

Tracking the *Herstory* Cycles of Elizabeth Vercoe

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A few months ago, on April 23, 2011, Elizabeth Vercoe turned seventy. I invite the reader to receive this article as a celebration of the life, influence, and work of this talented, award-winning composer, who has been described as “one of the most

inventive composers working in America today” (*Washington Post*, June 20, 1995). My research reflects a journey that began one spring weekend in 2006, when we first met in the seaside town of Rockport, Massachusetts, continued in depth over the following summer in Chamberlain, Maine, and remains fresh through regular correspondence.

A Cry from the Heart

Elizabeth Vercoe recognizes that her music is often autobiographical, and certainly most of her vocal works fit this description. When asked to explain her approach to composition, she usually responds by saying, “I write for a variety of media” in a style that could be called “contemporary classical music...not too

experimental and not too conservative, but somewhere in the middle....If you ask what I think my music sounds like—that becomes a very difficult question. Some of it is a cry from the heart.”¹

Vercoe’s compositional process centers on two common themes: intuition and evolution. She says, “I do often circle around back to the same theme. I like that sort of arch shape. I’m likely to come back with the same material and maybe the same home note.”² She is ever dissatisfied with her work and frets over each completed product. Colleague and singer Sharon Mabry says that Vercoe is “one of those composers who agonizes over her music a lot, and like Duparc, she won’t write reams of music, but what is there is there intentionally.”³



Elizabeth Vercoe (photo by Jack Campbell)

Her scores verify her own assessment that her music is classical yet contemporary. They are classical in that she utilizes traditional structural forms such as the song cycle, monodrama, concerto, and sonata. The recurrence of leading tones, ninths, or tritones, is also readily evident; therefore, it is easy to hear a tonal center being set-up despite the lack of other hierarchical harmonic motion.

Writing for voice is one of Vercoe's great passions, and she explains the main reasons: "First, the voice is so wonderfully expressive and flexible. A singer can not only sing in various ways—shatteringly high, ominously low, adamantly loud, stirringly soft—but can also whisper, screech, yell, scream, cluck, use Sprechstimme, glissandi, trills and all kinds of speech. Second, to write for voice, one usually (but not always) needs words, and that offers an opportunity to read lots of poetry."⁴

The Reluctant Feminist

After years of graduate study in Michigan and teaching in Ohio and New Jersey, Vercoe returned to Massachusetts. Before beginning her doctoral studies at Boston University, she became involved in various women's consciousness-raising groups. This was the late 1960s and feminism as an ideological thought or movement was fairly new to Vercoe. Keep in mind that at this time in feminist history, she was living in the midst of one of the most influential geographical areas in the U.S.—Boston—during the advent of a more political rendering of what was then referred to as Radical Feminism, a reaction against the male machismo radical style of treating women as less-than. Women were determined to establish freedom from the stronghold of such oppression in all walks of life. Also referred to as Difference Feminism, this is the form of feminism with which Vercoe was most familiar. She has always identified with the difference philosophies and has no interest in claiming that either gender is more important; instead, she believes that it is better to shine light on the various perspectives of women through her music. The group gatherings of the late 1960s had a lasting impact on her.

Vercoe joined the International League of Women Composers (founded in the 1970s) and served as a board member and associate editor of the *ILWC Journal*. After the merger that created the IAWM, she con-

tributed several reviews to the new *Journal of the IAWM* and heard her *Fantavia*, a duo for flute and percussion, performed at the 1996 IAWM concert at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. She also co-chaired the Women's Music Festival/85 hosted by Boston University, where her piano trio, *Despite our differences #1*, was premiered by Alea III. The festival was front-page news in the *Christian Science Monitor* and received extensive coverage in the *Boston Globe* and a plug in *MS Magazine*.

During our very candid discussions on the significance of her music as "feminist," she revealed that her "primary interest was writing from a woman's point of view." She remains reluctant to label herself as a feminist, yet she recognizes the obvious feminist themes in most of her vocal works.⁵ "I suspect that women who are composers find their gender an issue and their lives even more inextricably intertwined with their music than do men who are composers.... So I suspect that my story is in many ways HERstory, that is, the story of many another woman composer."⁶ Vercoe's most significant "feminist" works are the four (going on five) *Herstory* cycles.

