

~~/~~ A MASTER'S RECITAL AND
ANALYTICAL PROGRAMME NOTES ~~/~~

by

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

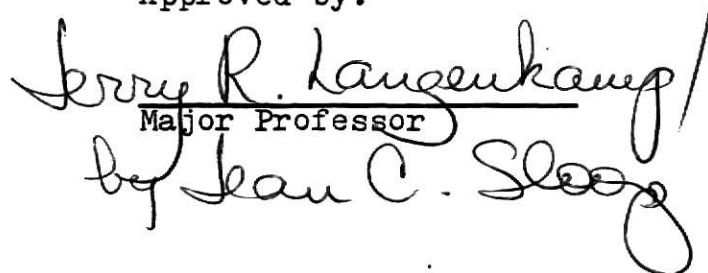
Department of Music

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Department of Music

Graduate Series
Season 1984-85

ANNE-MARIE FORBES—Mezzocontralto

Assisted by

JANET ANSCHUTZ—Pianoforte/Organ

April 1, 1985

All Faiths Chapel

8 p.m.

Two Arias from Cantata No. 170

Vergnügte Ruh *Johann Sebastian Bach*
Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust (1685-1750)
Mir ekelt mehr zu leben

Oboe—Kathy Irwin
Violins—Donna Bakke and Trish McClure
Viola—Emiko Takehana
Violoncello—Vincent Pugh

Liederkreis op. 39 (Eichendorff) *Robert Schumann*
I In der Fremde (1810-1856)
II Intermezzo
III Waldesgespräch
IV Die Stille
V Mondnacht
VI Schöne Fremde
VII Auf einer Burg
VIII In der Fremde
IX Wehmut
X Zwielficht
XI Im Walde
XII Frühlingsnacht

—INTERMISSION—

Chansons de Bilitis (Louÿs) *Claude Debussy*
I La Flûte de Pan (1862-1918)
II La Chevelure
III Le Tombeau des Naiades

Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac op. 51 *Benjamin Britten*
(1913-1976)

Abraham—Dr. Jerry Langenkamp
Narrator—Steven Rushing

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree.

CHAPTER I
JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S
CANTATA NO. 170 VERGNUGTE RUH

One of Johann Sebastian Bach's major tasks following his appointment as Cantor at the St. Thomaskirche in Leipzig in 1723 was the performance of sacred cantatas on Sundays and feast days throughout the liturgical year, excepting the Lenten season. During the first few years Bach spent at Leipzig his compositional output included, on average, one cantata per week. Not all of these cantatas, however, were entirely original, with quite a large number having been derived wholly or in part from earlier compositions. He maintained this rather rigorous schedule for two annual cycles, each beginning with the first Sunday after Trinity and ending on Trinity Sunday.¹

By the liturgical cycle commencing in 1725, Bach's production of cantatas seems to have become less regular, and during 1726 there were a number of occasions on which, rather than presenting a performance of one of his own

1. Chronological details derived from Gerhard Herz, "The New Chronology of Bach's Vocal Music," in Bach: Cantata No. 140 ed. Gerhard Herz (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), pp. 3-50.

cantatas, he used cantatas by his cousin, Johann Ludwig Bach (1677-1741). In the latter part of 1726 it appears that Bach once again firmly applied himself to the task of writing cantatas, with production being fairly regular until the end of that calendar year. Extant cantatas indicate that from 1727 onward the continuous production of cantatas ceased, although Bach still produced occasional cantatas until just before his death.

The church cantatas which Bach wrote during his period of tenure in Leipzig embody a wide variety of styles and formal arrangements.² The most commonly encountered type are chorale cantatas, with the original hymn stanzas being used for the first chorus and the final chorale and the music likewise being based on the chorale melody, ie. Cantata No. 137 Lobe den Herren. The majority of Bach's solo cantatas were also written in the four years of intensive cantata composition from 1723 to 1727, and of the five solo cantatas Bach wrote for alto voice alone, three were written during these years. Only one of the solo cantatas for alto was not written in Leipzig: Cantata No. 54 Widerstehe doch der Sünde (Weimar, 1714).

Cantata No. 170 Vergnügte Ruh was written for the sixth Sunday after Trinity, and received its first

2. For further details see: Christoph Wolff, "J. S. Bach: Cantatas" in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians 20 vols. Stanley Sadie ed. 6th ed. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980) Vol. 1, p. 808.

performance on 28 July 1726. As was the case with the two other solo cantatas for alto written in the latter half of 1726 (Cantatas No. 35 and No. 169), Cantata No. 170 makes use of an obbligato organ part. There are only twelve Bach cantatas in all that use organ obbligato,³ and these organ parts are quite distinct stylistically from his independent compositions for organ. The organ obbligati in the cantatas are scored for one manual and pedals, or occasionally for two manuals. In either case each manual plays only a single melodic line, which may have been a substitute for another instrument of the orchestra, such as an absent flute or oboe.

According to Whittaker,⁴ the title page of the score of Cantata No. 170 is in the handwriting of Carl Philip Emanuel Bach and states the instrumentation as: oboe d'amore (doubling Violin I), obbligato organ, strings and basso continuo. The cantata consists of three arias and two recitatives, all for alto solo, on a text apparently provided by Lehms, which was based on the New Testament readings for the sixth Sunday after Trinity. There is no unifying theme in the texts of the arias and recitatives, apart from a general progression of thought from the peace and delight in virtue of the opening, through a denouncement

3. For further details see William Gillies Whittaker, The Cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) Vol 1, p. 241.

4. Whittaker, p. 242.

of hatred and evil in the recitative and central aria, to joyful resignation in the final aria as the alto sings, "Mir ekelt mehr zu leben, drum nimm mich Jesu hin" (It sickens me to live any longer, therefore, Jesus, take me away).

As only the first and last arias of Cantata No. 170 were performed on the Master's recital programme, further discussion will be limited to these specific movements.

Aria I "Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust"

Pleasant repose, beloved delight of my soul,
one cannot find you through the sins of Hell,
but certainly in Heaven's way. You alone
strengthen the faint-hearted. Therefore pure
virtue should have its dwelling place in my
heart.

Bach's response to this text seems to have been strongly influenced by the opening words, for this first aria is a delightful slumber song in a rocking 12/8 meter. Rhythmic impetus is gained through the persistent trochees of the bass, and the swinging sixteenth-note figurations in the violins and oboe:

(ARIE.)

Oboe d'amore.
Violino I.
Violino II.
Viola.
Alto.
Continuo.

