

Instrument: A Dramatic Monologue

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (March 2021)



The Family of the Composer Claude Terrasse in the Garden, Pierre Bonnard, 1896

*Claude is a composer in his twenties. At a music
conference,
composers are asked about their beginnings.*

Our living room had no doors.
When I played the piano,
Even scales,

I felt exposure without privacy.
If they had guests
Or were doing accounts,
I went away, uncertain just when,
Or for how long,
I could return—

The terms of estrangement . . .

When I discovered the existence
Of a kit for building an instrument
I began to save:
Allowances, birthday, Christmas.
Their own sale (complete with tools)
Made it possible . . .

“Labor of love”
Leapt from a phrase
Into my daily life.
Eventually—
My own clavichord.
Such muted simplicity
Seemed to me
Inmost musical thought.
In more complex pieces
Thoughts were seeking
Their deeply private melody.
Their search was the start
Of my own composing.

Without interrupting,
Disturbing,
It seemed to give offense.

My father said,
“This must be removed,
A desk in its place instead,
Time you began to prepare

For your future.”

A future without my instrument?

“With the keyboard closed,”

I told him,

“My clavichord makes

Quite a good work table;

I don’t need more desk than this.

Save your money

But let me ask,

Blunt and straight,

Why don’t you like it?”

“In the living room,” he said,

“A piano can blend

As furnishing.

But, inside and out,

This instrument is yours.

And here,

The only castle I’m king of,

I don’t want anyone to do

Something I can’t do.”

I knew that sooner, not later,

Ready or not,

I would have to leave.

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Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and

received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French have appeared in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOp: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

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