

My song cycle, *The Coming of Age*, was written to pre-existing poems of Denis Johnson. The four poems that comprise the cycle come from three different collections of Mr. Johnson's poetry: "The Dry, Dry Land. Here" and "Upon Waking" are from the collection *The Man Among the Seals*; "The Coming of Age" is from the collection *The Incognito Lounge*; and "Poem" is from the collection *The Veil*. In spite of their origins during different periods of Mr. Johnson's output, the four poems all center on the theme of love, its solace and transformative power. This common thread, as well as the beauty and directness of their language, is what immediately drew me to these particular poems, and led me to form them into a set. Three of the poems also contain musical imagery which I found provocative and intriguing.

The music of *The Coming of Age* is not particularly abstract, as it is in most of my works, but is very much adapted to the poems, their meanings and imagery. In one sense, a composer sets a text like a jeweler sets a stone, looking for the right musical character and mood to show the poem off in all its facets. For example, the poem "The Dry, Dry Land. Here", with its strange arboreal imagery, needed a preternatural musical evocation. Likewise, "Poem" is so infused with a kind of vernacular iconography that it cried out for setting in an eclectic musical style which I chose to center around idioms of modern jazz.