Textually the form of the aria suggests a rondo, with the opening words, "Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust," recurring as a refrain. Musically, however, the aria appears to be a da capo aria, fully written out, including the ornamentation and with the internal sections being delineated by versions of the opening ritornello. Significant contrast is achieved between the A and B sections through changes in instrumentation: while the A section is marked by consistent use of motivic material from the ritornello and its attendant full instrumentation, the B section ("Drum, sollen lauter Tugendgaben") is almost entirely for voice and continuo.

Few opportunities are afforded for text painting by Lehms's text in this particular case, but Bach has availed himself of those opportunities that do exist, such as the chromatic nature of the vocal line and accompanying diminished triad to underscore "Höllensünden" (sins of Hell) and the tonally ambiguous diminished seventh underscoring "die schwache Brust" (faint-hearted).

Aria III "Mir ekelt mehr zu leben"

It sickens me to live any longer, therefore,
Jesus, take me away. I have a horror of all
sins; let me find this dwelling place where
I can be at peace.

The final aria of Cantata No. 170 is somewhat unusual with its rather awkward upward leap of an augmented fourth in the

opening phrase of the vocal line, but whenever this interval appears in the voice part it is always associated with the words "Mir ekelt" which translate literally as "makes me nauseous," so it certainly cannot be regarded as entirely inappropriate. Similar text painting is to be seen in the initial treatment of "Mir graut vor allen Sünden" (I have a horror of all sins) as the word "Sünden" is underscored by the sonority of a diminished seventh chord.

The aria is cast in five-part da capo form, with the major sections once again being clearly delineated by instrumental ritornellos. These ritornellos are marked by two major features: the characteristic leap of an augmented fourth in the first phrase, and the alternation between the organ obbligato and the rest of the ensemble.

The image displays a musical score for an instrumental ritornello. It consists of seven staves, each labeled with an instrument: Organo obbligato, Oboe d'amore, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Alto, and Continuo. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The Organo obbligato part features a prominent melodic line with a characteristic leap of an augmented fourth. The other instruments provide harmonic support, with the Continuo part showing figured bass notation. The score is divided into two measures, with the first measure containing the main melodic material and the second measure providing a continuation or resolution.



The organ obbligato consists of one manual line marked by thirty-second note figurations and a pedal line that is nothing more than occasional octave leaps. According to Whittaker,⁵ Bach himself wrote out the manual line on another sheet for flauto traverso, with certain pitch changes. This furthers the claim that organ obbligati in the cantatas served as a substitute for some other instrument.

"Mir ekelt mehr zu leben" brings Cantata No. 170 to a rousing close as the aria joyfully embraces death to escape the sins of the world and find eternal rest.

5. Whittaker, p. 245.

CHAPTER II

ROBERT SCHUMANN'S LIEDERKREIS OP. 39

When Robert Schumann turned his attention to song-writing in 1840, he brought to his new medium of musical expression the benefits of his extensive experience in composition for the piano and his strong literary background. Up until that time Schumann had written only a dozen or so rather mediocre songs, but in that single year, 1840, he produced well over a hundred lieder, including all of his great song cycles. The impetus for this sudden and somewhat obsessive preoccupation with vocal music seems to have been his anticipation of and artistic response to his long-awaited marriage to Clara Wieck, which took place in September of 1840. For the three years of their engagement Schumann had been expressing his love for Clara in the piano music he had dedicated to her, and as the time of their marriage drew closer it seems that piano music alone could not suffice. Thus the Romantic poetry of Heine, Eichendorff and Chamisso, in particular, provided the means to make explicit his joys and apprehensions towards this upcoming event.

Schumann's Liederkreis op. 39 was the immediate sequel to his spending a fortnight with Clara in Berlin in the

April of 1840,⁶ and within the space of a month he composed not only this cycle, but also what is arguably his greatest achievement in this genre: the setting of sixteen Heine poems that comprise the cycle Dichterliebe op. 48.

By the late 1830s Schumann has firmly established his reputation as a composer for the piano, particularly in the genre of character pieces. These he linked together in cycles such as the well-known Carnaval op. 9 (1834-5) and Kinderszenen op. 15 (1838). The influence of Schumann's piano compositions on his song-writing should not be underestimated, for while the harmonic language utilized in the lieder is generally more conventional than that explored in the piano pieces, the earmarks of Schumann's style are still very prominent in his accompaniments. Even more so than Schubert, Schumann focussed interest on the piano, sometimes to the point that the song could be more accurately described as a character piece for piano with vocal obbligato. The love of motives in his piano writing is retained along with those distinctive sweeping melodies flowing from the right hand to the left. In keeping with his perception of the lieder as a character piece for piano and voice, Schumann linked many of his lieder into cycles: Liederkreis (Heine) op. 24, Liederkreis (Eichendorff) op. 39,

6. Gerald Abraham, "Robert Schumann" in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 6th ed., Stanley Sadie ed., 20 vols. (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980) Vol. 16, p. 838.

Frauenliebe und -Leben op. 42 and Dichterliebe op. 48.

Schumann's Liederkreis op. 39 consists of settings of twelve poems selected from the works of the German Romantic poet, Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857). Unlike the Liederkreis op. 24 and the Dichterliebe, the Eichendorff Liederkreis is made up of poems that did not originally belong together. Several of the poems were taken from novels of Eichendorff, where they performed the function of songs sung by various characters in the course of the story.⁷ Yet despite the diversity of sources, and the fact that the poems do not embody a circle or sequence of events in the strict meaning of the German word "Kreis", there is an affinity between the poems: a similarity of language, imagery and sentiment. It is possible, however, that this unity resulted more from Eichendorff's poetic idiom than from Schumann's careful choice.

Eichendorff's poems depict a timeless world shrouded in mystery. They are certainly not just love poems relying on the standard Romantic images of love: singing birds, the moon, and twilit peaceful landscapes. These images all appear, but they are twisted as Eichendorff dwells on the darker, more menacing side of nature. The predominant theme in the poems is the transience of happiness, and the uncertainty of love. Images of happiness are tempered with

7. For sources of the poems see Eric Sams, The Songs of Robert Schumann (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969) pp. 92-103.

warnings, and even the wedding processions described in two of the poems are painted with an air of foreboding. For Schumann, as his own wedding drew near, these poems must have struck a sympathetic chord, voicing his own apprehensions.

In a similar manner to that seen in the Dichterliebe, Schumann has attempted to create in the Eichendorff Liederkreis a type of musical unity based for the most part on key relationships. There is no overt quotation of earlier thematic material to effect the type of cyclicity seen in Frauenliebe und -Leben where the melody of the first song is recalled in the epilogue of the last, but the key relationships between the individual songs evidence careful planning.

