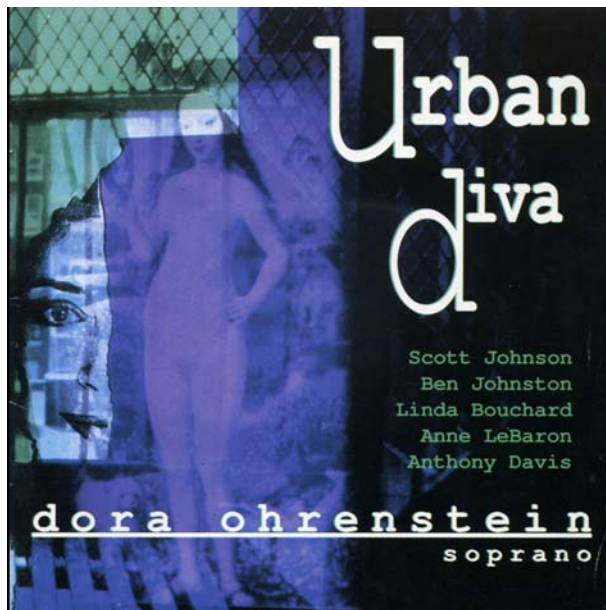


NWCR654

# Urban Diva

Dora Ohrenstein



1. *Confetti of Flesh* ..... (10:24)  
Music by Scott Johnson (1989); Text by Jayne Cortez (1973); Dora Ohrenstein, soprano; Mary Rowell, violin; Phillip Bush, piano, synthesizers; Jason Cirker, marimba, drum set
2. *Calamity Jane to Her Daughter* ..... (20:03)  
Music by Ben Johnston (1990); Text by Calamity Jane Hickok (?); Dora Ohrenstein, soprano;
3. *Black Burned Wood* ..... (12:02)  
Music by Linda Bouchard (1989); Text by John O'Keefe (1990); Dora Ohrenstein, soprano; Mary Rowell, violin, viola; Phillip Bush, piano; Jason Cirker, drum set, percussion; Bill Ruyle, marimba, xylophone, percussion; Linda Bouchard, conductor
4. *Dish* ..... (18:39)  
Music by Anne LeBaron (1990); Text by Jessica Hagedorn (1975, 1990, 1993); Dora Ohrenstein, soprano; Mary Rowell, violin; Phillip Bush, piano, synthesizer; Bill Ruyle, tabla, glockenspiel, Indian bells; Jason Cirker, drum set; John Thompson, electric bass; Voices on tape: Jessica Hagedorn, Ramon Hodel, Anne LeBaron, James Pelletier, and Michael from Central Park
5. *Lost Moon Sisters* ..... (13:03)  
Music by Anthony Davis (1990); Text by Diane di Prima (1971); Dora Ohrenstein, soprano; Philip Bush, keyboards; Mary Rowell, violin; Jason Cirker, marimba, vibraphone

Total playing time: 74:42

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## Notes

It was when I first sang *Urban Diva* for a mainstream audience (rather than a crowd of new music fans) that I fully understood why I had conceived the piece in the first place. Though the audience (in Poughkeepsie, NY) dearly enjoyed itself, I sensed some uneasiness. It dawned on me that a classical soprano singing phrases like "I am New York of the brown spit" and "you flick long cocks of satyrs with your tongue" might seem a strange beast.

Divas, it seems, were intended to love and lament. When confronted with anything more complex and threatening, a soprano's only option was to go mad. Despite my admiration of Verdi and Puccini, I found these nineteenth-century notions cramping my style. What I wanted was the freedom as an artist to express the emotions of my time, however crude and impolite.

My crusade really began with composers. On the downtown scene, where most of the music-making that interests me is going on, composers tend to avoid the sound of a "trained" voice (at least until their first opera commission). They had their reasons—for raw emotion, a less refined sound is wanted. I resist this argument. Or more accurately, I believe there's a middle ground worth exploring. It's an artistic challenge, one that a New York City kid who grew up on Mozart and Motown feels compelled to tackle.