Herstory I

Herstory I (1975), for soprano, vibraphone, and piano, sets eight texts by the "confessional" poets Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, Sylvia Plath, and Pam White. Vercoe says of the chosen texts that "the songs relate a woman's life experiences: finding freedom only in madness, coming to her child in the midst of a nightmare, growing older with her partner, expressing bitterness about aging, and dreaming at eighty of her youth." In this work, the first of her feminist endeavors, she had an opportunity to say something through her music that only a woman could say, thereby speaking on behalf of Every Woman. To clarify, Vercoe explained, "This is not intended as a kind of political activism couched in musical terms. Rather it is a way to celebrate four wonderful women poets and focus on uniquely female views of the world."⁷

The first song, "Noon Walk," relates to the sense of shifting temperament or mood, and the extreme feelings are apparent in the melodic line with its wide leaps and disjunct motion (see Example 1). Along with the unaccompanied song, "For A Child," the most personally meaningful song in the *Herstory I* cycle is "Old," in-

The musical score for "Noon Walk" consists of three staves: Voice, Vibraphone, and Piano. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 9-12, and the second system covers measures 13-16. The voice part has lyrics: "It sucks the air and looks a-round for me." in the first system and "The grass splains, I hear green-chart-ing chart-" in the second system. The vibraphone part features chords and melodic lines with dynamics like *mp*, *p*, and *mf*. The piano part provides harmonic support with chords and melodic fragments, including a section marked "MOTOR ON" in the second system.

Ex. 1. "Noon Walk" from *Herstory I*, mm. 9-16

tended as a tribute to her godmother and aunt. This same aunt spent a great deal of time with Vercoe in the summers when they vacationed near Damariscotta, Maine, and the poem references this exact place with the text, “We are young and we are walking and picking wild blueberries all the way to Damariscotta.”

While Sprechstimme is used, exclusively in the case of “Mirror,” it is the only extended technique presented. Nonetheless, the vocal part is demanding with wide leaps and a nearly impossible range. It is hard for Vercoe to appreciate the difficulty of the vocal parts she writes because she is always singing while composing. If she is able to squeak out a sound, she assumes that professional singers should be able to handle it, too.⁸ And so they do.

Herstory II: 13 Japanese Lyrics

After completing a violin concerto as her final doctoral composition, Vercoe was eager to write chamber music again, but had no idea what she was going to write. She purchased a book of medieval Japanese poetry translated by Kenneth Rexroth and began typing out poems to add to her text file. Selecting a number of them to set, she suddenly realized that all thirteen of the poems selected were by women. She did not set out to write another *Herstory* cycle, “It was just meant to be.”⁹

Herstory II is scored for soprano, piano, and a variety of percussion instruments. This is the first vocal work in which Vercoe began experimenting with extended piano techniques such as string plucking and striking the strings with percussion mallets. For this score, published in 1979 by Arsis Press, Vercoe includes an extensive notation key for percussion and piano.

These short poems express a variety of emotions and perspectives on life and love, ranging from humorous to deeply tragic. The brevity of the poems is reflected in the settings. Primarily syllabic, the melodies are again quite disjunct, though not as much as in the songs of *Herstory I*. Hints at tonal centers are evidenced through a variety of techniques as in the first song, “Lady Murasaki Shikibu,” where Vercoe uses the minor ninth interval to create a sense of hierarchy centering around the pitch D (see Example 2). She often selects intervals that challenge the listener’s sense of a tonal center, setting up an expectation and immediately moving elsewhere.

The musical score for "Lady Murasaki Shikibu" from *Herstory II*, measures 7-9, is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the Voice, showing a soprano line with lyrics: "passes, And while and while I won-der And". The middle staff is for Percussion, with a line for Finger Cymbals. The bottom staff is for Piano, showing a complex texture with techniques like "Finger gliss. on strings". Dynamics include *p*, *mp*, and *mf*.

Ex. 2. “Lady Murasaki Shikibu” from *Herstory II*, mm. 7-9

She expresses the emotional content of the text not only through the use of a wide range and dramatic leaps, but also through Sprechstimme in nearly every song; in fact, “The Mother of the Commander Michitsuna” consists entirely of notated Sprechstimme. The piano is especially important in elaborating upon the drama, as in “Lady Horikawa,” where a rhythmically improvisational piano introduction illustrates increasing confusion and agitation prior to the singer’s entrance, and the piano’s final measures depict the woman’s frenzied state after the poem has ended. Since the majority of songs are emotionally intense, Vercoe provides contrast in the final one, “Lady Shikibu.” The song is gentle with an ethereal piano accompaniment and a vocal line that very calmly rises and falls three times to depict “whatever may come [after death].”¹⁰

Herstory III: Jehanne de Lorraine

Of Vercoe’s four *Herstory* cycles, *Herstory III: Jehanne de Lorraine* arguably stands out from the rest in that it is a monodrama and thereby has a different structural identity. In many ways it is the most complex and theatrical of the four cycles and therefore is described in greater detail.