The songs progress through a series of key changes linking the opening song in F sharp minor to the final song in F sharp major. The key centres are all contained within a perfect fifth from E to B, a relationship that will later be shown to have further constructive significance. The key relationships between the songs are most clearly perceived in terms of key centre; the key centres of the last three songs mirror the key centres of the first three, and the keys of the middle three songs constitute the relationship of a fifth, E-B-E, as was seen in the overview of the key centres of the work as a whole.

<u>Song Number</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Key</u>	<u>Key Centre</u>
I	In der Fremde	F sharp minor	F#
II	Intermezzo	A major	A
III	Waldesgespräch	E major	E
IV	Die Stille	G major	G
V	Mondnacht	E major	E
VI	Schöne Fremde	B major	B
VII	Auf einer Burg	E minor	E
VIII	In der Fremde	A minor	A
IX	Wehmut	E major	E
X	Zwielicht	E minor	E
XI	Im Walde	A major	A
XII	Frühlingsnacht	F sharp major	F#

In German letter notation a B natural is represented by the letter "H", thus to Schumann, the fifth relationship illustrated above would have been "EHE", which is the German word for marriage. Schumann's use of ciphers in his songs has been fairly thoroughly explored by Eric Sams who has noted uses of this particular cipher in works dating from 1838 and 1840.⁸

It may be seen, therefore, that in his Liederkreis op. 39 Schumann achieved a certain degree of poetic and musical unity with a consistency of sentiment and imagery, and a distinctive plan of key relationships linked by a

8. Sams, p. 7.

cipher to the idea that was uppermost in his mind when he composed the cycle--marriage.

I In der Fremde (In a foreign land)

From my homeland beyond the red lightning
the clouds drift here, but Father and
Mother are long dead, and no-one knows me
there anymore.

How soon, how soon comes the quiet time
when I too shall rest; and above me the
forest will rustle in lovely solitude
and no-one will know me even here.

The consistently arpeggiated accompaniment that Schumann chose to employ for this poem suggests that he was acquainted with the Eichendorff novel from which this poem was drawn. In the novel Viel Lärmen um Nichts,⁹ this song is sung to a guitar accompaniment, and Schumann's figuration, in combination with a melancholy folk-like tune and an overall rounded bar form typical of folk tunes, readily evokes that image:

Nicht schnell.

Singstimme.

Aus der Hei - - math hin - ter den

Pianoforte.

Mit Pedal

Bli - - tzen roth da kom - men die Wol - ken her, a-her

pp

9. Sams, p. 93.

The harmonic language is also unsophisticated, relying on alternations between tonic and dominant, with a brief modulation to the subdominant. Neapolitan sixth chords heighten the poignancy of the singer's final line, "und keiner kennt mich mehr hier," and a brief postlude for the piano, echoing the final vocal phrase, brings the song to rest.

II Intermezzo¹⁰

I have your blessed image in the depth of
my heart; so fresh and merry it looks upon
me all the time.
My heart silently sings within itself an
old, beautiful song that soars into the air
and swiftly flies to you.

In direct contrast to the preceding song, Schumann has thrown a mantle of sophistication and rhythmic complexity over a simple love poem. The piano accompaniment is marked by restless syncopations adding an air of impatience certainly not implicit in the poem, and the tension builds with an *accelerando* through the treatment of the second stanza. Schumann then repeats the words and music of the opening section of the song to create a ternary form, and affording some relaxation from the tension of the second stanza. Complete relaxation, however, is not achieved until the singer's last line of text, "das sieht so frisch und fröhlich

10. Eichendorff's title was "Andenken". See Philip Miller, The Ring of Words (New York: Norton, 1973) p. 34.

mich an zu jeder Stund," as the syncopations are gradually abandoned and the voice and piano are heard in complete alignment for the first time. Again a brief postlude closes the song, re-establishing the syncopation and mood of impatience, for the union of the lovers has not yet been achieved.

III Waldesgespräch (Forest dialogue)

"It is already late, it is already cold.
Why are you riding alone through the forest?
The forest is long, you are alone. You
lovely bride, I'll guide you home."

"Great is man's deceit and cunning, from
sorrow my heart is broken; the hunter's
horn echoes to and fro. Oh flee! Oh flee!
You do not know who I am!"

"So richly adorned are the horse and woman;
so beautiful her young body. Now I know you,
God stand by me! You are the witch Lorelei."

"You know me well; from the high rock my
castle looks silently deep into the Rhine.
It is already late, it is already cold.
Nevermore will you leave the forest."

According to German legend, the Lorelei was a siren who dwelt on a cliff along the Rhine and lured sailors to destruction with her song. Eichendorff transposes the Lorelei in this poem from her cliff down into the forest as an embodiment of the dark side of nature, revenging herself against mankind in another guise.

Schumann relates this tale with music that is dramatically well suited to its task. The brief piano prelude which opens the ballad evokes the lonely forest with

open fifths and octaves in the bass, and a right-hand figuration highly suggestive of hunting horns:

Ziemlich rasch.

mf
„Es ist schon spät, es ist schon kalt, was“

There is no hint of what is to come until the interrupted cadence that heralds the Lorelei's reply. The tonic E on which the hunter sings the word "heim", expected to be a reassuring word, is abruptly transformed into the mediant of the new key; an eerie change, which in association with harp-like figurations, sets the scene for the Lorelei. The hunter does not heed her warning to flee and his response is heard back in the tonic key above the hunting horn figures. The only change comes at the moment of his comprehension as he breaks into quasi-recitative, throwing the words of recognition into high relief:

Im Tempo *ritard.*

mf
kenn' ich dich, - Gott steh' mir bei! du bist die He - xe Lo - re -

Im Tempo *ritard.*

mf
ley! „Du kennst mich“

With the Lorelei's identity revealed there is no further need for a disguise of key, and so the Lorelei's music is transposed up a major third to the tonic key as she affirms her identity and reveals the hunter's fate. The piano postlude restates the opening hunting horn theme, rounding off the song into a second rondo form (A B A¹ B¹ A²) and serving to re-establish the fairy-tale atmosphere of the opening.

IV Die Stille (The silence)

No-one knows or can guess how happy I am.
 Ah! If only one man knew it, no other mortal
 should. It is not as silent out in the snow,
 nor are the stars in the heavens as mute and
 silent as are my thoughts.
 I wish I were a little bird and could fly over
 the sea. Right over the sea and further
 until I would be in heaven.

As was the case with the second song of this cycle, Schumann has taken a slight love poem and cloaked it in music it really does not have the strength to bear. As in "Intermezzo", he reiterates the words and music of the first stanza to fulfill a ternary scheme. "Die Stille" effects a complete contrast with the preceding song. It begins without a prelude and immediately captures the atmosphere of intimacy, with a restrained vocal line punctuated by lightly articulated chords. The downfall of the song comes with Schumann's over-exuberant treatment of the second stanza. It is not the melody that is at fault here, but rather the

accompaniment, which launches into a lively Viennese waltz at the words: "Ich wünsch ich wär ein Vöglein." The return of the first stanza restores decorum but the overall effect is rather weak.

