

# Dory's Songs of the Psyche

by RALPH KEYES

**When reality slips just out of your reach, you can find yourself in a frightening place. Those who have been there know that Dory Previn knows, too.**

**Ralph Keyes, author of *We, The Lonely People*, has written about encounter groups in HUMAN BEHAVIOR.**

Dory and I were introduced by my friend Doug Land, who counsels people and leads encounter groups. "Now listen," Doug said to me one afternoon, putting a record on his stereo, "you've got to hear this."

Not being in the habit of paying attention to lyrics, I only caught the last few lines sung by a clear and melancholy woman's voice, with a piano tinkling in the background.

*I think perhaps tomorrow/ I'll try to make a friend/ to really get/ To know him/ Instead of pretend/ I'll ask him if his feet hurt/ Has he burdens to be shared/ And if he doesn't walk away/ I'll ask him/ If he's scared/ And if he don't walk away/ If his eyes don't/ Turn to stone/ I'll ask him/ If he's scared/ To be alone*

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"Nice," I said as the song ended, then got thinking about the milk I had to pick up at Seven-Eleven, and some letters to be dropped at the post office.

"Now, listen," Doug said as the next song began. "Be Carl Rogers for a second."

The beat of a lively guitar quickly got my foot tapping as the same sad

voice started again—a little desperate now, but controlled.

*My hair is curly/ My freckles are tan/ Could my daddy be/ The garbage man?*

My toe kept tapping to the song's barrelhouse beat, but grew a little more tentative. Doug grinned and handed me a white album cover. On the front was a blurred watercolor; on the back, a photo of a dark curly-haired lady looking grim and a little bitchy. She wore big smoky glasses and a fur coat.

*My daddy says/ I ain't his child/ ain't that something/ ain't that wild/ Daddy says/ I ain't his child/ ain't that something/ wild*

"I AIN'T HIS CHILD" © 1970 Mediarts Music, Inc., and Bouquet Music. All rights administered by United Artists Music Co., Inc. New York, N.Y. Used by permission.

"Whew!" I said to Doug, who was looking smug over on the couch. "That's some heavy music. Who is it?"

"Dory Previn," he answered. "She used to be married to André Previn. Then he left her for Mia Farrow and she had a breakdown. A lot of these songs were written as verse therapy in a hospital."

Soon Muriel and I had our own Dory Previn album, and we'd play her night after night like a singing messenger from within. Dory shared with us her wish to be with Daddy in the attic and introduced Michael, Michael Superman (muscle-bound and super-tan) before describing the time she was riding in her car

*Screaming at the night/ screaming at the dark/ screaming at fright*

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In the album's finale, Dory roamed eerily between the speakers, as she sang:

*When I am going/'Round the bend/ I got a wild/ Imaginary friend/ When I am driven/ Up the wall/ My old friend/ He comes to call/ Mister Whisper's/ Here again/ Mister Whisper's/ Here again He's back/ In his apartment/ In my head/ He's back/ In his apartment/ Like I said/ Just when life/ Can't get much worse/ He tells me/ Reassuring things/ Says I'm the/ Center of the universe/ Says I'm as good as/ Presidents and kings . . .*

*Just when I am/ Sure he'll stay/ They shoot me/ With a bolt or two/ They try to drive/ My mister friend/ Away/ And damn it all/ They nearly always do/ Mister Whisper/ Don't/ Go 'Way/ Mister Whisper/ Won't/ You stay/ It gets so lonely/ Wish/ That I were dead/ Mister Whisper/ Please don't go/ Listen, Whisper/ Don't you know/ I'd rather/Madness/ Than this sadness/ In my head*

