

## Program Note

In *Hyacinth Curl* I transformed the essence of a *ghazal* (roughly speaking, the Persian equivalent of highly structured sonnet) into a song in English for two female singers and hand-bells that they play themselves. The hand-bells contribute to the purity of the sound world, playing a ceremonial role and helping the singers to stay in tune. The text, which I wrote myself, paraphrases a *ghazal* by Bibi Hayati, an early nineteenth-century noblewoman from Bam, in the Kerman province of Iran. Hayati embraced the principles of Sufi Gnosticism, although she adhered to the external principles of Islam, and her poetry reflects her ecstatic communion with God. I set the entire Ghazal in the original Farsi language in 2014, on commission by the Canada Council for the Arts for soprano Anne Harley, as *Divani Hayati*. I loved the exotic and pure sound world of this piece and wanted to make a version that more singers could perform. *Hyacinth Curl* was premiered on Hub New Music's portrait concert of my chamber works in Boston in January 2015. It is about six minutes in duration.

- Kati Agócs

## Percussion

The piece calls for 4 Hand-bells. Schulmerich hand-bells are preferred. No octave displacements are to be used for the hand-bells. Schulmerich handbells are available for rental from Carroll's Music in New York. Contact the composer if you need help sourcing the handbells.

Each singer holds one hand-bell in each hand:

Soprano - 2 identical hand-bells pitched A4

Mezzo-Soprano - one hand-bell pitched E4 and one handbell pitched E5

Bells should always ring as much as possible, with no dampening.

There are two methods of playing the hand-bells in the piece:

1. ringing them in the traditional manner, indicated by a regular note-head
2. hitting one bell against the other ("edge on edge") in such a way as to create maximum resonance, both bells held by the same singer, indicated by a triangular note-head.

In the final section of the piece, all 4 handbells are hit simultaneously 3 times by both singers using method #2. The singers should take time to co-ordinate these three hits. The hand-bells should be held high in a dramatic, ceremonial gesture after they are hit together.

## Performance Notes

### **Vocal Sound**

The piece calls for “straight tone” (or an “early-music” sound) in the voices. The two voices are like one voice. Toward this end, singers should strive for a unified (interchangeable, seamless) timbre wherever possible. For the desired pure, non-operatic quality, as little vibrato as possible should be used throughout, except where singers decide to add vibrato for expressive purposes. The beginning and end of the piece are to be performed *senza vibrato*.

### **Trills and Glissandi**

Trill speed should be shaped from slower at the beginning, to faster, to slower again before the release (“vocalize trill”)

Glissandi in the piece should always be interpreted with the change in pitch evenly distributed over the notated rhythmic value.

### **Accidentals and Grace Notes**

Accidentals hold through the given measure only, and apply only in the register in which they appear.

Grace notes always fall before the beat, and should generally be long in duration.

### **Phrasing, Tempos, and Rubato**

Phrasing should be over the barline throughout the piece, never “note to note,” aiming for a supple, sensuous flexibility of line. Singers should strive to make long, directional phrases wherever possible, and to avoid a “plodding” effect.

The rhythms, especially the quintuplets and septuplets, do not need to be interpreted too literally; liberties may be taken with the notated rhythms according to the natural ebb and flow of the text.

### **Dynamics**

“*poco p*” means between  $p$  and  $mp$ . “*poco f*” means between  $mf$  and  $f$ .