V Mondnacht (Moonlit night)

It was as if heaven had silently kissed the earth so that in the gleam of blossoms she could only dream of him.
The breeze went across the fields, the ears of grain gently waved, the forests rustled softly, so starry and clear was the night. And my soul unfolded wide its wings and flew across the silent lands as if it were flying home.

In his setting of "Mondnacht" Schumann's ability to effectively realize the intangible is well illustrated. The poetry is almost erotic with its explicit image of heaven and earth kissing in the moonlight, and the prevailing atmosphere is tinged with mystery. Schumann has captured the stillness with a very restrained vocal line above predominantly static repeated chords, highly reminiscent of his setting of "Die Lotosblume":

The image displays a musical score for the song "Mondnacht" by Robert Schumann. The score is written for voice and piano. The tempo and mood are indicated as "Zart. heimlich." (Tenderly, secretly). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line is written in a soprano or alto clef, and the piano accompaniment is in a grand staff. The lyrics are in German: "war, als hätt' der Him - mel die Er - de still ge - küsst,". The score includes dynamic markings such as "p" (piano) and "ritard." (ritardando). The piano part features a prominent, repeated chordal texture in the right hand, while the left hand provides a more active, flowing accompaniment. The overall mood is intimate and romantic, reflecting the "Zart. heimlich." character.

The vocal line consists almost entirely of repetitions of the opening two phrases of the song, the only exception being in the setting of the final stanza:

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

The vocal line maintains the same phrase structure and general shape, embodying the characteristic turn and semi-climactic rise, yet provides contrast as it captures musically the internalization in the final stanza of the poem.¹¹ While the role of the piano is primarily atmospheric, Schumann has engaged in some degree of word painting. The sweeping phrase in the right hand that introduces the song and recurs as an interlude and in the postlude may be seen as a musical depiction of heaven bending down to kiss the earth.¹²

VI Schöne Fremde (Beautiful foreign land)

The treetops rustle and shiver as though at
this hour the old gods were making their
rounds about the half-buried walls.
Here behind the myrtle trees in secret twilit
splendor, what are you saying, confused as
in dreams, to me fantastical night?

-
11. This stanza provides one of the relatively few examples of Schumann's deliberate injury of the text for the sake of consistency in musical phrasing: a whole measure's rest separates the simple verb "spannte" from the line of text containing its modifying prefix, "aus".
12. Sams, p. 98 notes the prominent use of the E-H-E motif in the left hand of the accompaniment.

All the stars twinkle on me with the
ardent look of love; the distance speaks
ecstatically as if of future happiness.

As was the case with the preceding song, Schumann's major concern with the setting of this poem was the creation of an appropriate atmosphere for the text rather than attempting a musical representation of actual events depicted in the text. With the possible exception of "Zwielicht" (XI) this song is the only one in the cycle that really sounds as though it was conceived as a piano solo independent of the vocal line. The lyrical vocal line seems to be a natural extension of the piano part, the words making more explicit the mood of the music, rising to an ecstatic climax with the words: "Es redet trunken die Ferne." There is demonstrable structural similarity between the opening measures of the vocal line of "Schöne Fremde" and the vocal line of the preceding song, almost as if Schumann was musically adding another dimension to the moonlit landscape of "Mondnacht".

VII Auf einer Burg (Aloft in a castle)

Fallen asleep on guard, aloft is the old
knight. Yonder pass showers of rain and
the trees rustle through the grating.
Beard and hair grown long, breast and collar
turned to stone, he sits for many hundreds
of years aloft in quiet hermitage.
Outside it is quiet and peaceful; everyone
has gone down into the valley. Lonely
forest birds sing in the empty window
arches.
A wedding party moves below, along the Rhine
in the sunshine. The musicians are playing
merrily and the beautiful bride weeps.

In "Auf einer Burg" Eichendorff appears to be making a direct reference to the German legend of Frederick Barbarossa, who was emperor of Germany from 1152 to 1190 and was drowned in a river in the course of the Third Crusade. According to the legend, however, he still sleeps in a cavern in Kyffhäuser mountain, with his beard grown around a stone table.¹³

The images of the first two stanzas of the poem evoke a timelessness that is further intensified by Schumann's setting. His choice of a quasi-modal idiom lends an air of antiquity, enhanced by the static rhythm and occasional contrapuntal voice-leading of the accompaniment:

Adagio.

Ein - ge - schla - fen auf der Lau - er o - ben ist der al - te Rit - ter,

drü - ber ge - hen Re - genschau - er, und der Wald rauscht durch das Gie - ter.

The vocal line is simple and almost folk-like in quality, characterized by the interval of a falling perfect fifth,

13. Dorothy Eagle, rev., The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Literature, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 36.

which is also a recurrent feature of the accompaniment. The folk-like quality is reinforced by the formal structure of the song, with its two musically identical strophes, each cast in bar form (AAB) so favoured by the minnesingers of Barbarossa's own day.

The overall atmosphere of the song is eerie and foreboding, mainly due to Schumann's use of the same music for both parts of the poem. The music that was so appropriate for the description of the old knight frozen in time in his tower adds a very strange air to a description of what is, by all accounts, a joyful wedding procession. It is by no means clear from Eichendorff's poem why the bride is crying; perhaps she is crying for joy, but Schumann's setting does not seem to allow for that possibility, rather suggesting that she is as trapped as the old knight and nobody cares anymore.

VIII In der Fremde¹⁴ (In a foreign land)

I hear the brooklets rushing in the forest,
to and fro. In the forest, amid the rushing,
I know not who I am.
The nightingales sing here in the solitude as
if they wanted to tell of the old, beautiful
times.
In the shimmering moonlight I seem to see
below me the castle lying in the valley--
but it is so far from here.

14. Eichendorff's title for this poem was "Erinnerung" (Remembrance). See Miller, p. 42.

It seems as though in the garden full of
white and red roses my beloved is waiting
for me--but she is long dead.

It appears that Schumann may have conceived this song as the 'alter ego' of "Auf einer Burg". The final E-major chord of the latter functions as a dominant to the A minor of "In der Fremde" bringing about a much needed resolution of the tonal uncertainty. Furthermore, the opening vocal phrase of "In der Fremde" is built from the same intervallic relationships as the opening of "Auf einer Burg", and the interval of a falling perfect fifth that was so prominent in that setting likewise is of major structural significance in "In der Fremde":

Zart, heimlich.