*The thought/ He'll leave/ Just bitterly/ Burns/ And my despondence/ Grows/ I lost my blue buttons/ He sent me/ Blue buttons/ On my birthday/ But my blue buttons/ Came loose/ Loose/ Loose/ Lucy Brown/ Lucy in the sky/ Luce/ Lucent/ Lucid/ Lucidity/ Lucifer/ Light/ Hang luce/ Stay loose/ I/ How did I get this way?/ I was/ What was I going to say?/ I was on/ How did I get in here?/ I was on my/ Wasn't I here last year?/ I was on my way/ Why have they locked me in?/ I was on my way to/ Who is my next of kin?/ Christ/ Won't I ever win?/ I paid/ My airplane fare/ I was/ On my way to where . . .*

"MISTER WHISPER" © 1970 Mediarts Music, Inc., and Bouquet Music. All rights administered by United Artists Music Co., Inc. New York, N.Y. Used by permission.

At the University of Pennsylvania, Norman Adler plays this song for the psycholinguistics section of his introductory psychology course. First, Adler explains the concept of "word salads"—incoherent but often clever schizophrenic speech patterns. Then he plays "Mister Whisper," and asks, "Is this a word salad?" After most students nod their heads, he says he doubts it.

"What distinguishes her songs from typical schizophrenic word salad," Adler wrote Dory's publisher, "is the quality of control and artistic manipulation." The physiological psychologist even wondered "whether Miss Previn had read any articles about the

## "Now I feel that the constructive part of me is stronger and that I will take care of myself."

structure of schizophrenic language since the last song is so closely conformed to the 'rules' that the psychologists laid down for generating this type of speech."

Dory read the letter and replied:

I have never heard of psycholinguistics and I have never read any "rules" laid down by psychologists regarding schizophrenic language. I have simply been through it, been there, and having come back, reported what I experienced. . . .

I have been admitted to mental hospitals on five different occasions, three times I was admitted under the diagnosis of schizophrenia. I have heard voices but I have always had an area left, no matter how tenuous, of objectivity even while I was in a deep state of intrajection. It was as though a third part of myself, and I think this is the creative part, would stand apart from the sick human being and the voice (or voices), and this third part would observe the dialog that went on between them. And I was always capable of making notes on what I heard though I did not put them into strict lyrical form and musical meter until I was a bit more oriented. Just for your own academic information, you may be interested to know the evolution of the identity of my voices as my problems became more clear to me and my breakdowns began to become breakthroughs. The voices progressed from primitive to more sophisticated. During my first illness I thought the voice was the devil. During my second illness I thought it was Thalia of the Nine Muses. And during my last illness I thought it was a man from another planet. So you see, though they were in the realm of unreality, the identities of the characters became more real, moving from a religious symbol through mythology to a human being, albeit from another planet. . . . My friend from the other planet did, in fact, tell me all those things in "Mr. Whisper" such as being the center of the universe and better than kings and presidents but even within the structure of the fantasy it was motivated to help me—because real life had become so intolerable that being the center of the

universe was the length to which my sick mind had to go to reassure me that I could cope with the danger I felt myself to be in. . . .

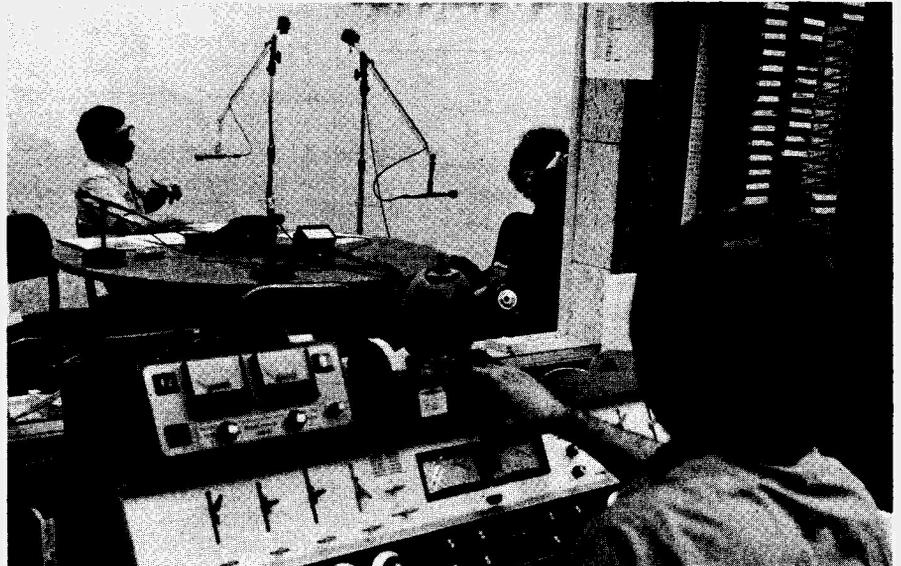
Dory nibbled at her bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich as she told me about this exchange of letters, soon after we met and went for lunch at the International House of Pancakes on Sunset Boulevard. "I really kind of resented the pedanticism of him saying that I must have read it. The way people like the author of 'linguistic behavior of the schizophrenic' get that speech is by listening to people

