

April 11, 1984 at 8:15 p.m. in Greenwall Music Workshop

The Bennington College Music Division presents

An Evening of Song

by the students of

Frank Baker

premiering

VERMONT VIGNETTES

music and text by Louis Calabro

I. Lumberjack	sung by Jill Beckwith
II. His Beard...	Michael Downs
III. Epitaph	Amy Hart
IV. Maple Syrup	Susannah Waters
	and Jane Harvey
V. Ira	Jane Harvey
VI. A Rare Beauty	Audrey Braam
VII. Exodus	Susannah Waters
VIII. The Hunter	Michael Downs
IX. Love Story	Jill Beckwith
X. Town Meeting	Michael Downs
XI. Jesamine	Lisa Friede
XII. Dowsing	Jill Beckwith
XIII. Verse	Susannah Waters
XIV. Fly Casting	Audrey Braam
XV. Holly Holland	Michael Downs
XVI. A Brief Life	Audrey Braam
XVII. Frugality	Jill Beckwith

Accompanied by: Marianne Finckel

Muriel Palmer

Allejandro Sanchez-Navarro

Eric Zinman

and Louis Calabro

Other Vermont Vignettes are exhibited, in the form of photographs by Neil Rappaport, from his series of portraits of the residents of Pawlet Vermont. The exhibit was curated by Susan Alancraig.

Cartoons are by Kelcey Jacobsen.

Special thanks to Frank Baker, who took his students, the songs, dedication and energy to Portugal this past winter to learn this song cycle.

## VERMONT VIGNETTES

....a note from the composer

In the bleak winter of 1983, after completing my *Missa Brevis* (the text in Latin), I longed for a return to my native tongue. I decided to brave the below zero weather and left my studio in Jennings and headed for the library, where I planned to spend a few hours browsing with the masters of English prose and poesy.

Lo!...as luck would have it, the library was closed. And so I headed back to Jennings filled with despair when mid-way, just beyond the pond, the wind picked up. I tried to calculate the Wind Chill Factor, but my mind went aboggle. My steps slowed to almost a halt as my body leaned horizontal, trying for headway. The wind blew away the remaining light and there I remained in icy darkness, cursing my twenty-eighth Vermont winter. What a way to die, I thought, just for a song! But somehow, I survived. And when I collapsed on my studio couch, I went into a deep slumber...I dreamt of lumber...slumber...lumber...Eureka! That was it! I ran for the typewriter and ripped out a long overdue counselee report (that I had been considering for some time) and put in some fresh paper and started writing.

'He slumbered in the lumber yard'....what a line! I was overjoyed. And yet I knew the hard part was yet to come. I ran to the piano and in a wink the line was set. Easier than I thought. But still, how much easier words flow...add an s to lumber, for slumber...add an s to get a slice from lice. Music, I thought, is the only hard art.

And so it went... sometimes a tune would pop into my head and I'd search for words, but usually it was the other way 'round. The trips between the typewriter and the piano, while numerous, were less hazardous than between Jennings and the library.

On the cast of characters, or a few of them: Mr. Winfield Bentley lived on our road and actually dowsed our land and found water. The well is still working.

--Frank Hollister from Chapel Road, a friend for many years, told me of a shooting accident he had while hunting. I made up the rest of it.

--Ira Barnicle could easily have been me, had I not been born in Brooklyn. I certainly turned out Ironical!

--Ma Agatha sounds fictitious, doesn't she?

--Jesamine was the Peggy Lee of the Green Mountains. She was actually kicked in the head by a horse, but I thought a mule was more poetic.

--Mr. Bump's story can be found in almost any Vermont cemetery. They didn't all play the fife, however.

--I composed *Holly Holland* and *Frugality* with the assumption that both Holly and Michael Hooker (the only two out-of-staters in the cycle) have senses of humor. If not, I'd better watch out!.

- Louis Calabro  
1984

## VERMONT VIGNETTES

### I. Lumberjack

He slumbered in the lumber yard  
Unaware that the buzz-saw was about  
To interrupt his little snooze  
(Too much booze, alas, too much)

And had he had, perhaps,  
One less brew,  
He might now be one  
Instead of two.

### II. His Beard....

His beard all agrizzle  
His head all afrizzle  
He tiptoed to the barn.

His nose all atrumble  
His toes all abrumble  
He stumbled to the barn.

His mind all aboggle  
His hind all atoggle  
He hobbled to the barn.

He tried, he did, to milk the cow,  
Instead he milked the sow.

### III. Epitaph

Deep was his sorrow  
Deep his regret  
When dear Tess left him  
For a cigarette.

"Come back," he implored  
But he she ignored  
For the drag on a butt  
You can bet.



#### IV. Maple Syrup

In March of Eighteen sixty-nine  
Old Ebenezer Money  
(His name rhymes with sunny)  
went into the sugar bush.  
With pail and spigot,  
hammer and bit,  
He drilled one nice hole  
The juice flowed fine.

"Ayup," he said. (To no one in  
particular.)  
"Like mother's milk," smooth  
As gin.  
He stuck his finger in the spout,  
Alas, he couldn't get it out agin.

He stands there yet, old Ebenezer Money,  
(His name rhymes with sunny)  
Cold as stone,  
but sweet as honey.

#### V.

Ira Barnicle  
wore a monocle  
On his way to the cider press.  
Trailed by his pigs  
His chickens and geese  
They all sang together  
Canonical.