Ich hör' die Bächlein rau-schen im Wal - deher und
hin, im Wal - de in dem Rauschen ich weiss nicht, wo ich bin. Die

Structurally, Schumann has also followed the pattern of the preceding song, with a strophic setting and each of the two verses having an AAB phrase structure.

In this song Schumann has engaged in some pictorialism that is rather atypical of the cycle as a whole. The rushing brooklet is depicted by a Schubertian semiquaver figuration

that introduces the song, but the frequent recurrence of this figure gives a flippancy to the setting that seems rather inappropriate for the intense expression of the text.

IX Wehmut (Melancholy)

Sometimes I can sing as though I am happy
but secretly tears well up to relieve my
heart. Thus nightingales, as the spring
breeze plays outside, sing their yearning
melody from their prison's vault.¹⁵
Every heart listens and everybody is made
happy, yet no-one feels the pain, the deep
sorrow in the song.

As was the case with his setting of "In der Fremde" (I), Schumann exercises the utmost restraint in dealing with an extremely expressive text. The lyrical melodic line, with its delicate nuances so closely matched to the natural accentuations of the text, is contained for the most part within the interval of a fifth from F sharp to C sharp. The accompaniment makes little attempt at direct word painting, restricted by the ternary formal arrangement, but nevertheless reinforces the melancholy mood by the empty sound of the octave doubling of the vocal line in the right hand of the accompaniment, and chromatic passing tones heard in the inner voices. The brief postlude that draws the song to a close enriches the atmosphere with an expressive descent into the

15. Schumann has substituted the word "Kerker" (prison) for Eichendorff's "Käfig" (cage). See Miller, p. 42.

lower reaches of the keyboard, and then rises again to bring the piece to a resigned resolution.

X Zwielicht (Twilight)

Twilight spreads its wings, the trees stir
eerily; clouds pass as heavy dreams--what
does this shuddering mean?
If you have a favourite deer, do not let
him graze alone; hunters pass in the forest
and sound their horns, shouting back and
forth.
If you have a friend down here, trust him
not at this hour; truly friendly in look
and word, he schemes for war in treacherous
peace.
What today goes down tired, rises tomorrow
revitalized. Many things are hopelessly
lost in the night--be wary, be watchful
and alert!

Schumann's inclusion of this poem with its brooding cynicism and vivid warning of infidelity may well be a reflection of his own uncertainty in the face of marriage. The sense of dread and apprehension in the poem is dramatically represented in the tonal uncertainty and sinuous chromaticism of the accompaniment.

The piano prelude with which the song commences is marked by a contrapuntal texture and the prominence of a melodic tritone in a two-measure theme that is repeated twice, each time at a lower pitch level. The tonic E minor is never really established until the very end of the prelude:



This seven-measure prelude serves as the prototype for the accompaniment of the entire song which is cast in modified strophic form, the four strophes corresponding to the four stanzas of Eichendorff's poem. As is typical of Schumann's treatment of this form, the variation from one strophe to the next is almost entirely in the accompaniment. The texture is thickened ominously in the third verse as the poet warns of disloyal friends, and consistent syncopations add further to the sense of insecurity. Schumann's treatment of the final stanza, as the warning is made explicit, differs more substantially from preceding material. The accompaniment abandons the counterpoint of the previous verses for repeated chords, favouring the ambiguous sonority of diminished seventh chords.

The vocal line of "Zwielicht" is extremely unusual, embodying an awkward tritone leap and a degree of chromaticism more readily associated with Wolf than with Schumann. The song is brought to a dramatic close as the voice breaks into urgent recitative in a range so low as to ensure that the

final warning is hardly above a whisper: "Hüte dich, sei wach und munter!"

XI Im Walde (In the forest)

A wedding party moved along the mountain.
I heard the birds singing. There flashed
by many riders--the horn rang out. It was
a merry hunt!
And ere I had thought it everything had
died away. Night covered the surrounding
land; only the trees still rustled on the
mountain and I shivered to the depths of
my heart.

As was noted in the discussion of "Auf einer Burg", here again the image of a wedding procession is accompanied by an air of foreboding underlining the transience of happiness. The joys of life are outlined in the first stanza above a consistent iambic rhythm in the piano part with several melodic allusions to the hunter's horn. Then suddenly the images of joy are banished; the dance-like pattern of the accompaniment begins to break down and the vocal line seems to cling to the memory of its previous shape at the words, "Und eh' ich's gedacht war alles verhallt." But the iambic rhythm re-establishes itself, a memory of the past, linking the musical treatment of the two stanzas, and being abandoned only for the last line of text: "Und mich schauert's im Herzensgrunde." This is declaimed twice above sustained chords, the vocal line sinking down to a low A in a vividly pictorial treatment of "Herzensgrunde".

XII Frühlingsnacht (Spring evening)

Above the garden, through the breezes, I
heard migrating birds fly, denoting that
already the scents of spring are beginning
to bloom below.

I would like to shout for joy, I would like
to weep; it seems as though this cannot be.
Ancient wonders appear again here in the
moonlight.

And the moon, the stars are telling it, and
in dreams the grove rustles it, and the
nightingales sing it, "She is yours! She
is yours!"

With his setting of "Frühlingsnacht", Schumann brings his Liederkreis op. 39 to an exuberant close. It seems that the fears and uncertainties of love and marriage explored in the other songs of the cycle are now dismissed in an ecstatic acclamation of love. The excitement is conveyed primarily by the piano with repeated chords in triplet sixteenth notes at a fast tempo, while the voice breaks forth with a lyrical vocal line predominantly independent of the accompaniment.

Ziemlich rasch. Leidenschaftlich.



Mit Pedal

Überin Gar - ten durch die
Luf - te hört' ich Wander-vö-gel ziehn. das be-

The general contour of the vocal line has much in common with other of Schumann's exuberant love songs, particularly

"Er, der Herrlichste von allen" of the Frauenliebe und -Leben. The three stanzas of text are set in ternary form with a little more subdued B section highly appropriate to the awe-struck wonder of the second stanza.

Unlike the Dichterliebe or Frauenliebe und -Leben, the Liederkreis op. 39 has no extended postlude. In just six measures the cycle is brought to an end. No glimpses of previous themes darken the exuberance, and a happy resolution has finally been achieved.

CHAPTER III

CLAUDE DEBUSSY'S CHANSONS DE BILITIS

One of the primary factors in the development of the characteristic fluidity of the French *mélodie* was the relaxation by Romantic French poets of the couplet form in verse.¹⁶ The problems posed in setting poetic lines of varying length received many different solutions in the hands of the major composers of nineteenth-century French *mélodies*, ranging from an imposition of periodic phrasing totally foreign to the verse as seen in some of the songs of Berlioz, to the flexible and subtly inflected vocal lines of Debussy that may sacrifice even melody in the service of the text.