the dozing state just before sleep, when ignored feelings bully their way into one's consciousness. I mentioned tossing and turning the night before because my half-awake condition kept letting me in on how petrified I felt about meeting Dory Previn the next day, and interviewing her.

"Oh!" she said on hearing this, looking at me directly for what seemed the first time. Dory then sawed her lips together for a few moments and gazed out the window, before looking at me again and saying, "Well, does this relieve you—to know this? Before I come to do an interview, I scream, 'I don't want to do it! I DON'T WANT TO!'"

"Really? Did you do that before coming to see me?"

She nodded. "I do it for every inter-



Dory Previn is interviewed on WAMU, the radio station of American University.

who've been through the experience. So I said, 'Don't assume that I took someone's book and wrote it down. You've written the books from people like myself.'

Dory Previn, in person, isn't the woman I had seen glowering from album covers and magazine pictures. Her hair is iodine red for one thing, and she's easy to be with—tells jokes and has a big smile.

I'd put off making contact with Dory Previn for a couple of years after having the wish, for fear she'd be too tough for me to handle, too tough and too crazy. What is the proper form, I wondered, for shaking hands and saying "How are you?" to someone who may just have been screaming in her car, and has a whisper friend?

But the apple-haired lady pushing her sandwich around a plate across the table seemed less lunatic than friend, someone who'd trusted me and, as a result, felt trustworthy.

We were talking at one point about

view, because then I get rid of the total anxieties, the hostilities—if that makes you feel any better."

Dory learned this way of coping through what she calls "activist therapy," the Gestalt group and counseling she entered after her last hospitalization three years ago. "I believe that activist therapy is much more valid, especially today, than classical therapy," she says. "I really think you have to get physical and loud and violent—though not destructive—and act all these things out."

I asked Dory if she'd have been up to such a regimen in years past, say a decade ago. "I don't know," she quickly replied. "I've often thought about that. I don't even know if I could have taken Gestalt therapy if I hadn't had all those years of classical analysis [16]. Because I was so gone that I had to be reconstructed, all the pieces rearranged, and I don't think I could have stood up under Gestalt then."

Dory feels just a dab defensive about her 16 years in analysis, saying, "People laugh at that, but I say, 'A day for a day, right?' I mean it took one day, by day, by day, by day, to twist the tree. Supposing you took one of those Monterey pines that have been turned by the wind. Try unturning one. I think it's just as difficult inside us. That's why we break and break when we try to turn—just like the tree would break."

Dory described a break with reality she had last year, similar to ones that drove her to the hospital before. This time she chose instead to drop out of her group, stay close to home and be very careful. "I was like a mother and child at once," she said, looking at me between long glances around the restaurant. "If I had to go out, literally, if I was crossing the street, I'd say, 'Now, Dory, be careful crossing the street because you're out to do yourself harm now.'

"I went through that period of unreality and came through it. Now I feel that though I still have this component that tends to lose touch with reality, the part of me that is constructive is now stronger than the destructive part and that I will take care of myself until I get into a situation where I'm safe."