In conceiving *Urban Diva* I hoped to reach a broad audience (both as a performer and as a proselytizer for new music) by creating a one-woman, multi-character, music-theater piece. I asked some very fine composers to set contemporary poetry, poems I searched out and submitted for their approval. I looked for texts that clearly portrayed a character and did so with drama, eloquence, wit, or some combination thereof. The compendium became *Urban Diva*; each of the compositions is, however, an independent entity, and several have been done as concert pieces on their own terms. *Urban Diva*, fully staged and costumed, premiered at the Ijsbreker in Amsterdam in 1990. The American premier took place that same year at New York's Dance Theater Workshop, and since then it has toured colleges, festivals and new music venues across America.

Some thoughts about the individual works and their creators:

In Scott Johnson's music I hear a rock 'n roll sensibility filtered through a brilliant, obsessive mind (a three-note motive generates pages of music) underneath which lurks a longing soul (his restless tonality). Being from the Midwest, Scott keeps some distance from Jayne Cortez's wild, angry poem. I, however, am a native, therefore qualified to explicate: this is the city as a body, and she's hungry. Beware her appetite—if you get eaten, you'll wind up as wind (see last line).

As more listeners awaken to the great experimental tradition of American music, it is becoming clear that Ben Johnston is one of its most intriguing figures. Ben uses a system of tuning he calls "extended just intonation." Alert ears will notice the results: pitches slightly higher or lower than conventional scale tones, consonant intervals (such as fifths and octaves) that are truly in tune, and dissonances that have more crunch. Ben didn't take to any of the texts I offered. Fortunately, his friend Bill Brooks came up with the astonishingly apt recommendation of *The Diary of Calamity Jane* (published by the now defunct Shameless Hussy Press). Jane Hickok (1850–1904) was a legendary Wild West heroine who lived a life of adventure and debauchery. The tale of her having a child by Wild Bill Hickok, however, is pure concoction. The diary's mysterious author was, evidently, a marvelous portraitist and wit after the fashion of Mark Twain.

Linda Bouchard asked for a text with particular characteristics: something in sections, with extremes of emotion and abrupt changes. Having gotten to know John O'Keefe through his performances—he's an intense, compelling dramatist/actor—I asked if he had something appropriate. To my delight, he presented me with *Sara Songs*, which fit the bill exactly. In *Black Burned Wood*, Linda's fine, painterly command of timbre illuminates the haunted, fragmented mind of the character Sara. John once suggested to me that Sara may have murdered her parents. She remains an enigma, wandering from terror to an eerie bliss.

Just as Jessica Hagedorn's poetry goes from pain to whimsy in a flash, Anne LeBaron's music slides from one style to another before you can name them. At times she serves up a barrage of clashing ideas—the musical equivalent of a Rauschenberg collage. *Dish* is an ode from the frontlines of the sexual battlefield. Our heroine indulges in a bit of housework, a little madness, some Eastern mysticism, a self-help monologue, and goes tangoing off into the sunset.

Anthony Davis's vocal line sounds free and improvisatory, but it's entirely written out in meticulous rhythmic detail. The experience of learning it was something akin to lip syncing Betty Carter. When I first read Diane di Prima's *Ave* I knew it was right for Anthony, and that the piece would end *Urban Diva*.

The poem strikes me as an oracle; it possesses restorative power. I tend to be hardheaded about such things, but Diane's eloquence moves even this urban diva to a higher spiritual plane.

It's been a great privilege for me to work with these wonderful composers and writers. The same goes for my band, whose sheer talent, remarkable versatility and tremendous commitment have been a joy. Much thanks as well to the dedicated staff at CRI, to Michael Riesman, a great producer, to The Looking Glass Studios for its generosity, to James Law for seeing through all the last minute details, to Ken Valitsky and Jason Cirker for lending their ears, and to my musical collaborator and husband Phillip Bush, for his artistry and support.