The publication in 1895 by Pierre Louÿs of what was purported to be a French translation of the works of an ancient Greek poetess, Bilitis, turned out to be one of the greatest literary hoaxes of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ The volume, entitled Chansons de Bilitis, was prefaced by Louÿs's rather inventive biography of the poetess and the

16. Donald Ivey, Song: Anatomy, Imagery and Styles (New York: The Free Press, 1970) p. 222.

17. Arthur B. Wenk, Claude Debussy and the Poets (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) p. 175.

story of the discovery of her tomb, the walls of which were supposed to be covered with the poems found in the collection. To Louÿs's undoubted delight, leading archaeologists readily supported his claim, particularly as his prose poems seemed to be the right length for prose versions of ancient Greek poetry.

Debussy's works based on the Chansons de Bilitis--three songs, incidental music and some four-hand piano music--were the only musical manifestation of a decade-long friendship between Debussy and Louÿs. While the two men had discussed other projects, such as a ballet on the subject of Daphnis et Chloé and a musical adaptation of Louÿs's novel, Aphrodite, none of these ever came to fruition.¹⁸

The three poems which Debussy selected from Louÿs's collection describe the three phases of love for the young maiden Bilitis. The first, "La Flûte de Pan", describes her awakening to love; her meeting with a nameless boy who gives her a set of pipes and teaches her how to play upon them. In the second poem, "La Chevelure", Bilitis retells her lover's erotic fantasy in which he becomes entangled in her hair, caressing it until it joins with his own. The last poem, "Le Tombeau des Nalades", is set in winter; the landscape is frozen and the poem symbolically relates the deadening of Bilitis's love.

18. Wenk, pp. 174-179.

Debussy's setting of the three Chansons de Bilitis dates from 1897 to 1898, midway through the period in which he was involved with Pelléas et Melisande. The quasi-recitative style of text setting that predominates in the songs was obviously inspired by the idiom he had chosen for the vocal writing in his opera. The vocal lines in Debussy's Chansons de Bilitis are melodically simple, being contained within a narrow range with many passages of repeated notes, yet they simultaneously achieve great rhythmic fluidity by freely interchanging triplets and sixteenth notes in order to render an accurate accentuation of the text. There are very few instances of actual text depiction, apart from the depiction of a flute at the beginning of "La Flûte de Pan", but the timeless atmosphere of the poems is readily conveyed through Debussy's use of modality and the static nature of the accompaniments.

La Flûte de Pan (The flute of Pan)

For the day of Hyacinthus he has given me
a syrinx made of well-hewn reeds, joined
with white wax that is as sweet to my lips
as honey.
He teaches me to play, sitting on his knees,
but I am trembling a little. He plays it
after me so sweetly that I can scarcely
hear it.
We have nothing to say to each other, so
near are we to one another, but our songs
wish to be answered and by turns our mouths
are united on the flute.
It is late; there is the song of green frogs
that begins with the night. My mother will
never believe I have been so long looking
for my lost girtel.

The mythological associations of Louys's text add another dimension to the sensual tale of a young girl being taught to play a syrinx by her lover. In Greek mythology Syrinx was a nymph pursued by Pan, and to enable her to escape, she was turned into a reed by the goddess Diana. Her escape, however, was not complete, for Pan took the reed and made it into a flute, and thus was literally able to play upon Syrinx.¹⁹ This device of utilizing Classical mythology to lend propriety to situations that range from mildly to blatantly erotic was one of which Louys was particularly fond and had exploited in the novel Aphrodite that had quickly gained him notoriety.

Debussy's musical treatment of "La Flûte de Pan" is delicate and subtle in its effects; both the vocal line and the accompaniment are almost entirely subservient to the text. The text setting is syllabic throughout, with the vocal line being contained within an octave. There is not a single moment in the vocal line that could be described accurately as being melodic, but a beautiful melody would only detract from the whispered intimacy of Bilitis's story.

The song is through-composed, falling into clear musical sections that correspond to the stanzaic divisions of the text. The opening two measures of the song for piano

19. H. J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1965) p. 142.

alone serve not only to evoke an appropriate atmosphere of reverie, but also to introduce the two ideas which dominate the accompaniment:

Lent et sans rigueur de rythme

Voice

PIANO *pp*

doux et soutenu

P

Pour le jour des hya - cin - thies, il m'a donné u - ne sy -

pp

(s) - rinx fai - te de ro - seaux bien tail - lés, u - nis a -

The first is the Lydian scale passage in the right hand, so reminiscent of the flute melodies in Debussy's Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune and Syrinx. The second musical idea is another commonly associated with the idiom of Debussy, that being the fluctuation of chords that have little, if any, functional relationship to each other, simultaneously exploiting the sonority of exposed parallel

fifths. Only in the final section of "La Flûte de Pan" does material appear that is not directly related to either of these ideas:

The musical score is for a piece in G major (one sharp). It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked "Plus lent". The lyrics are in French. The piano part includes markings for "ppp", "pp léger mais sans sécheresse", and "pp presque sans voix". The vocal part includes markings for "3" (triplets) and "Ma mè - re ne croi - ra ja -".

Plus lent

- mence avec la nuit

ppp

pp léger mais sans sécheresse

pressez un peu

pp presque sans voix

Ma mè - re ne croi - ra ja -

The figurations of acciacaturas a tritone above the main note that occur in the left hand of the accompaniment at this point seem to suggest the song of the green frogs that Bilitis has just mentioned.

La Chevelure (The Hair)

He said to me: "Last night I dreamed I had your hair around my neck. I had your hair like a black collar around the nape of my neck and on my chest."
 "I caressed it and it was mine and we were bound thus for always by the same hair mouth upon mouth, thus as two laurels have often one root."
 "And little by little it seemed to me, our limbs were so mingled, that I became you or that you entered into me like my dream."
 When he had finished, he gently placed his hands upon my shoulders and he looked at me, with a look so tender that I lowered my eyes with a shiver.

In his setting of "La Chevelure" Debussy seems to have found, as David Cox has observed,²⁰ an exact musical equivalent for the delicate, sensual paganism of Louÿs's prose poem. The vocal line writhes chromatically as Bilitis relates her lover's erotic dream in quasi-recitative, expanding into lyricism only at the passionate climax of their kiss.



It is almost as though the naive Bilitis is embarrassed or unnerved by the strength of the emotions she has experienced just recounting the images of the dream; her lover's fantasy has now become her own. The song returns to the subdued simplicity of the opening and the whispered intimacy of the vocal line as the dream ends.