In 1985 Vercoe received a commission from Austin Peay State University to write a piece for mezzo-soprano Sharon Mabry. The work came with restrictions, inherent in a commission. It was to be fifteen minutes in duration and for two performers, a mezzo-soprano and a pianist. During a trip to France, Vercoe visited the chateau country in the Loire valley, home of the historically famous Joan of Arc. A chance visit brought her to the Chateau du Chinon, where Joan urged the Dauphin to

provide troops to help free France from the English. As a result of this visit, Vercoe’s interest in Joan as the focus for the commissioned work was solidified.

Her research on the literature about Joan of Arc yielded a wide variety of sources. Included in the list of texts Vercoe used in this work are a poem by François Villon; a novel on Joan of Arc by Mark Twain; an anonymous medieval English poem; Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*, Part 1; a patriotic eighteenth-century French poem; a translation of the trial records; Shaw’s *St. Joan*; a gem of a poem by Joan’s contemporary, Christine de Pisan; and a prayer from the English Sarum rite. Of greatest importance to Vercoe was the poem by Pisan, who broke her self-imposed vow of silence of more than a decade (originally begun to protest the English occupation of France) after learning of Joan’s triumph at Orléans. What flowed from her pen was an epic poem containing the seminal line included in *Herstory III*, “Hee! quel honneur au femenin sexe!” which translates as “Oh what an honor to the female sex!” [that God has chosen a woman to free France]. This line is remarkably delivered by the singer as a battle cry. Of the more modern documents, the only historical inclusions are the trial records from *Joan of Arc* by Regine Pernoud. This is also the only text that Vercoe chose to manipulate. A bold and creative move on Vercoe’s part, she has given voice to Joan by restructuring these documents into a narrative for the penultimate movement, “The Inquisition.”

The question to ask in choosing Joan of Arc as the subject of a work is, “Why? Why now another work about Joan of Arc when so many earlier composers have

written compositions based on her life?" Vercoe began to see that she could offer a new view of Joan. The theme of woman-centeredness found in her other cycles is very obvious in this work. However, there are two main differences between *Herstory III* and the other cycles. First, as a monodrama, this work was intended from inception to be a theatrical piece complete with dramatic lighting and minimal staging. Second, the texts on the popular subject of Joan of Arc are taken from many centuries and are penned by both genders. Nonetheless, Vercoe produced a riveting dramatic work that was easily in keeping with the female-centered nature of the other cycles.

Structurally, *Herstory III* is in twelve movements divided into seven dramatic scenes. The labels and discussion of each scene come from a presentation given by the composer at Tufts University and are not reflected in the score itself. Vercoe labels each scene as follows:¹¹

1. "Joan speaks as from the grave" (movements 1 and 2)
2. "Flashback: Joan as a young girl" (movements 3 and 4)
3. "Joan the Soldier" (movements 5 and 6)
4. "Sharp-witted Joan" (movements 7 and 8)
5. "Battle Scene" (movements 9 and 10)
6. "Inquisition" (movement 11)
7. "Prayer" (movement 12)

In essence, this dramatic work begins from the grave, followed by chronological flashbacks that end with Joan's death.

By setting it as a monodrama the composer is able to explore the range of the human voice using dramatic techniques that include singing, Sprechstimme, approximated pitched speaking, intoning, whispering, glissandi, shouting, hysterical speaking on pitches, and speaking with an ordinary voice. The singer is often required to utilize a combination of at least two of these techniques in each movement. Shifting from one technique to another between and within movements is vocally demanding. It is important that a singer, in the early stages of studying the work, learn several movements at a time in order to determine how to vocally navigate through the piece.