As a consequence, Dory says she now feels able to risk going mad by choice. "It's what Laing refers to, and I think that's what the poet Rimbeau tried to do—that self-imposed madness where you try to take the journey and get yourself back. Jung did it, too. It's very important. But I think that with people such as myself, I had to take all those other journeys where I might not have come back, and might have done myself physical harm, or mental harm, emotional harm—forever—and something inside me was willing to risk it."

Dory swallowed the crust of her sandwich and stared at the empty plate for a few moments. Then she looked up at me through her siamese-mango glasses. "What did you ask me? How did I get into that one?" She shivered and looked off again. "I feel it. I feel it emotionally when I'm talking about it. . . ."

As we started toward her Mercedes 250 in the parking lot, she remarked, "But I guess I'm mellowing, because when I get depressed now, instead of fighting it, saying 'Oh, my God,' taking pills and being rushed to the doctor, I go to the limit of the depression and console myself with the fact that there will be an end to it—there has to be. And if I'm frightened, I go to the limit of my fears."

As we parted at United Artists Studios after a delightful (for me) two

## " 'Ralph. Wait! Don't forget,' shouted Dory, her hand outstretched, 'I'm just as scared as you are!' "

hours, Dory disappeared into the building and I started for my car. Then hearing, "Ralph. Wait!" I turned around to see Dory standing in the doorway, hand stretched out toward me. "Don't forget," she shouted, "I'm just as scared as you are!"

Inside the United Artists building, Dory Previn is by now a poster picture on the wall and a thick handful of rave reviews for her five albums,

Not long after her marriage broke up, Dory was pulled off an airplane about to leave for London, screaming and ripping at her clothes. During four months in a Los Angeles hospital, Dory used her craft, her songwriting skills, as part of the recovery process. While other patients wove straw into baskets, Dory wove her fears into verse—not all of which has been recorded.



On the way to a rehearsal for her performance at the Cellar Door Cafe in Washington, D.C., Dory talks about her song "Screaming While Driving in a 20 MPH Zone."

one book of verse and occasional concerts—including a packed Carnegie Hall last spring.

She'd been a long time getting there. Born Dorothy Langdon in Woodbridge, New Jersey, on October 22 in a year she'd rather not mention, Dory left home at 16 to study acting in New York. She worked over the next few years as an actress, chorus girl, model and coffeehouse singer accompanying herself on guitar. Writing her own material to save copyright fees, the singer soon began to impress show business people more with her songs than her performance of them. Dory's career until recently was primarily as a lyricist, often in collaboration with composer André Previn to whom she was married from 1959 to 1970.

Although barely known to the public, Dory's professional reputation was as one of Hollywood's most skilled songwriters. Three times she was nominated to receive an Academy Award: for "Come Saturday Morning" from *The Sterile Cuckoo*, "A Second Chance" from *Two for the Seesaw*, and "The Faraway Part of Town" from *Pepe*.

*gotta stop pretending/ i'm adjusted/ screw them all/ and let the surface crack/ may i be psychotic?/ please may i trip out?/ may i be?/ i mean/ what i'm about?/ may i?/ may i?/ may i?*

"GOTTA STOP DEPENDING" ©1971 Mediarts Music, Inc., and Bouquet Music. All rights administered by United Artists Music Co., Inc. New York, N.Y. Used by permission.

Dory returned to a hospital recently, to the psychiatric ward of L.A. County General—to give a concert. Two staff members there were using her music in group work with patients, and one had invited Dory Previn to come sing for all of them.

From the stage, Dory eyed the filled auditorium. "I could just see so many gestures and actions and things that reflected myself when I was in the hospital, and people I knew when I've been in. And I was scared.

