

the casual thirst of many summers

wet in heat and taken by the sea.

Some places are forever afternoon.

Across the road and a short field

there is the river, split and yellow

and this far down affected by the tide.

(11 Places for Richard Hugo)

Wayne Horvitz

A dramatic landscape photograph of a grassy field under a stormy sky. Dark, heavy clouds fill the upper two-thirds of the frame. A bright rainbow is visible in the center, arching from the horizon towards the top. The foreground is a lush green field with a wooden fence line running across it. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible under the storm clouds.

Wayne Horvitz

Eric Eagle

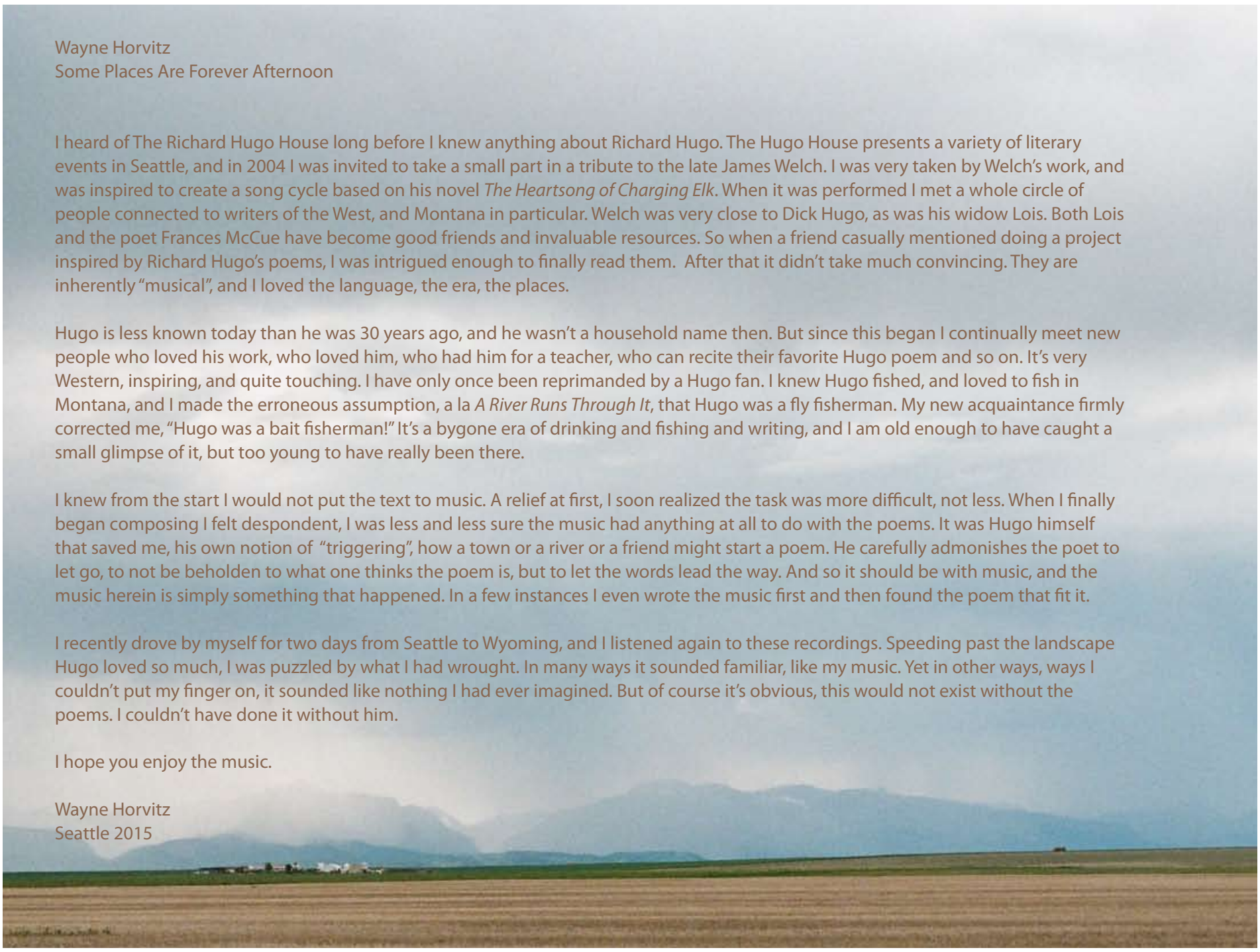
Peggy Lee

Keith Lowe

Ron Miles

Sara Schoenbeck

Tim Young



Wayne Horvitz
Some Places Are Forever Afternoon

I heard of The Richard Hugo House long before I knew anything about Richard Hugo. The Hugo House presents a variety of literary events in Seattle, and in 2004 I was invited to take a small part in a tribute to the late James Welch. I was very taken by Welch's work, and was inspired to create a song cycle based on his novel *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. When it was performed I met a whole circle of people connected to writers of the West, and Montana in particular. Welch was very close to Dick Hugo, as was his widow Lois. Both Lois and the poet Frances McCue have become good friends and invaluable resources. So when a friend casually mentioned doing a project inspired by Richard Hugo's poems, I was intrigued enough to finally read them. After that it didn't take much convincing. They are inherently "musical", and I loved the language, the era, the places.

Hugo is less known today than he was 30 years ago, and he wasn't a household name then. But since this began I continually meet new people who loved his work, who loved him, who had him for a teacher, who can recite their favorite Hugo poem and so on. It's very Western, inspiring, and quite touching. I have only once been reprimanded by a Hugo fan. I knew Hugo fished, and loved to fish in Montana, and I made the erroneous assumption, ala *A River Runs Through It*, that Hugo was a fly fisherman. My new acquaintance firmly corrected me, "Hugo was a bait fisherman!" It's a bygone era of drinking and fishing and writing, and I am old enough to have caught a small glimpse of it, but too young to have really been there.

