventh system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a half note G4, quarter notes A4 and Bb4, and a half note C5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

*rit.*

Musical notation for the eighth system, including vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with a half note D5, quarter notes E5 and F5, and a half note G5. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

### III. Homage to my Hips

At a gently swaying tango tempo ♩ = 80

At a gently swaying tango tempo ♩ = 80

*poco* *And. ad lib.*

4 A *mf*  
These hips are

7  
big hips. They need— space—

16

10

\_\_\_\_\_ to move a - round in.

13

\_\_\_\_\_ They don't fit \_\_\_\_\_

**B**

16

\_\_\_\_\_ in - to lit - tle pet - ty pla - ces. \_\_\_\_\_

19

These hips \_\_\_\_\_ are free \_\_\_\_\_

*cresc.*

47

50 *f*

*p*

hips.

53

56 **F** *col Piano ad lib.* *(p)* *mf* *p*

la la la la la la la la la la la la la

**F** *mf* *p*

75 *mf*

I have known them to put a spell on a man and spin him like a

79 top!

*a tempo*

*a tempo*

*p*

(*leo.*)

83 (*p*)

la la la la

*mf*

87 *f* *rit.* *p* *a tempo*

la la la la la la la la la la la la la

(right hand plays only to support voice) *rit.* *a tempo* play with palm

*f* *p* *f* *p*

10

*8vb*



# IV. Homage to My Hair

**Freely, as an introduction** *f*

Soprano

When I feel her jump and dance,—

**Freely, as an introduction** *f* *8va*

4

When I feel her jump up and dance,

*loco* *8va*

7

When I feel her jump up and dance, I hear the

*p sub.* *f* *8va*

10

**A** Lively ♩ = 112

mu - sic, my God!

**A** Lively ♩ = 112

*p*

13 [spoken (in a lively manner)]

I'm talking about my hair, my

*mf*

16 *mf*

nappy, nappy, hair. She's a chal-lenge to your

*p*

19

hand, my man,- she's as tas-ty on your tongue as good, good greens.

22 **B**

She can touch your mind- with her e- lec- tric fin- gers.

**B**

*mf* *p sub.*

# V. The Thirty-eighth Year

At a moderate tempo ♩ = 80

*p reflectively*  
Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

5 *poco accel.* *rit.* *a tempo* *p*

*poco accel.* *mf* *rit.* *a tempo* *p*  
The

9 **A** *reflectively* *quasi recitative, free tempo*

thir-ty-eighth year of my life, plain as bread, as round as a cake an

13

*rit.*

ord - in - ar - y wo - man, an ord - in - ar - y wo - man

16 **B** *a tempo*

*rit.*

*mf quasi recitative*

I had ex - pect - ed to be

18

small - er than this, more beau - ti - ful, — wi - ser in Af - ri - can

21

ways, more con - fi - dent, more con - fi - dent, I had ex - pect - ed

25

start slowly and accel.

C ♩ = 92

more than this.

start slowly and accel.

C ♩ = 92

reflectively

28

rit.

mf freely

p

I will be for - ty soon. My moth - er once was for - ty.

rit.

31

rit.

D With motion ♩ = 112

rit.

D With motion ♩ = 112

34

mp

I have dreamed dreams for you

81 *accel.*

life, out of my moth - er's

*accel.*

83 *(accel.)* *cresc.*

life, in - - - to my

*(accel.)* *cresc.*

I ♩ = 132 *ff*

85 *rit.*

own.

I ♩ = 132 *rit.*

89 *f* *forcefully*

I had ex - spect - ed more than this.

90 *p* *more slowly*

I had not ex - spect - ed to be an or - din - ar - y

91 **Tempo primo** ♩ = 80 *rit.*

wom - an.

**Tempo primo** ♩ = 80 *rit.*

4'15" | Total: 14 minutes  
 September 10, 1997  
 New Canaan, Connecticut