"I saw a person as I was coming in, a young girl going in with her boyfriend and I could tell he had just brought her back from a walk, and she was crying because she. . . . Oh, God, that broke my heart—because I re-

## "She's saying, if I have a choice — and I do — I'm choosing to be insane rather than depressed."

member that, the dread—first of all, the dread of leaving, of going out the first time. And then the worse dread, once you've made the leap—in my case, I could never leave once I'd go in there—and the even worse dread of having to go back and leave the person you love who then goes home to the house and you go into a hotel. I mean, into a hospital room—it's like a motel room, a bad motel or something, and you just sit there alone. It's awful, it's just awful. . . ."

*judy and don/ came to see me/ the technician undid the lock/ i showed them/ the inner attractions/ the meds/ the straps/ the shock*

*nervously/ don admitted/ sensing danger of a kind/ like someone might/ hide in a doorway/ and hit/ him from/ behind*

*i laughed/ and reassured him/ the techs are always on guard/ one sign/ of a patient's violence/ they move in/ hard*

*but/ i had seen/ a face in a doorway/ i recalled when they had gone/ a boy hid/ behind don's shoulder/ the boy/ i'd seen/ was don.*

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Laurie Goodman, the young recreational therapist who had invited Dory Previn to sing at the hospital, was worried about the usual rustling and moving about of patients during such a performance. But as the hour's concert progressed, Goodman found herself amazed at the attention being paid this singer. Even though the room grew sweltering because of faulty air conditioning, she says no one left the hall—even after Dory had finished. "Nobody moved," recalls Goodman. "They thought she was coming back. The way they sat there was as if they were trying to reach out to her up on stage. She looked that way, as if she could be touched."

Goodman, who has since left L.A. County General, had been using Dory Previn's records in recreational therapy groups for several months before the concert. "She has a way of getting people to talk," Goodman explains of the music's effect. "They could share feelings they had through her. If Dory sings about anxiety and loneliness, they could say, 'Yeah, I've felt lonely,' or 'Yeah, I've felt anxious.

I've felt like screaming before,' and get into that.

"There were some people who wouldn't talk about the music, who wouldn't respond, because possibly it was hitting on something they did not want to deal with.

"Others would get very excited and then, when their families would come to visit, tell them to go out and buy her albums for them."

Laurie Goodman is only one of a number of people using Dory Previn's music to work with groups. Perry Goering, a recreational therapist still at L.A. County General, has used Dory's music for over two years with groups of adolescents. John Perry, a Jungian analyst in San Francisco, includes Dory Previn music in the training curriculum for the paraprofessional staff of a county-funded residence for young people suffering psychotic episodes. Howard Shapiro, a Los Angeles psychiatrist, includes two Dory Previn songs on a tape of different singers he plays sometimes during group therapy.

I've also talked with various encounter-group leaders who use Previn's music to kick things off, and a Parent Effectiveness teacher who calls on her songs to start discussion groups she leads for older housewives.

More rarely, Dory's music has been integrated into a one-to-one counseling relationship. Eric Marcus, Dory's Gestalt therapist, says he'll sometimes suggest that a patient listen to particular songs of hers for insight into their own experience. Pat Rice, a counselor at the Center for Studies of the Person in La Jolla, told me of a client who wanted to work with some Dory Previn albums during counseling, then changed her mind "because the songs just hit too close to home, were too frightening."

Dory herself hears occasionally from counselees who have used her music in therapy. One woman in New York found that just listening to Dory's first album gave her the breakthrough she'd missed in hours of analysis, and at her therapist's suggestion brought the record in to play during succeeding sessions. An older man told the singer-composer that his wife had been turned on to her music by a psychiatrist and now shares Dory with patients in her own work as a psychiatric nurse.

Leonard Zunin for years has used a tape of Previn songs as a teaching device for his frequent lectures. A

psychiatrist and former director of Los Angeles's Institute for Reality Therapy, Zunin relies especially on "Mr. Whisper" to illustrate his contention that neurotic symptoms become "foul weather friends" to their sufferer. At the point in this song where Whisper tells Dory she's the center of the universe, good as presidents and kings, Zunin said, "I stop the tape and ask my audience, 'How many people here today were told by someone that you are the center of the universe and that you are as good as presidents and kings?' And everyone laughs. Then I'll say, 'Okay, now just picture this scene—this is a lady sitting in a hospital. She's crazy and she's saying to a therapist, 'Mr. Whisper's talking to me again and he



told me I'm center of the universe, I'm as good as presidents and kings." And the therapist says, "Lady, you're crazy. Get rid of that symptom." And she thinks the therapist is crazy. Would you get rid of a friend telling you on a daily basis that you're the center of the universe, that you're as good as presidents and kings?"