—Dora Ohrenstein

**Scott Johnson** was born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1952. Upon receiving his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1974, Mr. Johnson moved to New York, seeking first hand exposure to the minimalist and "downtown" music world then flourishing in Manhattan, and soon decided against returning to an academic environment. An electric guitarist as well as a student of "serious" music, he concluded that further study in the accepted modernist genres of the time would not further his goal of developing an art music

appropriate to a contemporary world filled with electronically altered folk musics. This early decision continues to inform his mature work, which makes frequent use of musical materials and sounds generally associated with the American vernacular. Most of Johnson's scores employ both acoustic and electric/electronic instruments, and similarly draw upon both classical and popular traditions. His early use of tape and electric instruments culminated in *John Somebody* (1982), in which transcriptions of recorded speech became the source material for an instrumental score; a technique which has since passed into common use, and which he has used most recently in *How It Happens* (1993), based on the voice of I.F. Stone, and commissioned by the Kronos Quartet.

**Ben Johnston** was born in Georgia in 1926 and received degrees from William and Mary College, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and Mills College. In the early 1950's Johnston worked with Harry Partch, and from this association Johnston developed his interest in writing music in just intonation. He remains today one of the foremost authorities on Partch and his work. Another important influence was John Cage, with whom Johnston studied in 1959–60 while in New York on a Guggenheim Fellowship. Johnston joined the faculty of the University of Illinois in 1951, where he remained as professor of composition and theory until he retired in 1983 to devote himself full-time to composing. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University in 1990. Johnston has received an enormous number of commissions throughout his career, resulting in a substantial and important body of work. Among the most renowned of his works are the cycle of nine string quartets, the product of commissions from the Fine Arts, New World, Concord, and Stanford quartets, among others. The Fourth Quartet, a set of variations on "Amazing Grace," was recorded by the Kronos Quartet and has been praised as "one of the most moving and profound of all American string quartets."

**Linda Bouchard** is the composer-in-residence of the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa, Canada. Born in 1957 in Val-d'Or, Quebec, Ms. Bouchard has pursued a career as a composer and conductor in Canada and the U.S. She came to the U.S. in 1977 to study with Henry Brant at Bennington College, followed by graduate studies at the Manhattan School of Music. Ms. Bouchard has written over fifty compositions in various genres including opera, orchestral and chamber works, concertos and dance scores. Her works have been performed by the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony, Victoria Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, L'Orchestre Metropolitain and the Toronto Symphony. Her music has been recorded by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and by ECM in Germany, and is published by Doberman-Yppan and Musigraphe.

**Anne LeBaron**, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, graduated from the University of Alabama, received the master of arts degree from the State University at Stony Brook, and completed her doctorate at Columbia University. As a Fulbright Scholar to Germany in 1980–81, Ms. LeBaron studied composition with György Ligeti. Her works, written for virtually every contemporary genre and performed and broadcast throughout the U.S. and Europe, have received numerous awards and prizes, including a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. Chamber music by Ms. LeBaron has been recorded by the New Music Consort and the Theater Chamber Players of Kennedy Center for the Mode label. The Phantom Orchestra, featuring the Anne LeBaron Quintet on the German Ear-Rational label, reveals her work as a jazz musician and band leader. Ms. LeBaron's chamber opera *The*

*E & O Line*, with a libretto by Thulani Davis, will be presented by Washington's District Curators in 1994.

**Anthony Davis** has received international recognition for his compositions and for his virtuoso performances, both as a solo pianist and leader of the ensemble, Episteme. His most recent works include *Litany of Sins*, a composition for the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble; *Voyage Through Death to Life Upon These Shores*, a choral work; and Violin Sonata, commissioned by Carnegie Hall for its centennial. Davis is best known for his opera *X, The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, which premiered to sold-out houses at the New York City Opera in 1986. He has written two other operas, *Under the Double Moon* (1989) and *Tania*, (1992) about Patty Hearst, and is at work on a fourth, *Amistad*, with writer Thulani Davis, the librettist of *X*. Davis also composed incidental music to the Tony award winning Broadway play *Angels in America*.