I knew from the start I would not put the text to music. A relief at first, I soon realized the task was more difficult, not less. When I finally began composing I felt despondent, I was less and less sure the music had anything at all to do with the poems. It was Hugo himself that saved me, his own notion of "triggering", how a town or a river or a friend might start a poem. He carefully admonishes the poet to let go, to not be beholden to what one thinks the poem is, but to let the words lead the way. And so it should be with music, and the music herein is simply something that happened. In a few instances I even wrote the music first and then found the poem that fit it.

I recently drove by myself for two days from Seattle to Wyoming, and I listened again to these recordings. Speeding past the landscape Hugo loved so much, I was puzzled by what I had wrought. In many ways it sounded familiar, like my music. Yet in other ways, ways I couldn't put my finger on, it sounded like nothing I had ever imagined. But of course it's obvious, this would not exist without the poems. I couldn't have done it without him.

I hope you enjoy the music.

Wayne Horvitz
Seattle 2015

Degrees of Gray in Philipsburg

You might come here Sunday on a whim.
Say your life broke down. The last good kiss
you had was years ago. You walk these streets
laid out by the insane, past hotels
that didn't last, bars that did, the tortured try
of local drivers to accelerate their lives.
Only churches are kept up. The jail
turned 70 this year. The only prisoner
is always in, not knowing what he's done.

The principal supporting business now
is rage. Hatred of the various grays
the mountain sends, hatred of the mill,
The Silver Bill repeal, the best liked girls
who leave each year for Butte. One good
restaurant and bars can't wipe the boredom out.
The 1907 boom, eight going silver mines,
a dance floor built on springs –
all memory resolves itself in gaze,
in panoramic green you know the cattle eat
or two stack high above the town,
two dead kilns, the huge mill in collapse
for fifty years that won't fall finally down.

Isn't this your life? That ancient kiss
still burning out your eyes? Isn't this defeat
so accurate, the church bell simply seems
a pure announcement: ring and no one comes?
Don't empty houses ring? Are magnesium
and scorn sufficient to support a town,
not just Philipsburg, but towns
of towering blondes, good jazz and booze
the world will never let you have
until the town you came from dies inside?

Say no to yourself. The old man, twenty
when the jail was built, still laughs
although his lips collapse. Someday soon,
he says, I'll go to sleep and not wake up.
You tell him no. You're talking to yourself.
The car that brought you here still runs.
The money you buy lunch with,
no matter where it's mined, is silver
and the girl who serves your food
is slender and her red hair lights the wall.

