

COMPOSER'S NOTES:

In Search of Eldorado

In Search of Eldorado is a song cycle for medium voice and piano. It was commissioned by the Laidlaw Foundation and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. It was premiered by Catherine Robbin.

All three songs are set to the poems by Edgar Allan Poe. I found myself drawn to the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe because of its fantastical atmosphere. Poes' works are a sensitive exploration of memory and imagination. I am drawn to his language and I am inspired by the images of his poetry which are by turns ecstatic and nightmarish. Poes' poetry seems to exist on the boundary of the conscious and unconscious mind which makes it an ideal partner for music.

I chose to set my first song to Poes' poem "*Evening Star*". I have always admired the moon and the stars in the evening sky. I wanted to create a mood that reflected this sense of sparkling light, therefore I chose to open and close the song with an accompanimental texture that is in the high range of the piano. The tempo, dynamics and texture change in the middle part of the piece. Here we reach the climax on the words "*For joy to my heart thou bearest in heaven at night*". The opening material returns once again, and the song ends with music that seems to rise and disappear into space.

The second song is based on Poes' poem "*Eldorado*". I wanted to imitate musically the knight on his horse galloping away desperately trying to find this land of gold. The opening accompaniment is rhythmic and the mood is somewhat quirky with its many time signature changes. It first sets an optimistic atmosphere until the knight grows old and has yet not found Eldorado. There is a sense of frustration on the words "*Where can it be*". A pilgrim shadow tells him to keep riding. The song ends with the knight frantically riding searching for Eldorado. The galloping texture is thicker, louder and more dissonant creating a sense of endlessness and frustration.

The poem "*A Dream within a Dream*" is a somewhat darker text. I originally composed a cello piece that was inspired by this poem. In fact, I used some of the melodic material from the cello piece and incorporated into this song.

Musically I tried to create a kind of profound and intense atmosphere. The music is both jarring and heartfelt. There is a sense of helplessness and sadness on the words "*How few yet how they creep through my fingers to the deep while I weep*". The music intensifies, the tempo quickens as it moves towards the climactic *maestoso* and the song ends on the words "*Is all that we see or seem but a dream within a dream*".

Larysa Kuzmenko / 1998