

# Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

*Thirteen Brief Songs for Mezzo-soprano or Contralto Voice and  
String Quartet Composed to a Text by Wallace Stevens*

Composed 1984-85  
(Revised 1993)

## Footnotes

Footnote \*1, Song #3, Page #4, m. 1, Voice - The percussion clef is employed here to indicate indefinite pitches. The bottom line on the staff represents the lowest possible mouthed vowel shape and the top line on the staff represents the highest possible mouthed vowel shape. Produce a “sh” sound while gradually changing the shape of your mouth from a dark “oo” shape to a bright “ēē” shape and back to the “oo” shape again. The note values represent arrivals at and departures from new mouthed vowel shapes. The *glissandi* indicate that these changes should be executed gradually. The intention here is for the vocalist to make a sound like that of a gust of wind swelling to a climax and then subsiding.

Footnote \*2, Song #3, Page #4, m. 6, Voice - Here the bottom line on the staff represents the the lowest possible vocal register, the middle line on the staff represents the vocal mid-range, and the top line on the staff represents the upper-most vocal register. The intention here is for the vocalist to perform the music in a “speak-singing” fashion. Emphasis should be placed upon the “speaking” rather than the “singing” aspect of this term. Treat all grace notes as you would in strictly notated pitched music, except in this case make quick references to a given vocal register rather than a given pitch. The *glissandi* indicate those registers into and out of which the voice should slide.

Footnote \*3, Song #6, Page #8, m. 1, Voice - Here the vocalist should follow the same instructions as those given in Footnote \*2. Take heed of the additional instructions indicated in the score.

Footnote \*4, Song #9, Page #15, m. 1, Voice - Here the vocalist should follow the same instructions as those given for Footnote \*3.

Footnote \*5, Song #12, Page #22, m. 1, Voice - Here the intention is for the vocalist to perform the text in an ordinary speaking voice. The result should be markedly different in character from the exaggerated “speak-singing” style of vocal production employed in Song #3 and Song #6. With respect to rhythm, all that is desired is that the words of the text be spoken during the measures in which they appear.

Footnote \*6, Song #13, Page #26, m. 12, Voice - Here the vocalist should follow the same instructions given in Footnote \*2.

Footnote \*7, Song #13, Page #26, m. 12, Cello - Here the cello player should follow the same instructions given to the vocalist in Footnote \*1.

Footnote \*8, Song #13, Page #26, m. 13, Viola - Here the viola player should follow the same instructions given to the vocalist in Footnote \*1.

Footnote \*9, Song #13, Page #26, m. 14, Voice - The “X” through the percussive clef here indicates a cancellation of the “speak-singing” style of vocal production and a change to the ordinary speaking voice style of vocal production. The vocalist should follow the instructions given in Footnote \*5.