"Then there is that beautiful line in 'Mr. Whisper' which says: I'd rather/ Madness/ Than this sadness/ In my head, and this comes after I've explained in the lecture that to be crazy is much less painful than the depths of loneliness and depression. To feel that you are Napoleon is not painful. She's saying, if I have a choice—and I do—I'm choosing to be insane rather than depressed.

"I can talk all day about the problem of psychosis versus depression.

But when she can in poetic words say, 'I'd rather madness than this sadness'—that's it!"

Norman Oberman also uses Dory Previn's music to illustrate points in his lectures, but from a different perspective. President-elect of the Los Angeles Society for Psychoanalytic Psychology, Oberman has used "Whisper" and other Previn songs as an illustration of manic-depressive psychosis during his talks, and as part of a training seminar for psychiatric residents at Mt. Sinai Hospital. "Her music," he explains, "is a rich revelation of the fantasies, wishes and fears of psychotic depressives."

"With My Daddy in the Attic," for example, Oberman sees as an illustration of "the underlying fantasy creating the characteristic impasse in the treatment of psychotic depression—the patient's narcissistic transfer-

## "Dory is painfully aware that her chances of making the nation's Top 40 song list are slim."

Dory found this an interesting analysis of her song—the narcissistic transference and pseudo-oedipal relationship—except she says her father really did live for a time in the attic of their home and that, in fact, was where she wanted to be.

"He thinks I took a metaphor," Dory said of Oberman's perspective, "but I took a reality. That's where people get confused about my work. With your daddy in the attic—in the cave, in the tree house, in the cellar—is a dream that all little girls have—but I lived through it.

"With hindsight, people analyze these things and say, 'Isn't that inter-

is painfully aware that her music isn't listenable to many and her chances of making the Top 40 are slim, "because it's tough what I say about myself and a lot of people aren't interested in hearing that, don't want to, and I don't blame them—don't listen. Go somewhere else. But I maintain that what I'm writing will be a cliché and common subject matter in a couple of years."

"Really?"

"Oh, yeah. Look, the song about screaming is a cliché today, and I only wrote it three years ago. And people who said three years ago, 'My God, you mustn't say that, I can't bear that,' they talk about screaming all the time.

"I mean when the senator said the other day at the Watergate hearings—'If these go on much longer, I'm going to curl up on the table and suck my thumb'—isn't that wonderful for a senator to say? I was thrilled by that phrase. Now, when would a senator have said, 'I'm going to suck my thumb'? Just all of the sexual connotations are terrifying. The baby connotation; the thing in life."

Dory has written a song about Watergate for her next album that she says will be her most outward-looking one. The record will also include a song on censorship, and one about the obscene call she got the other night. I'm worried there may also be a selection about nosy reporters with tape recorders, but that's the risk you take in knowing this unusual woman. Her friends joke that you shouldn't utter anything around Dory that you wouldn't want put to tune.