Debussy has cast "La Chevelure" in an arch-form (A B C B¹ A¹) which corresponds closely to the structure of Louÿs's poem. Dream and reality are musically differentiated, but the confusion between the two that Bilitis experiences is depicted by Debussy through stylistic reversal. The dream-like music (A) is used for the sections of the poem that are

20. David Cox, "France" in A History of Song ed. Denis Stevens (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970) p. 211.

set in reality, but the music of the dream itself has great presence and rhythmic assuredness, marked by syncopations that add to the urgency of the images.

There is an interesting musical link between "La Chevelure" and the first song of the cycle. The Lydian scale of the syrinx that permeates "La Flûte de Pan" is recalled a semitone higher in "La Chevelure" in the ecstatic rising vocal line: "par la même chevelure la bouche sur la bouche."

Le Tombeau des Naiades

I walked the length of the frost-covered wood; my hair before my mouth was decorated with small icicles and my sandals were heavy with muddy, caked snow. He said to me, "What are you looking for?"-- "I am following the track of a satyr. His little cloven hoofprints alternate like holes in a white mantle." He said to me, "The satyrs are dead." "The satyrs and the nymphs also. For thirty years there has not been such a terrible winter. The track that you see is that of a he-goat. But let us stay here where their tomb is." And with the point of his hoe he broke the ice of the spring where the naiads used to laugh. He took some of the big, frozen pieces and raising them towards the pale sky, he looked through them.

The satyrs and nymphs, symbols of Bilitis's youthful love, are dead. Only a few traces remain of past happier times: the spring where the nymphs used to laugh has frozen over and the only tangible sign of their existence is their tomb.

Images of frozen water abound in the poem²¹--"givre", "glaçons", "neige", "glace", "morceaux froids"--and seem to represent death more as a suspension of animation than as having total finality. This is further reinforced in the final image of the poem as the man lifts up the pieces of ice and looks through them as a figurative window to the past; the nymphs perhaps are not dead, just trapped in the ice, waiting for the warmth of love to release them.

The timeless, glacial landscape is effectively portrayed through the very static nature of Debussy's accompaniment. Sixteenth-note motion prevails throughout the song and with the exception of only five measures, the entire fabric of the accompaniment is woven around two melodic motives. The first is a rising four-note figure, which is generally repeated at least four times before being moved to another pitch level:

The image shows a musical score for a song. The top system is for the Voice and Piano. The Voice part is marked 'Très lent' and 'p doux et las'. The Piano part is marked 'Très lent' and 'pp'. The lyrics are 'Le long du bois couvert de gi - vre, je mar - chais; mes che -'. The bottom system continues the Piano accompaniment with the same melodic motives. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time.

21. Wenk, p. 193.

The second motive is comprised of four thirds (major or minor) symmetrically arranged so that they are mirrored about the centre of the group:

The image displays a musical score for a song. The top system features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The vocal line includes the lyrics: "- Jesus la trace du saty - re." and "Ses petits pas fourchus alternent comme des trous dans un manteau". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady harmonic rhythm of chords. The bottom system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "blanc." "Il me dit:" and "Les sa - tyres sont morts." The piano accompaniment continues with similar chords, marked with a piano (p) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

The fact that both of these motives turn back upon themselves adds further to the static nature of the accompaniment. The harmonic rhythm is likewise appropriately slow, with just one chord to a measure at a "Très lent" tempo. Only as Bilitis's excitement mounts as she thinks she has found the track of a satyr in the snow, and as she recounts how the man broke the ice of the spring, does the harmonic rhythm quicken to the extent of having three or four chords in a measure.

The vocal line of "Le Tombeau des Naïades" is arguably more lyrical than that of either of the two preceding songs. Not only is the range expansive, extending from a low C to F sharp, but there are much more frequent undulations in the line, leaving the listener with an overall impression of lyricism at the close of the cycle.

CHAPTER IV
BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S CANTICLE II:
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC OP. 51

Of all English composers since the Second World War, Benjamin Britten is by far the most likely to attain a place of permanence in the genre of vocal music. His solo songs, choral music and operas have received considerable acclaim for their accessibility, despite a fairly uncompromisingly 'modern' idiom, and have been accepted into the standard repertoire far more readily than works by other major composers of this era.

One of the distinctive characteristics of Britten's vocal writing is its sensitivity to the inflections and nuances of the English language, ensuring accurate and dramatic declamation. Also characteristic is his tendency towards a use of extended melismatic passages in a manner highly reminiscent of Purcell,²² i.e., "The Choirmaster's Burial" from Winter Words (1953). The vocal line and accompaniment are often quite independent; despite sharp dissonance and unconventional harmonies in the accompaniment

22. Ivey, p. 240.

the individual vocal lines are generally tonal, at times even diatonic, as may be seen in many of the songs that make up A Charm of Lullabies (1947).

Included in Britten's large output of vocal music are five extended vocal pieces for one or more solo voices which he designated as "Canticles". They are not canticles in the sense of Roman Catholic or Anglican liturgical practice, but do all deal with religious subjects, although the texts themselves are drawn from widely diverse sources--none directly from the Bible.

Canticle I, op. 40 (1947) was scored for tenor and piano and is a predominantly lyrical setting based on the poem of the seventeenth-century poet, Francis Quarles, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Five years later it was joined by Canticle II, op. 51, a dramatic musical representation of the Biblical narrative of Abraham and Isaac as it appears in the Chester Miracle Play.

Canticle III, op. 55 (1954) entitled Still falls the rain, was based on a poem by Edith Sitwell and scored for tenor, horn and piano. Britten's last two Canticles were written almost twenty years after the first three, and are based on poems of T. S. Eliot: Journey of the Magi, op. 86 (1971), for countertenor, tenor, baritone and piano, and The Death of St. Narcissus, op. 89 (1974) for tenor and harp. All of the Canticles are centred around the tenor voice, and were written, as indeed many of Britten's works were, for Peter Pears.

Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac, op. 51, was scored for tenor, contralto and piano and was given its first performance in 1952 by Peter Pears, Kathleen Ferrier and Britten himself as pianist. While there are only two singers, there are three characters involved in the Miracle Play: Abraham, Isaac and God. Abraham is sung by the tenor, Isaac by the contralto, and the two voices are used together with great dramatic effectiveness to create the voice of God. Britten has also included in the score,²³ stage directions apparently from the original play, which may further enhance the performance from the audience's point of view if they are narrated. In almost every case these directions may be declaimed without any disturbance to the musical flow; thus the performance given on this Master's recital with narrator, although unorthodox, can be justified.

The music for Abraham and Isaac falls into clearly delineated sections, each dominated by one or two melodic motives and corresponding to a certain incident in the text. Such an approach could certainly result in a rather disjointed composition, but the recalling of certain motives affords relatively tight musical unity. Nine musico-dramatic sections may be identified on the basis of text and thematic material:

23. Benjamin Britten, Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac op. 51 (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1953).