Soprano **Dora Ohrenstein** has been widely hailed a gifted interpreter of contemporary vocal music. Having been associated for over a decade with composer Philip Glass as vocal soloist of his ensemble, she has in recent years carved out her own special niche in today's music scene. Ms. Ohrenstein has been presented as soloist in recent seasons by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Spoleto Festival, Cabrillo

Festival, Walker Art Center, Composers' Forum (NYC), the Music Gallery (Toronto), the Celebrity Series in Calgary and Lincoln Center's Serious Fun! Festival. Long active as a chamber musician, she has sung with The Kronos Quartet, Relâche, Essential Music, the Quintet of the Americas and Newband, among others. A favorite among composers on the experimental edge, she has collaborated with such emerging talents as Guy Klucevsek, Ben Neill, Anthony Coleman and David Macbride.

Ms. Ohrenstein joined pianist Kathleen Supové and double bassist Robert Black in 1992 to form Bermuda Triangle, a trio devoted to presenting chamber music in non-traditional ways. For its debut in May 1993, Bermuda Triangle opened Bang on a Can Festival with *The Political Songbook*, a program of twenty-five short songs commissioned especially for this project; contributing composers include Michael Daugherty, Tan Dun, Oliver Lake, Frederic Rzewski and Judith Weir.

In 1993 a four-CD set on Albany Records of *The Complete Songs of Charles Ives* was released, featuring Ms. Ohrenstein along with other artists, as well as Conrad Cummings's *Photo Op*, also on CRI's Emergency Music series, with the soprano as soloist. Also released in 1993 was a New World recording of music by Ben Johnston on which she performs his *Three Chinese Lyrics*.

## 1. Confetti of Flesh

*I Am New York City*  
by Jayne Cortez

i am new york city  
here is my brain of hot sauce  
my tobacco teeth my  
mattress of bedbug tongue  
legs apart hand on chin  
war on the roof insults  
pointed fingers pushcarts  
my contraceptives all

look at my pelvis blushing

i am new york city of blood  
police and fried pies  
i rub my docks red with grenadine  
and jelly madness in a flow of tokay  
my huge skull of pigeons  
my seance of peeping toms  
my plaited ovaries excuse me  
this is my grime my thigh of  
steelspoons and toothpicks  
i imitate no one

i am new york city  
of the brown spit and soft tomatoes  
give me my confetti of flesh  
my marquee of false nipples  
my sideshow of open beaks  
in my nose of soot  
in my ox bled eyes  
in my ear of saturday night specials  
i eat ha ha hee hee and ho ho

i am new york city  
never-change-never-sleep-never-melt  
my shoes are incognito  
cadavers grow from my goatee  
look i sparkle with shit with wishbones  
my nickname is glue-me

Take my face of stink bombs  
my star spangle banner of hot dogs  
take my beer-can junta  
my reptilian ass of footprints  
and approach me through life  
approach me through death  
approach me through my widows peak  
through my split ends my asthmatic laugh  
approach me through my wash rag  
half ankle half elbow  
massage me with your camphor tears  
salute the patina and concrete  
of my rat tail wig  
face up face down  
piss into the bite of our handshake

i am new york city  
my skillet-head friend  
my fat-bellied comrade  
citizens  
break wind with me.

(Text © 1973 by Jayne Cortez.

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## 2. Calamity Jane to Her Daughter by Calamity Jane Hickok (?)