The score calls for two performers, a pianist and a singer, who also play three percussion instruments and an array of percussion mallets. The singer has the relatively easy task of playing finger cymbals

in the last movement. The real challenge comes for the pianist. The two percussion instruments played by the pianist are a gong and a wood block set inside the piano. Most movements call for no more than a simple mallet strike on the lowest strings. As usual, Vercoe provides a notation key at the front of the score. Movement 9, the scene leading into battle, is a true work of choreography for the pianist. Within this short movement, the pianist is asked to use two types of mallets on the bass strings of the piano, bounce a triangle beater across the strings, use a woodblock, and also rub a rubber mallet across the highest strings. In other movements, the pianist is asked to manipulate the color of the sound by dampening the strings with her hand, brushing her hand along the strings, and plucking a specific pitch on the string. This is the only movement that so challenges the pianist with choreographic planning.

To illustrate the drama, Vercoe uses a variety of expressive devices and extended techniques for both the voice and the piano, and they share in depicting the character of Joan of Arc. They represent two different aspects of Joan at the same time, and the only place where this is not the case is in Movement 6, "I am a soldier," where the piano takes on the role of a galloping horse.

Each movement of *Herstory III* makes significant use of the tritone, and Vercoe has stated that it is her favorite interval. Maybe so, but before this work, tritones were not as prominent in her vocal compositions. *Herstory III* is harmonically defined by the tritone. In addition, Vercoe favors both major- and minor-seventh and minor-ninth leaps. These intervals appear consistently throughout each vocal movement, as in the previous two *Herstory* cycles.

The feminist musicologists Renée Cox Lorraine, Catherine Clément, Susan McClary, and Caroline Abbate all discuss how chromaticism is frequently used in music to define a female character as sensual or going against the norm of society. Resolution to a more diatonic or tonal framework usually comes either in death or social reconciliation, or both.¹² A look at the character of Joan, unfolding through Vercoe's music, illustrates how such chromatic language defines Joan in life as she goes against the norms of fifteenth-century France. She is consistently defined through the use of the tritone, which I argue is representative of her place of discomfort in between the realm of Man and the realm of God. Joan's particular harmonic resolution will be discussed in connection with final movement.

In history Joan was known as a sharp-tongued young woman who freely spoke

The image shows a musical score for the piece "N'appercevez-vous" from *Herstory III*, measures 7-9. It is written for Voice and Piano. The voice part has lyrics in French: "vous fait jus a - battre? Ne force n'a - vez qui souf - fise! Vou - lez - vous con - tre dieu com - battre?" and English: "Sound, sound the alarm! we will rush on them. Now for the honour of the forlorn French. Hiel quel honneur au feminin sexe!". The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *p*, *cresc.*, and *sf*. Performance instructions include "8vb on lowest strings", "gliss. with rubber mallet on highest wound strings", and "RH not too loud". There are also notes about "continue shouting over din" and "continue".

Ex. 3. "N'appercevez-vous" from *Herstory III*, mm. 7-9

Steady and slow (♩ = 72)

Ex. 4. "God be in my head" from *Herstory III*, mm. 1-8

her mind. That she was so open about consulting with her voices led to the interrogations experienced in this work through a monologue and the dry-witted, sarcastic "Holy Cat Blues." In this song, Joan's point of contention is that the clerics, or rats, are wasting their time questioning this servant of God, the cat, while France is being lost to the English. Her character becomes apparent in the sultry blues style of the piano accompaniment and the wide, sarcastic leaps and Sprechstimme in the vocal part. The song ends with a lengthy, wild improvisational piano solo, which betrays her true feelings—she is irate.

It is in the "Battle Scene," where the text, intoned over extended piano techniques, informs us that Joan is being forced into battle because no one is paying heed to the warnings she gives from the saints who communicate with her. The first number of this scene ends in the wild screaming of a battle cry ending with the powerful line, "Hee! quel honneur au femenin sexe!" The piano then takes over to aurally create the image of battle. (See Example 3, "N'appercevez-vous.")

Scene six shows us a very different Joan. She has been captured and imprisoned and is obviously frightened. Not only does she confess, she does so in a very calculated, methodical manner forswearing all of the ways she has "erred from the faith." This is evidenced by her vocal line centering around the pitch of C-sharp

and the piano doubling the vocal line in several places during her confession—the first time this has occurred in the work. Remember that Vercoe sees the piano and voice as two different yet complementary aspects of Joan. There is little difference between them, indicating a wearing down of her spirit and a willingness to conform. Suddenly, Joan bursts into hysterics as her voices reproach her for confessing. She is near madness when she revokes all of her confessions. The word "revoke" comes on the highest pitch of the entire work, marking the Inquisition, the dramatic peak of *Herstory III*. Joan prepares for the inexorable—being burned at the stake.