But his story is not comical  
(Some even say it's diabolical)  
For in just one hour  
The mash turned sour.  
Went to his head  
With so much power  
That he...  
Anyhow...  
He came out of the press  
Ironical.

## VI. A Rare Beauty

She was born somewhere  
Deep in the Green Mountains  
And at eighteen no sweeter  
Lass could be found.

She was raised on pure air  
And when her golden hair, abounded  
With trusses fair...  
Her eyes...  
Her lips...  
But I can't go on  
This tale is too sad  
Believe me, gentle listener.  
You'll be only too glad.

## VII. Exodus

Mr. Bump left Vermont  
Just one day in his life.  
(He played the flute, the plow, the fife.)  
He never should have left, you see  
Instead he should have played high C.

Well anyway, he took this trip  
He packed his one and only grip.

When on the road, he became laconic  
and drove moronic (on the Taconic)  
He should have left his car at home  
And gone aboard a super-sonic.

Now all alone, at night, his wife  
Plays sad songs upon his fife.

She does miss Mister Bump  
She does miss, miss the bum.

## VIII. The Hunter

He was a hunter, sure of shot  
Rejoicing whenever a deer, he got  
He'd skin it neat  
Eat all the meat  
And throw the bones to his fine dog, Spot.

One day, alas, he arose from bed  
Early at dawn, in the woods to tread.  
He sniffed the air  
So fresh and fair.  
Then someone shot him  
Through the head.

## IX. Love Story

She hates him she loves him she hates him she loves him  
She hates him she loves him she do  
She hates him she hates him she loves him she loves him  
she hates him so toodle-loo.

She loves the way he greets her  
She hates the way he treats her  
She hates the things he makes her do.

She hates him she loves him she hates him she loves him  
She hates him she loves him she do  
She hates him she hates him she loves him she loves him  
she hates him so toodle-loo.

She loves the way he flies a kite  
She hates the way he smells at night  
She hates the things he makes her do.

She loves the way he tills the soil  
She hates the way he makes her toil  
She loves the way he kills the sow  
She hates the way he licks her brow  
She hates the things he makes her do.

She loves him she loves him she loves him she loves him  
She loves she loves him she do  
She hates him she hates him she hates him she hates him  
she hates him so toodle-loo.

She loves the way he milks the goat  
She hates the way he licks her throat  
She hates the things he makes her do.

## X. Town Meeting

It snowed thirty feet or more that year  
(Even the wood-chucks were rare)  
No one showed on Town Meeting day  
Except Ma Agatha, who smelled of hay.  
(Her boots were on, but her head was bare)

She chaired the empty hall  
(By jiminy she had a ball)  
And when the snow had finally thawed  
They found her bones  
Laid on the floor.

#### XI. Jesamine

Jes' when she thought  
Things were jes' fine  
Old Jesamine got kicked in the head  
by a mule.  
Jes' for an instant  
It reminded her of another time  
When she got jilted  
by a fool.  
But now her reminding days are over,  
As she lies still  
Deep in the clover.

#### XII. Dowsing

Old man Bentley, bent with age  
Dowsed around, amidst the sage.  
He was a mystic of high order  
And found, for sure, all kinds of water.

This story is quite hard to tell  
because, you see, he tripped and fell  
into his new dug well.

His dowsing rod has gone to root  
turning, somehow, into a lute...  
Playing, softly, fare-thee-well.

#### XIII. Verse

What could be worse  
Than verse that's terse?  
A one-armed nurse?  
No.  
An evil-eyed curse?  
No.  
A half-empty purse?  
No.  
Not to tease any longer  
I'll tell you what's worse than verse that's terse;  
A stiff Vermonter in  
an air-conditioned hearse.  
Yes!



#### XIV. Fly Casting

On the first day of fishing season  
(No need here for rhyme or reason)  
Ol' Jethro Hatch, maligned with gout  
Went out to catch some trout.

He waited long, oh , how he sighed:  
For just this moment, to cast his fly.  
He trudged to the winding Batten Kill  
For sure, he thought, he'd get his fill.

With his good leg in the water  
His bad leg out (remember gout?)  
He heard a shout from his only daughter,  
"Oh Daddy, Behind you! Watch out!"

#### XV. Holly Holland

Holly Holland came from Maine  
To get away from the harsh terrain  
Too many blueberries  
Too much pine  
The rocks and rain became a pain.

So a train from Maine she took  
With her favorite hen and her favorite book  
For Vermont she sped  
And there she wed  
A man with a forelorn look.

They bought some land on West Mountain Road  
where nothing survives not even a toad  
'though her hen laid eggs  
Holly Holland ate its legs  
While her husband ate pie-a-la-mode.



## XVI. A Brief Life

She was young  
She was fair  
And was among  
The flowers rare  
(But no one cared)  
Her heart was pure  
Her beauty sure  
and when she sang  
All heaven rang  
(Still, no one cared)  
And then one day  
It was in May  
She wept and sighed  
Lay down and died  
(Her soul was spared.)

## XVII. Frugality

There came a man named Michael Hooker  
Who wasn't much of a macho looker.

He wanted to be president  
So's he could set some precedent.

He liked Vermont ( or so he said)  
and settled in a Shaftsbury bed.

And the first thing he did, by blazes  
Was to strip us of our raises.

He did it (he said) against his will  
And now Vermont is poorer still.

But our story ends with a ray of hope  
(because, you see, he was no dope)

Like the scant-clad feathered Sally Rand  
He fluttered back to Maryland.

1983  
Bennington , Vermont