

IN HONOR OF JUSTICE GINSBURG

4 featured works by Women Composers

Notes provided by “The Notorious RBG in Song” album

Anita’s Story

Patrice Michaels

Notes by composer

(b. 1956)

Commissioned by Jane and James Ginsburg in celebration of Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s 80th birthday

In 2013, sister and brother Jane and James Ginsburg decided they would like to give their mother an 80th birthday gift of three songs by three women composers. They engaged Stacy Garrop, Vivian Fung, and me. Each of us was presented with a text from Justice Ginsburg’s life, and the resulting songs were premiered at a celebration organized and attended by many of Justice Ginsburg’s 33 years’ worth of law clerks. The text I received became the genesis for *THE LONG VIEW*. 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.

MICHAELS is distinguished by her eclectic musical personality and her vocal virtuosity. Her live and recorded performances rank her as “a formidable interpretative talent” (*The New Yorker*), possessing “a voice that is light, rich and flexible” (*Opera News*). Concert and operatic engagements include appearances with the Shanghai, Czech National, St. Louis, Atlanta, and Minnesota orchestras, as well as New York’s Concert Royal and Chicago’s Music of the Baroque. Patrice debuted with the Cleveland Opera as Marzelline in *Fidelio*, sang in *Candide* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and recorded the role of Monica in Menotti’s *The Medium* (Chicago Opera Theater on Cedille Records). Patrice has received consistent critical acclaim for her many recordings (Albany, Amadis, Neos, Cedille, and Decca labels), including, most recently *INTERSECTION: Jazz Meets Classical Song* (Cedille) and *Sonic Migrations: Music of Laurie Altman* (Neos). Patrice is an active recitalist and performs several different dramatic concerts, including *Divas of Mozart’s Day* (www.mozartdivas.com), an internationally acclaimed album and live concert dramatizing five of the greatest singers of the Classical era. Patrice’s compositional interests center around works with words. She has written incidental music for Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, a one-act opera on Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, music for the children’s show *A Song for Harmonica*, and several song cycles.

V. Anita’s Story

I had been in New York only a very short time. I got a job in a law firm typing in the steno pool. One morning, one hundred pages of hand written material from some lady lawyer. And her method of delivery? Her own husband - in his shirt sleeves!

The way she used words – I had never seen or heard, I had never even thought. “Sexual,” “female,” “male,” “Gender Based Discrimination...” I started typing...

A few months later, again this shirt-sleeved lawyer husband, again the yellow pad of notes, again this horrifying, nonsensical subject of sex discrimination. I kept typing...

One morning the shirtsleeved lawyer husband announced, “My wife is coming in.” I thought “Good God, here she comes: La Estraña.” In walked this little woman with a softspoken voice, wearing a green dashiki. “She’s not supposed to be like this. She’s supposed to look like George Sand. Where’s the cigar? The fly on her pants?” I... kept...typing...

Back in Sevilla we went to a party. The host presented my husband, Don Mario Escudero, who announced in his turn “Esta es mi mujer.” “Yo no soy *tu mujer!* Soy una *persona*. Mi nombre es Anita L’Oise Ramos Mosteiro de Escudero.”

From the back of the room boomed the host’s eighty-year-old grandmother, “VIVA AMERICA.”

RBG converted me...through typing.

Anita Escudero, 1983

Adapted from her tribute letter in honor of RBG’s 50th birthday

Wider than The Sky

Lori Laitman

Notes by composer

(b.1955)

Wider Than The Sky, from my short cycle *Two Dickinson Songs*, was composed in 2002 (rev. 2003) as a gift for my mother-in-law, Eleanor Slimp Rosenblum on the occasion of her 75th birthday, and was also dedicated to the wonderful pianist Warren Jones. Soaring vocal lines above a subdued piano texture open the work, allowing Dickinson’s verse to shine. Midway through, an unusual modulation and quickening of pace accompany “The Brain is just the weight of God.” The song concludes with an air of mystery, as the piano reiterates this melody over somewhat dissonant harmonies.

LAITMAN Described by *Fanfare* as “one of the most talented and intriguing of living composers,” Lori Laitman has composed multiple operas and choral works, and over 250 songs, setting texts by classical and contemporary poets (including those who perished in the Holocaust). Her music is widely performed and has generated substantial critical acclaim. *The Journal of Singing* wrote, “It is difficult to think of anyone before the public today who equals her exceptional gifts for embracing a poetic text and giving it new and deeper life through music.” *Opera News* named Naxos’s 2017 recording of her opera, *The Scarlet Letter*, a *Critic’s Choice*, saying “Laitman’s score succeeds with a surging, sweeping, unapologetically tonal

landscape that offers carefully etched character portraits, rapturous choral expostulations and lush orchestrations of insistently tuneful melodic motifs.”

The Brain — is wider than the Sky — For — put them side by side —

The one the other will contain With ease — and You — beside —

The Brain is deeper than the sea — For—hold them—Blue to Blue— The one the other will absorb — As sponges — Buckets do —

The Brain is just the weight of God — For — Heft them — Pound for Pound — And they will differ — if they do —

As Syllable from Sound —

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), circa 1862

Pot Roast à la RBG

Vivian Fung

Notes by composer

(b. 1975)

Commissioned by Jane and James Ginsburg in celebration of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's 80th birthday

Justice Ginsburg has been a wonderful role model on many fronts, and her values, strength, and reputed love for and knowledge of music all fit well with my views and beliefs. When I received the call from her son Jim about this project (songs by three different women composers), I could not say "no" to the opportunity to contribute to such a wonderful birthday present! The challenge was the nature of the text, a most unusual request in the form of a tongue-in-cheek "recipe" created by RBG's daughter Jane (who also happened to be one of my husband's most beloved law school professors). The recipe included not only dubious instructions for making a pot roast, but also whimsical and often humorous side anecdotes and life lessons that a busy mother would undoubtedly have. I decided to highlight the pitter-patter of the text, as well as the busy life that the recipe implied with lines such as "drink some black coffee, read some advance sheets, and tell one of your children to do his or her homework — for the third time." The tempo marking indicated is "Lively like a busy chef," and the piano accompaniment strives to keep the rhythm strong and active — at times march-like, other times more waltz-like. There are moments of reflection, e.g., encrustation as "the best part"; and moments of declamation, e.g., "no fat must contaminate the Pot Roast." Ultimately, the song ends on a high note as the pot roast reaches its completion. Pure fun!