*In 1941, Jean Hickok McCormick, a teacher of penmanship in Butte, Montana, claimed in a nationwide radio broadcast to be the daughter of the legendary Wild West heroine, Calamity Jane. As proof, she produced a diary supposedly written by Jane describing her secret marriage to James Butler (Wild Bill) Hickok, and the birth of their baby girl. Unable to raise the child, Jane gave her up to a British sea captain, James O'Neil, who adopted her and brought her up in England. The diary consists of a series of letters Calamity Jane wrote over a twenty-three-year period. They were sent to Captain O'Neil (referred to in the letters as "Daddy Jim"), to be given to her daughter after Jane's death. While the diary was accepted as authentic at the time of its appearance, serious doubts have since been raised regarding its content and authorship. The text of this piece consists of excerpts from this diary; those parts that are used are printed verbatim as they appear in the Shameless Hussy edition.*

Janey, a letter from your Daddy Jim came today & another picture of you. Your birthday is this month, you are seven-years old. I like this picture of you; your eyes & forehead are like your Father, lower jaw, mouth & hair like me. Your expression in your blue eyes with their long black eyelashes are exactly like your father's.

Your picture brought back all the years I have lived with your Father & recalled how jealous I was of him. I feel like writing about him tonight so I will tell you somethings you should know. I met James Butler Hickok, "Wild Bill," in 1870 near Abilene, Kansas; I heard a bunch of outlaws planning to kill him. I couldn't get to where my horse was so I crawled on my hands & knees through the brush past the outlaws for over a mile & reached the old shack where he was staying that night. I told him & he hid me back of the door while he shot it out with them. They hit him, cutting open the top of his head & then they heard him fall & lit matches to see if he was dead. Bill killed them all.

I'll never forget what he looked like with blood running down his face while he used two guns. He never aimed & I guess he was never known to have missed anyone he aimed at, I mean wanted to kill, & he only shot in self defense. Then he was quite sure. I nursed him several days & then while on the trip to Abilene we met Rev. Sipes & Rev. Warren & we were married. There will be lots of folks doubt that but I will leave you plenty of proof that we were. You were not a woods colt Janey. Don't let any of these pus guillied [erased] ever get by with that lie.

O Janey I did hate to come back here. Why couldn't I have stayed with you & Daddy-Jim? Why didn't he ask me to stay? I was so in hope he would but darling your mother is a misfit in a home like you have—or what can be wrong? I had such a lovely time there. Why can't I ever be anybody worthwhile? I likely will end up in the poor house in my old age. I am so discouraged. One consolation I shall always know you are alright & I thank God for your Daddy Jim.

I'll never forget that party & will always think of you when I got my first glimpse of you that day when your Daddy Jim called you in to meet me & when you asked my why I cried & I told you that you reminded me of a little girl I once knew. Then your Daddy Jim left us alone, remember Janey & you told me about the women on your Daddy's ship & you mocked them makin' eyes eyes at him. O, you were so comical then & when I asked you where your mother was & you said "My mother is dead. She died a long time ago. She was Mother Helen O'Neil" & I said "O, I see" & then it was that I held you close Janey & it seemed for one moment I was

back again with you in those terrible heart breaking days in Yellow Stone Valley facing life without your own father, a future black and tragic for you darling. I hope you will think of me sometimes & of the things I told you so you would remember the woman your Daddy Jim called Jane & of the man we called Wild Bill Hickok. When you said your prayer that night to me you added "God bless Jane Hickok & that man who was shot in the back wherever he is. Bless him because Jane loved him." I wondered how you knew that I loved him. Good night little girl & may God keep you from all harm.