Of all the music Vercoe has composed, the final scene is the one piece that pleases her the most. She has arranged and published it as a piano solo and as an accompanied choral work. The purity and dignity of this movement, "God be in my head," is unlike any before it (see Example 4). The simplicity of the text dictates the vocal and piano lines. Both hands of the piano play open fifths throughout, and these are not tonally related fifths—the clash harkens back to the chromatic sounds we have come to identify with Joan's character. This movement is the most vocally challenging for the singer. Its tessitura is high and demands an immediate calmness and centeredness following the hysteria of the Inquisition. The mixed meters and sustained phrases create a sense of seamlessness in the vocal line. This is a meditation that begins with the chiming of prayer bells. The clashing open fifths come to a tonal resolution in unison with each other in the very last bar, after Joan stops singing.

I believe that she dies at this point, which brings us back to the feminist musicologists' argument presented above by Lorraine et al. Following their collective theory, this resolution to a more tonal framework comes in death, where Joan, a strong female character going against cultural norms, is socially reconciled.¹³ It is with this sense of serenity that the monodrama concludes.

Herstory IV

By the time Vercoe composed *Herstory IV*, the use of the title was "beginning to have a heavily freighted meaning" for her.¹⁴ She wrote *Herstory IV* on a

Ex. 5. *Herstory IV*, mm. 1-6

Much Slower (♩ = 90)

Ex. 6. *Herstory IV*, mm. 29-34

suggestion by mandolinist Neil Gladd that she compose something for voice and mandolin. This work differs from the preceding *Herstories* in that it is through-composed, whereas the others are in multiple movements. Vercoe does not believe that the length of the work, twelve minutes in all, has any bearing on its meaning. In fact, in spite of its brevity, *Herstory IV* felt like a large composition to her.

Written in 1997, *Herstory IV* was the work in which she made peace with her divorce some years earlier. She selected poems by May Swenson—"The Key to Everything" and "All That Time"—and they triggered her journey to personal understanding.¹⁵ The two poems are interwoven in alternating sections, and each has its own mood. The first is in a quick tempo with great rhythmic drive and rapid sixteenth notes in the mandolin part, whereas in the second poem, the tempo is halved, thereby creating a plaintive contrast. (See Example 5, mm. 1-6, and Example 6, mm. 29-34.) By the last stanza of the first poem, it is musically evident that the character has come to a realization and understanding of what is "the key to everything" and that it has been there "all that time." The musical elements from the previous stanzas are now combined.

Herstory V

I am pleased to share with the readers the news that Elizabeth Vercoe is working on her fifth *Herstory* cycle! The subject matter of the new cycle, initially titled *Herstory V: Intimations of Mortality*, begins with thoughts of "last things" but concludes with a focus on living mindfully. Seen from a woman's perspective, the texts include several translations by Kenneth

Rexroth of poetry by Japanese women and translations of Sappho by Mary Barnard as well as poetry by Vercoe's daughter, Andrea Vercoe. Several other poems, both serious and humorous, are by a fifth-century Greek woman—Praxilla of Sicyon, a nineteenth-century epitaph, and an anonymous ninth-century Irish woman. Vercoe is scoring this *Herstory* for a "Pierrot ensemble"—voice and six players. This combination provides rich possibilities for variety and sound exploration in the setting of each text.

Herstory Connections

The *Herstory* cycles—intensely dramatic works for voice and a variety of instruments—are fascinating additions to the

solo vocal repertoire. Of an obviously feminist nature is the shared title: *Herstory*. After the 1991 release of *Herstory III* on CD, one reviewer verbally attacked Vercoe for the use of this made-up word. Vercoe recalls, "He hated the piece and spent a great deal of time saying how ridiculous it was to put together those two words and make a pseudo-word out of it...to imply that the word history is his story; but of course that is the point—that so much history was only the story of male enterprises."¹⁶

For each cycle, Vercoe selected texts that reflect a woman's point of view. *Herstory I, II, and IV* are cycles setting texts by woman poets. *Herstory III* contains many texts by men, but centers on one character, Joan of Arc. Text is the most cohesive element among the four cycles. Of primary importance to Vercoe is the fact that each cycle strives to express some view on life from a woman's perspective. She publicly and powerfully draws attention to the distinctive experiences and values of women, expressing their unique contribution through music.