I (God's bidding)

The alto and tenor voices combine to form the voice of God, chanting his command that Abraham sacrifice his son, Isaac. The words of God are introduced throughout the Canticale by a rising E-flat-major arpeggio in the piano, which is reiterated frequently in this section, giving a strong sense of an E-flat-major tonality. The vocal lines incorporate three major musical motives that have been shown by David Brown²⁴ to form the basis of the melodic material for the entire work. These short themes he has identified as the "summons", "sacrifice" and "will" motives:

Summons:

ALTO
TENOR

Slow recitative

GOD SPEAKETH

pp

A - bra - ham!.... My servant A - bra - ham,

A - bra - ham!.... My servant A - bra - ham,

Sacrifice:

A.
T.

And in sa - cri - fice of - fer him to me marked

And in sa - cri - fice of - fer him to me marked

Will:

A.
T.

pp

moving forward

For ought that may be - fall.

For ought that may be - fall.

24. David Brown, "Britten's Three Canticles," Music Review Vol. 21 (1960) pp. 58-60.

In a few measures of recitative Abraham's resolution to obey moves to A major, polarized at the interval of a tritone from the voice of God.

II (Journey to the place of sacrifice)

This scene between Abraham and Isaac as they make preparations and go on their journey is almost entirely in A major, with lilting, folk-like lines for both Abraham and Isaac.

Isaac's vocal line is symbolic of his obedience, closely modelled on his father's throughout the duet, and the piano part beneath these exchanges constantly reminds the listener of the purpose of their journey by recalling the "sacrifice" motif:

HERE ABRAHAM, TURNING TO HIS SON ISAAC, SAYS:

P

T. 

HERE ISAAC SPEAKS TO HIS FATHER, AND TAKETH A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND REARETH AFTER HIS FATHER.

pp

A. 

T. 

III (Abraham reveals his purpose)

The lyrical exchanges between Abraham and Isaac from the

previous scene are briefly recalled, yet the main melodic idea for this scene comes from Abraham's outburst, "O! My heart will break in three." The entire scene is conducted in widely modulating recitative, punctuated by rolled chords or tremolos in the piano. The only melodic interest in the piano part comes at the very end of the scene as the piano portentously recalls the "sacrifice" motif and Abraham finally reveals his purpose.

IV (Issac's anguish)

The "sacrifice" motif is suddenly converted into an urgent accompaniment figure²⁵ underscoring the impassioned pleas of Isaac.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (labeled 'A.') and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a prominent, urgent accompaniment figure consisting of repeated eighth notes, which is a variation of the 'sacrifice' motif. The lyrics are as follows:

System 1: A - las! Fa - ther, is that your will, Your

System 2: own - ē child for to spill U - pon this hil - lē

System 3: brink?..... If I have tres - passed in a - ny de - gree, With a

25. Peter Evans, The Music of Benjamin Britten (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1979) p. 406.

As with the previous duet in the second scene, this duet between Abraham and Isaac is fairly solidly in one tonality--in this case, D minor. The short breathless phrases of Isaac's vocal line dramatically depict his agitation and are in strong contrast to Abraham's long and steady phrases, symbolic of his resolve. The agitation of the accompaniment slowly breaks down with Isaac's resignation to his fate: "Father, seeing you must needs do so, let it pass lightly and over go."

V (The Blessing)

This scene is again conducted in recitative as Isaac asks for and receives his father's blessing, above arpeggiated blocks of major chords with an added sixth. Abraham's blessing closely follows the outline of Isaac's request: "Kneeling on my knees two, your blessing on me spread," with its distinctive opening leap of a major ninth.



VI (The Farewell)

As has been the case with the other set pieces, this duet is firmly based in a single tonality: on this occasion, D flat major. There is only a brief diversion at the

climactic point in Isaac's line as he sings, "I come no more under her wing," and for four measures the tonality is unambiguously A major--a tritone away from the main tonality of this section. The lyrical vocal lines of both Isaac and Abraham seem to owe their genesis to the falling thirds of the "will" motif, and the duet is cast with two strophes rounded off by a coda reiterating the word "farewell".

VII (The Sacrifice)

A sudden change occurs as Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac. The piano engages in a vast build-up based on the characteristic intervallic structure of the "sacrifice" motif above a C-sharp pedal, and the vocal parts of both Abraham and Isaac are declaimed on a low C sharp, rising to the octave above as the drama intensifies. The climax is reached at the point where, according to the directions in the score, Abraham makes a sign as though he would cut off Isaac's head. Musically this climax is indicated by a sudden shift to E flat, heralded by the "will" motif,²⁶ and the tension suddenly dissolves into a serene E flat major chord as the next scene begins.

VIII (Divine Intervention)

The opening measures of the Canticle are recapitulated as

26. Evans, p. 407.

God speaks again: "Abraham, my servant dear, Abraham! Lay not thy sword in no manner on Isaac thy dear darling...." The musical substance of this scene has much in common with that of Scene I; God is heralded by an E-flat major arpeggio, and the three main motives reappear, although the "sacrifice" motif has been inverted reflecting the turn of events. Abraham's vigorous reply, "Ah, Lord of Heav'n and King of bliss....," is punctuated by a lively accompaniment figure drawn directly from the "summons" motif, and the "sacrifice" motif is recalled several times in the vocal line before being stated in the accompaniment as Abraham takes the lamb caught in the briars to make his sacrifice.

T. *f* To Thee of-fered shall he be A - non right in this

T. *f* place, A - non right in this place.

T. *f* Sa - cri-fice here sent me is, And all, Lord, through Thy

cresc *(freely)*

IX (Envoi)

The moralizing final stanza of the Miracle Play is set by Britten using the same melodic material as he used for the duet in the second scene, but in E-flat major rather than A major, and without the ominous theme in the accompaniment. The two voices are no longer characters participating in the drama, but serve the function of a Greek chorus, commenting on the preceding action. The vocal lines move in loose canon, finally coming together and broadening into a hymnic cadence with the words: "Forever and ever, Amen."

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A MASTER'S RECITAL AND
ANALYTICAL PROGRAMME NOTES

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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ABSTRACT

This Master's Report consists of a tape of the author's Master's Recital, accompanied by analytical programme notes dealing with each of the selections included on the recital programme: Two arias from J. S. Bach's Cantata No. 170, Schumann's Liederkreis op. 39, Debussy's Chansons de Bilitis and Britten's Abraham and Isaac op. 51. These notes include pertinent biographical information of the composer, historical background, original translations of the German and French texts and a detailed musical analysis of each selection.