I am going to get a job of some kind. For awhile I worked in Russell's saloon. Abbott got me the job. They want me to drive stage coach again. For when I worked at Russell's the good virtuous women of the town planned to run me out of town. They came into the saloon with a horse whip & shears to cut off my hair so I would have bob hair like the fancy women in Paris have to wear their hair to keep them in their own class with their own ear marks. Well Janey I fixed them in my own way and didn't leave town either with bob hair or marks from their whip. I jumped off the bar into their midst & before they could say sickem; I had them all howling. I cut off one of the bitches old block locks & thrashed the whip over their heads & had one had killed a few when Abbott & Rev. Sipes came in & the dust settled & there they all were with their scalps still on their heads minus a few wads of hair & no harm done except having been dragged around on the dirty floor their dresses half torn off with a petticoat or two missing. Queer how these nasty nice women forget to use a hand kerchief & blow their snotty noses on their petticoats. I bet their petticoats would stand alone if they tossed them in a corner. You should have seen the men. They all got out of the way but they didn't miss the sight. Someday I'll finish the job. You see, I wear pants so I can get around while these petticoat females yell for help. One of the aristocrats, Net Sims, still wears hoops. You should have seen her when I jumped off the bar. I grabbed her hoop skirt & three petticoats & flung them all up over her head. She couldn't fight back so I had her just where I wanted her. I tore off her long pantalets & left her standing there in her birthday bloomers for the men to get a treat. Then I took the pantalets with its rows of crocheted lace & wrapped them around another woman's neck who was beating me over the head. I saw her tongue was hanging out then started on another. If Abbott & Sipes hadn't showed up just then I would have had them all in their birthday gowns. Some of them even bit me but I was so damned mad I didn't feel any of it till the next day. Now that's Deadwood for you.

I am leaving next week to join Bill Cody's Wild West show. I suppose you will wonder what I will be doing up there. I ride a horse bare back, standing up, shoot my old Stetson hat twice after throwing it in the air before it falls back on my head. I will do all kinds of tricks on horse back shooting stunts & soon when the show gets cast maybe you & your Daddy Jim O'Neil will be there to see me. Of course you won't know who I am but I will know you're my own little girl, although you are grown up. I must tell you something. There is a shack not very far from my hut & a bunch of outlaws living there. I cook lots of things for them. They pay me well for everything. What they do is none of my business. I don't disturb them any. Let sleeping dogs lie, is my motto. I bakes them two dozen loaves of bread this week, eight cakes, fifteen mince pies. They paid me 50 cents a pie 20 cents a loaf for bread &

\$1 a cake. I am going to write down my receipts for you. Maybe some day you might like to know if I could cook or not. I am proud of my cooking, especially of my fish dishes, cakes & pies. I make up recipes & try them out on these outlaws across the way. First I will give you my

#### 20 YEAR CAKE

25 eggs beaten separate  
2 ½ pounds sugar  
2 ½ pounds flour  
2 ½ pounds butter  
7 ½ pounds seeded raisins  
1 ½ pounds citron cut very fine  
5 pounds currants  
pint brandy  
¼ ounces cloves ounces cinnamon  
½ ounces mace ounces nutmeg  
2 teaspoons yeast powder or  
2 teaspoons soda &  
3 cream tartar

This cake is unexcelled & will keep good to the last crumb 20 years. Pour over cakes while still warm the pint of brandy. Seal in tight crock. This will make three cakes eight pounds each.

The years have slipped by & I am back in Deadwood. I am tired & feel so old. I am nursing again. I can always fall back on that. I get so lonely for our old west & so disgusted with gadding all over the world. My eyes are bothering me a lot these days. I am goin' by horse back down in Wyoming; will be down there for a year or two. If I can only keep my good

health & my sense of humor I'll be all right. The Spanish-American War is on. If I won't so old I would get to nurse our boys who are sick & dying in that awful country. I always miss out on these wars. I was only ten at the time of the Civil War & now I'm too old for this one with Spain. Excitement is running high. I'm glad I haven't any sons to go. I will write next time from some wherein Wyoming. I have a beautiful saddle horse but none can compare with the one I called Satan. If there is a heaven for horses I am sure he is there where there are no cold winters or lack of feed. Good night Janey.