Vercoe offers these four significant vocal works as musical embodiment of Difference Feminism by focusing on concerns and expressions that characterize women. Rather than explicitly expressing her feminist ideals, Vercoe chose for her music to implicitly embody these principles.

I Resound Press

We are pleased to announce the launch of I Resound Press, a digital press/archive for works by contemporary women composers. Edited by Linda Dusman, I Resound Press provides digital access to scores and performance materials by women composers selected for their imagination, innovation, and craft. By providing scholars, performers, and the general public fast and affordable access, the digital archive facilitates the study and programming of music reflecting the varied experiences constituting women's lives.

The press provides digital access to hand-copied scores, as well as computer-copied scores, electroacoustic compositions, mixed media works, and audio CDs for purchase. Initial offerings include over 100 works by Annea Lockwood, Ruth Lomon, Anna Rubin, Jane Rigler, Sofia Kamayianni, and Linda Dusman.

The press provides on-line perusal of public domain scores from the Women's Philharmonic Orchestra Collection as the result of a recent grant from the Patsy Lu Fund for Women in Music under the aegis of the Open Meadows Foundation. Performing editions of these works are available for loan from the Fleisher Collection of the Philadelphia Free Library (<http://www.freeibrary.org/libserv/fleisher.htm>).

Dr. Linda Dusman established I Resound Press in 2011 with research support from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). Visit I Resound Press on-line at <http://iresound.umbc.edu> and on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/I-Resound-Press/181392048597781>

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Vercoe, interview by author, June 24, 2006, Chamberlain, ME, digital audio recording and transcription.
 2. Vercoe, interview by author, April 1, 2006, Rockport, MA, digital audio recording and transcription.
 3. Sharon Mabry, interview by author, April 11, 2006, Cincinnati, OH, audio recording.
 4. Vercoe, "Herstory Unfolding," paper presented at Wellesley College, MA, 1996.
 5. Vercoe, interview by author, April 1, 2006.
 6. Vercoe, "Herstory III: Jehanne de Lorraine," panel presentation on Women in Music, n.d., Tufts University, Boston, MA.
 7. Vercoe, "Herstory Unfolding."
 8. Vercoe, interview by author, June 23, 2006, Chamberlain, ME, digital audio recording and transcription.
 9. Vercoe, interview by author, March 31, 2006, Rockport, MA, digital audio recording and transcription.
 10. Vercoe, interview by author, June 24, 2006.
 11. Elizabeth Vercoe, "Herstory III: Jehanne de Lorraine."

12. Renée Cox Lorraine. "Recovering Jouissance: Feminist Aesthetics and Music." In *Women & Music: A History*, ed. Karin Pendle, 3-20, 2d ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, 6-7.

13. Ibid.

14. Vercoe, interview by author, June 24, 2006.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

Elizabeth Vercoe: Selected Works and Discography

God Be in My Head (for women's or mixed chorus & keyboard). Arsis Press, 1995.

Herstory I (for soprano, piano and vibraphone). Composer Facsimile Edition, 1975.

Herstory II: 13 Japanese Lyrics (for soprano, piano and percussion). Arsis Press, 1979.

"Herstory II: 13 Japanese Lyrics (for soprano, piano and percussion)." *America Sings!* Performed by Elsa Charleston, soprano, Randall Hodgkinson, piano, Boston Musica Viva, and Richard Pittman, conductor. Capstone: CPS-8613, 1995.
- Herstory III: Jehanne de Lorraine* (for mezzo or soprano and piano). Arsis Press, 1986.
- Herstory III: Jehanne de Lorraine*. Performed by Sharon Mabry and Rosemary Platt. Owl Records: OWL-35, 1991.
- Herstory IV* (for mezzo or soprano and mandolin or marimba). Composer Facsimile Edition, 1997.
- Vercoe's music is available from Arsis Press, Certosa Verlag, Plucked String Editions, and Noteworthy Sheet Music and on compact disc on the Owl, Capstone, Leonarda, and Centaur labels.
- Jennifer Capaldo, DMA, is a mezzo-soprano and Assistant Professor of Voice at Longwood University in Virginia. At the fall 2011 National Convention of the College Music Society, she performed a recital of "The Dramatic Vocal Works of Elizabeth Vercoe" and co-presented a lecture-recital, "Angel of the Amazon: Social Consciousness and Activism in Modern American Opera." She also has a CD currently in production of all-Spanish art song, "Corazón de Mujer," due for summer 2012 release.*