

Private Collection (1975)

1. I Heard, 2. Says What? 3. Hello Rico? 4. Echoes, 5. Questions, 6. Oh, That I Were, 7. My Dear, Etcetera, 8. All is Still, 9. Love Love Love

According to the Canadian Music Centre website, “Private Collection is an open set of songs for soprano voice and piano with lyrics and music by the composer. [...] They are about anything: an experience, an observation or a fleeting impression. Since they are a collection of individual songs, the singer may select any one or more for presentation.” Weinzwieg had earlier confessed his struggle to write vocal music, exclaiming “Words, words, too many words. Is there no substitute for them!” By 1975, Weinzwieg had begun to explore more colloquial texts over poetry. He stated: “I feel that common speech has a rhythm that sharpens song projection.”

The first song in the collection, “I Heard,” presents an imitation of birdsong by both the piano and the voice; its main phrase “I heard” comes from *Triologue*’s “All is Still.” Weinzwieg’s humour quickly emerges in “Says What?,” which, according to the Canadian Music Centre website, “is a monologue of nonsense syllables combining slang and scat in phonetic rhythms of pitched sounds and whispers.” The humour continues in the musical depiction of teenagers’ phone conversations in “Hello Rico?” No. 4—“Echoes”—contrasts the previous songs with its coloratura passages and use of the piano’s resonance. “Questions” focuses on Weinzwieg’s preference for dialogue between musical lines; in this case, the piano poses questions while the soprano replies in increasing tempo.

The next three songs are from *Triologue*. “Oh, That I Were” has a stark texture, created by the voice’s disjunct melody and the piano’s abrupt chords and strumming of the piano strings. “My Dear, Etcetera” is related to e.e. cummings’s similarly titled poem; the vocal part is mostly spoken, while the piano plays a 12-tone row. “All is Still” retains the theatrical quality of the original *Triologue*, as the soprano sings with her back to the audience until a final whispered Samuel Beckett quotation.

The final song, “Love Love Love,” combines the nonsense syllables of Elizabethan madrigals (“fa la la”) and scat (“bi ba du”) with selected poetic lines. Weinzwieg includes additional musical references with Handelian sixteenth-note vocal runs and Alberti bass patterns. The whole cycle is brought full circle through a recollection of the opening scat from “Says What?”

Written by Alexa Woloshyn. Excerpts from the Canadian Music Centre have been republished with permission.