I guess my diary is just about finished. I am going blind—can still see to write this yet but I can't keep on to live an avaricious old age. All hope is dead forever Janey. What have I ever done except to make one blunder after another? All I have left are these little pictures of you and your Father. I can't go on blind & the doctor told me yesterday that in two months I would be absolutely blind. O how I wish I had my life to live over—I hate poverty & dirt & here I shall have to live in. such in my last days. Don't pity me Janey. Forgive all my faults & the wrong I have done you. I am sick & haven't long to live. I am taking many secrets with me Janey. What I am & what I might have been. I'm not as black as I have been painted. I want you to believe that. My eyes have cheated me out of the pleasure I could get from looking at your photo. Can't see to write anymore. There is some thing I should confess to you but just I can't. I shall take it to my grave—forgive me & consider I was lonely.

### 3. Black Burned Wood

*Sara Songs* by John O'Keefe

1  
No.  
No.  
No.  
No.  
Don' let it be.  
Don't let it be.  
No.  
No.  
No.  
No.  
No.  
Don't let it be.  
Don't let it be.  
Don't let it be this way.  
Not this way  
Not now.

2  
Her Name is Sara  
That's what they called her, S a r a  
But she doesn't like it so much  
not so much not so much  
but she doesn't like it.  
She would rather have been  
named after a Saint!

3  
run  
run  
run  
run  
run  
run

run  
run  
run  
run

4  
Are you calling her?  
Are you calling?  
She can't come now  
She's running to  
Black  
Burned  
Woouoooood.

5  
I can't believe that it's true  
S A R A .  
You didn't do that  
d i d y o u ?  
You didn't do that  
d i d y o u ?  
The house won't go to sleep now.  
The house won't go to sleep now.

6  
Go through the trees.  
When I go to the forest I don't do  
the same things I do at the house,  
not there,  
not like that place  
not at the house  
the house . . .  
When I am in the forest I drink from

the streams  
like the deer.  
When I'm there I don't make a sound.  
I listen . . .  
and I hear . . .  
    everything.  
I can hear them talking through my  
body  
in the forest.

8  
And the sun is shining,  
shining,  
shining,  
setting,  
setting,  
setting,  
shining,  
shining . . .

9  
Go  
go  
go  
go to the house  
Don't go to the house  
Yes, go to the house

Go to the house  
Don't go  
to the house  
to the house  
the house.

10  
Windows . . .  
Windows . . .  
The sun shining on the windows is  
sinking  
and soon it will be dark inside  
but I have left the light on  
in the kitchen  
and the bathroom and the hall upstairs  
where mama  
and dad  
sleep.

11  
Sara . . .  
Sara . . .  
    . . .coming.

(Text © 1990 John O'Keefe.  
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#### 4. Dish

*Seeing you again makes me wanna wash the Dishes*  
by Jessica Hagedorn

Seeing you again  
    makes me wanna wash the Dishes  
go into other rooms  
collect myself  
compose melodies  
on my face  
scrub the feelings  
down  
so i can smile  
  
make comments  
about the dirt  
on my kitchen  
floor  
  
the walls  
that sometimes  
close in  
on me  
  
i don't know  
who it was  
we made ourselves  
into  
  
i don't know why love is a word  
that gets thrown around  
so casually  
  
i guess  
i'm easily excited  
why

the myths ever start  
or why dreams  
are our only bearable source  
  
remain part  
of the question you chose  
never to answer  
  
pieces of paper  
and tarnished jewels  
line my bed  
  
the songs  
i'll never finish  
the titles  
our names  
the lyrics  
our history  
and lies  
  
enough to fill the silence  
  
martha & the vandellas  
crooning  
  
come  
    and get  
  
    these  
  
        memories

*On Being Irresponsible About Lovers*

*And Those Who Swoop on You* (excerpt)

i must remember/to consider irresponsibility while i'm on the plane tomorrow/ airplanes are good for thinking/bring all notebooks/pens/n don't forget to wear loose clothing/is always a drag to piss on the airplane/i have been very irresponsible lately/

i must remember to think on it / ask myself questions / like why i enjoy leading them on / men can be fun / i must be a nicer person in the future / be for real / that's the crux of the problem / i enjoy bein unreal / n sometimes surreal / but if i must be real / then i must be real / that's what Sri Halo Halo would say / or else the Sri would say:

SO WHAT

*The Swooper and the Swoopee*

wow / you look good enuf to eat / wow / how can you do this to me / can i call you tomorrow / how about later / how about leaving with me / like right now / i'm married too / but it's on the rocks /like a sinking ship / actually i'll be truthful / n only because your special / you a special woman / i knew it the minute i saw you / i could feel your specialness / you so fine it don't even matter that i love my woman / cuz what we got / you n i / is a different thing / precious / if you know what i mean/

blah-blah bland / is all i have to say /

don't forget:

when you get to new york / go out  
at least once / during the day /  
visit at least one museum / otherwise /  
your reputation as a vampire /  
may blossom /

(Text © 1975, 1990, 1993 by Jessica Hagedorn. Reprinted by permission of the author and her agents, Harold Schmidt Literary Agency.)

**5. Lost Moon Sisters**

*Ave* by Diane di Prima

O lost moon sisters  
crescent in hair, sea underfoot do you wander  
in blue veil, in green leaf, in tattered shawl do you wander  
with goldleaf skin, with flaming hair do you wander  
on Avenue A, on Bleecker Street do you wander  
on Rampart Street, on Fillmore Street do you wander  
with flowered wreath, with jeweled breath do you wander

footprints

shining mother of pearl  
behind you

moonstone eyes

in which the crescent moon

with gloves, with hat, in rags, in fur, in beads  
under the waning moon, hair streaming in black rain  
wailing with stray dogs, hissing in doorways  
shadows you are, that fall on the crossroads, highways

jaywalking do you wander

spitting do you wander

mumbling and crying do you wander

aged and talking to yourselves

with roving eyes do you wander

hot for quick love do you wander

weeping your dead

naked you walk

swathed in long robes you walk

swaddled in death shroud you walk

backwards you walk

hungry

hungry

hungry

shrieking I hear you  
singing I hear you  
cursing I hear you  
praying I hear you

you lie with the unicorn

you lie with the cobra

you lie in the dry grass

you lie with the yeti

you flick long cocks of satyrs with your tongue

you are armed

you drive chariots

you tower above me

you are small

you cower on hillsides

out of the winds

pregnant you wander

barefoot you wander

battered by drunk men you wander

you kill on steel tables

you birth in black beds

fetus you tore out stiffens in snow

it rises like new moon

you moan in your sleep

digging for yams you wander

looking for dope you wander

playing with birds you wander

chipping at stones you wander

I walk the long night seeking you

I climb the sea crest seeking you

I lie on the prairie, batter at stone gates

calling your names

you are coral  
you are lapis and turquoise  
your brain curls like shell  
you dance on hills

hard-substance-woman you whirl  
you dance on subways  
you sprawl in tenements  
children lick at your tits

you are the hills, the shape and color of mesa  
you are the tent, the lodge of skins, the hogan  
the buffalo robes, the quilt, the knitted afghan  
you are the cauldron and the evening star  
you rise over the sea, you ride the dark

I move within you, light the evening fire  
I dip my hand in you and eat your flesh  
you are my mirror image and my sister  
you disappear like smoke on misty hills

you lead me thru dream forest on horseback  
large gypsy mother, I lean my head on your back

I am you  
and I must become you  
I have been you  
and I must become you  
I am always you.  
I must become you  
ay-a ay-a ah  
ay-a  
ay-a ah ah  
maya ma maya ma  
om star mother ma om  
maya ma ah

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## Production Notes

Produced by Michael Riseman

Recording Engineers: James Law, Dante DeSole and Skoti Elliot.

Recorded in February and April 1993 at the Looking Glass Studios, New York City

Art Direction/Production Manager: Ladi Odeku

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Managing Director: Joseph R. Dalton

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