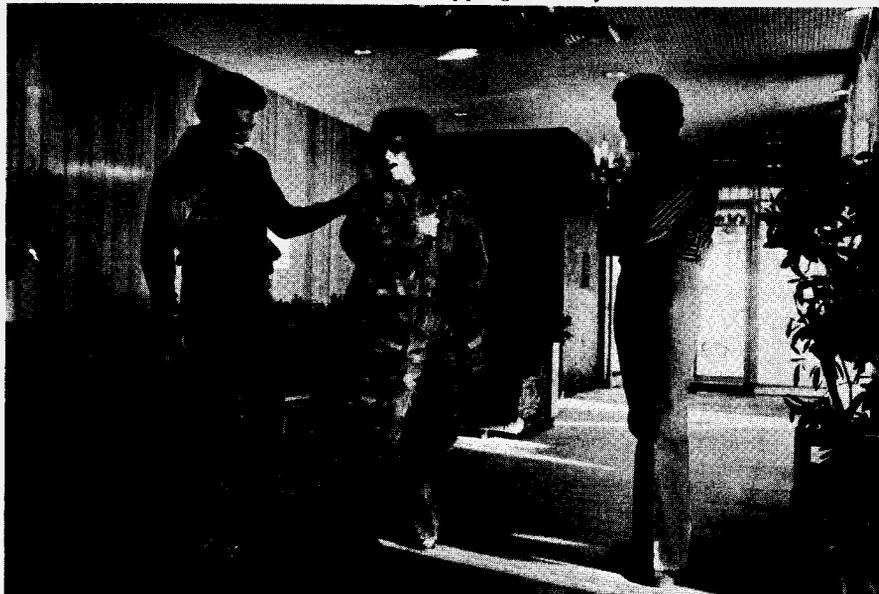
Dory Previn sees her art as just a reflection of her life—one obsessed for a time with madness and therapy, but now more diverse. Although three years ago Dory told an interviewer she foresaw the need for some kind of therapy the rest of her life, today she's not been officially counseled for more than a year, and this shows up in her work.

*so i hereby/ take myself/ my soul  
doth take my heart/ to honor love  
and cherish/ till death do us part*

*i will i will/ accept myself/ with  
hope and fear and wonder/ and i  
what i have joined together/ let no  
one put asunder*

"MORNING STAR/EVENING STAR" ©1972 United Artists Music Co., Inc., Bouquet Music and Mediarts Music, Inc. All rights administered by United Artists Music Co., Inc. New York, N.Y. Used by permission.

Dory shows off her warm, new fox fur coat to Bill Chappell (left), her manager, and Tom Schoburg of United Artists after shopping in Maryland.



ence, the pseudo-oedipal relationship that develops in treatment of depressive disorders."

*With my/Daddy in the attic/With  
my/Daddy in the attic/That is  
where/My being wants to bed. . . .*

*With the/Door closed on my  
mamma/And my sibling  
competition/And my Shirley  
Temple doll/That truly cries/And  
my essay on religion/With the  
pasted paper star/Proving tangibly/  
I'd won the second prize*

*With my/Daddy in the attic/With  
my/Daddy in the attic/That is  
where/My dark attraction lies*

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esting that she took a common symbol of the world, when, in fact, I'm just relating instances that happened to me.

"I have conscious awareness of those episodes in my life and I have emotional—even in talking about it to you now, I can really feel the emotions and you start getting distorted in front of me and I really get gripped with that fear of years ago, in my childhood."

We were sitting on the brick patio in front of her home in the Hollywood Hills, and Dory looked off absently at the adjacent brush-filled canyon. After talking for nearly two hours in this second (and final) visit, the bottle of Charles Krug wine on a table beside us was nearly empty.

We'd discussed for a long time the impact of Dory Previn on this culture, and whether in fact she had any. Dory

## "Dory said her discovery of reasons daily to keep going, to want to live, was relatively recent."

Among Dory's recent credits have been the screenplay of *Third Girl From the Left*, a TV movie starring Kim Novak, and the lyrics to "Last Tango in Paris." Her play *Mary C. Brown and the Hollywood Sign* closed before it opened as a major Los Angeles production last year, but Dory has now done some revisions and hopes the musical may yet be produced on the modest scale she originally envisioned.

Dory was telling me that her discovery of reasons daily to keep going, to want to live, was relatively recent, when something distracted her on the floor. "Look!" she said, pointing near her feet. "Two bees fucking. Isn't that interesting?"