FUNG UNO Award-winning composer Vivian Fung has a unique talent for combining idiosyncratic textures and styles into large-scale works, reflecting her multicultural background. Her work often assimilates disparate influences such as non-Western folk music, Brazilian rhythms, and visual inspirations. Fung's recently composed works include *Clarinet Quintet*:

Frenetic Memories based on minority folk singing from Yunnan, China; *Humanoid* for solo cello and electronics for a consortium of cellists in North America; and *Baroque Melting* for harpsichord and strings. 2018 projects include *Earworms* for Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and a new solo percussion work commissioned by the Banff Centre. Born in Edmonton, Canada, Fung currently lives in California and is on the faculty of Santa Clara University.

1. Brown a hunk of brisket in the ovular, reddish-orange cast iron pot received as a wedding present (no doubt from someone who little suspected the rueful purpose to which it would be put.)
2. Add carrots, celery, and red wine, and simmer this mess for a very long time. (While this is simmering, drink some black coffee, read some advance sheets, and tell one of your children to do his or her homework – for the third time.)
3. At the end of the protracted simmering, the contents of the pot will have spattered the sides with a baked-on brownish-black residue. This dubious-looking encrustation is “the best part,” and therefore requires extraction by pouring boiling water down the sides of the pot. (Be careful not to burn yourself during this operation.)
4. Next, remove the former brisket and most of the carrots from the pot, and puree the remaining contents in a blender. (The blender contents are doomed to become “sauce.”)
5. Put the blender in the refrigerator long enough for the fat to rise to the top and congeal. (While you wait for this to happen, drink some more black coffee, eat some prunes, and rewrite your child's English essay.)
6. After the fat has coagulated, remove all fat with a large spoon. (Remember: no fat must contaminate the Pot Roast. This is one of the few culinary commandments handed down by your mother: not a drop of fat disgraced her chicken soup. – Not like that cousin who left “great greasy rings of fat” in her broth.)
7. Slice the former brisket. (Against the grain, and keeping your fingers well out of the knife's path. The memory of the Roast Ham With Sliced Thumb should serve as sufficient admonition.)
8. Pour the purified sauce over the brisket slices and reheat in the oven (Which you will have lighted soon enough after turning on the gas to avoid an eyebrow-singing conflagration.)
9. Carry forth to the groaning board. (And don't forget to heat – but not bake – the plates!)

Text by Jane Ginsburg, adapted from her tribute to her mother's 50th birthday

My Dearest Ruth

Stacy Garrop

Notes by James Ginsburg

(b. 1969)

Commissioned by Jane and James Ginsburg in celebration of Ruth Bader Ginsburg's 80th birthday

The letter on which *My Dearest Ruth* is based was my father's last written statement. My parents celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary in my father's room at John Hopkins Hospital in

Baltimore on Wednesday, June 23, 2010. The following day, my mother called to say Dad had taken a turn for the worse. I flew to Baltimore the next morning (Friday) and met Mom at Dad's room. The doctors came in and told us there was nothing more they could do — the cancer had progressed too far. All this time, Dad kept repeating one word: "Home." So we made arrangements to bring him back to our apartment in Washington, D.C. While collecting his belongings from the hospital room, Mom pulled open the drawer next to Dad's bed and discovered a yellow legal pad on which Dad had written the letter a week earlier. My sister, Jane, and I commissioned Stacy Garrop to adapt the letter and set it to music as one of three songs by different women composers to be presented in 2013 as an 80th birthday tribute to our mother, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Soprano Patrice Michaels sang the premiere at the Supreme Court with pianist Dana Brown on Saturday, April 6, 2013.

GARROP is a freelance composer whose music is centered on dramatic and lyrical storytelling. She has garnered grants and awards from New Music USA/League of American Orchestras, Fromm Music Foundation, Barlow Endowment, Utah Arts Festival, and Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Her instrumental works are published by Theodore Presser Company and she self-publishes her choral works under Inkjar Publishing Company. She is a recording artist with Cedille Records, with works commercially available on ten additional labels. She has been commissioned by the Kronos Quartet/Carnegie Hall, Chanticleer, Albany Symphony, Capitol Saxophone Quartet, Gaudete Brass, and San Francisco Choral Society. Her musical output is wide-ranging, including art songs, choral works, piano solos, string quartets, piano trios, mixed chamber ensembles, orchestral pieces, and an oratorio.

My Dearest Ruth,

You are the only person I have loved in my life, setting aside, a bit, parents and kids and their kids. I have admired and loved you almost from the day we first met some 56 years ago.

What a treat it has been to watch you progress to the very top of the legal world!!

I will be in the hospital until Friday. Between then and now I shall think hard on my remaining health and life, and whether on balance the time has come for me to tough it out or

to take leave of life. The loss of quality now simply overwhelms. I hope you will support where I come out, but I understand you may not. I will not love you a jot less. Not a jot.

Love, Marty

Adapted from letter by Martin D. Ginsburg, June 17, 2010, Washington, DC