A nest of bees accumulated recently near Dory's house, and they buzzed, hummed and looked like they were copulating on the floor around us as we sipped the last of our wine and watched the sun approach the hill beyond.

"It's interesting," Dory said, examining the bees. "They come just at certain times, and they always come in twos. And they like wine."

A car hummed by on the winding road beneath us and she strained to see it before looking back at me.

"Because, you see, Ralph, why go on if there isn't some kind of—and I look always for reasons—what is it, what is it? I feel desperate and yet I go on living. In the book I wrote those four lines—'I can't go on, I swear I can't go on, I can't go on, so I guess I'll get up and go on.' The point about that is, I just really feel, I mean—look, the bees—I think we're drones, you see, and I think in everything you see, in every tree there's the tap root, in the bees there's the queen bee, and it just seems to me—I don't take credit for what I write, I just feel that I have experienced these things and now put them down, like a scribe, like a secretary."

The sun had almost set and Dory had begun to tremble with the cold and her feelings. I was about to ask whether we should finish up inside when a wine glass shattered and Dory Previn screamed, then clutched her hand. I thought she'd cut a finger on the broken glass and jumped up to look at it, but Dory was tearing at her sandal, hopping around and howling. "A bee stung me," she finally gasped. "My God, a bee sting on my toe. I think I'm allergic!"

She stumbled into the house, me close behind, and sat down at the kitchen table, her face a map of terror. "I think I'm allergic. I think I'll get sick. I might die." Her words tumbled out. "Do you know anything about bee stings?"



Dory becomes involved in rehearsal at Georgetown's Cellar Door Cafe.

I didn't know much, except that my mother used to rub wet tobacco on our stings. I started to shred a cigarette to do the same for her, wondering secretly if it really did anything, but saying it was worth a try. I asked Dory if she'd ever been stung by a bee before.

"Never," she said, flipping through an address book for the number of her doctor, "and I'm really scared I'll have an allergic reaction." Finding the number, she frantically dialed her phone, but ended up shouting at a secretary who wouldn't put her through.

Dory seemed to calm Dory a bit, and she put my wet tobacco on her toe as I called Mt. Sinai Hospital and talked to a nurse who said that if no allergic reaction appeared in five minutes or so, it was doubtful that any would. The only thing to do, the nurse advised, was apply an ice pack to reduce swelling around the sting. An allergic reaction would most likely be shortness of breath.

Dory's breath stayed normal and we finished up our visit in the living room of her house. It's a cute, wood and brick chalet with dutch doors. The insides are neatly cluttered by bric-a-brac that looked to me like a private museum. Dory said it was designed to appear an attic.

Curled up on her divan, clutching an ice pack to her toe, Dory Previn looked soft, vulnerable and huggable. Her face had smoothed to that of a child's and I could easily see Dorothy playing *Go Fish* or looking for her reflection in a mud puddle.

"You know," she said shortly before I left, "you saw more of me, the real me, in the few minutes of that bee sting episode than in all our hours of talk put together."

"Incidentally," she asked, "what are the symptoms of an allergic reaction?"

The nurse had warned me not to say for fear she'd then feel them, so I only grinned and shook my head.

"You won't tell me, because then I'll have them, right?"

I nodded.

Dory laughed, then looked at my tape recorder.

"That scream isn't on tape, is it?"

I said it might be.

"Oh, couldn't you erase it?" She smiled, but only partly.

"Why?"

"Well, I don't want people to see me that way."

"But you'll put it in a song some time anyway, won't you?"

"Oh, it will come out in some way—my world-famous bee sting."

"But couldn't you erase it?"

As it turned out, the bee sting took place between tapes. I listened through both sides of a cassette, bracing myself the whole time for her scream, but it never came.

I do expect the bee sting to show up in Dory Previn's music. Dory says that anything she considers an indignity inflicted upon her, or an injustice, will eventually be recorded in her work.

When her own death approaches, Dory once wrote a correspondent, "I will probably say, 'Would you hold this death thing for just a minute? I'd like to write a song about it before I check out.'" HB