

THE FEMININE CHARACTER: THE BALANCE BETWEEN STRENGTH AND CHARM

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A REPORT

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Abstract

This Master's Report is in the form of extended program notes on works performed on a graduate recital for a mezzo-soprano. The notes include biographical information, and a literary and historical exploration of the piece selected, to discuss the overall theme of the feminine character as she appears in contrasting works. Translations of the texts are included in the body of the text.

The pieces discussed are Debussy's *Trois Chansons de Bilitis*, Rossini's "Cruda Sorte!...Già so per pratica" from *L'Italiana in Algeri*, selections from Wolf's *Spanisches Liederbuch*, Massenet's "Va! Laisse couler mes larmes" from *Werther*, Lori Laitman's *Daughters*, Handel's "In gentle murmurs will I mourn" from *Jephtha*, and Granados's *La maja dolorosa* No. 1, 2, and 3.

The graduate recital was given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree in vocal performance on March 29th, 2015 performed in All Faiths Chapel at Kansas State University. It featured the piano talents of Amanda Arrington, with the aid of Jillian Emerson on cello, Janice McGregor on violin, and Christopher Gugel on flute.

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Chapter 1 - George Frideric Handel--In gentle murmurs, will I mourn

Biographical Information

George Frideric Handel was born February 23rd, 1685 in Halle, Germany. Much of what we know about Handel's early life comes primarily from 1760 biography, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frideric Handel*, by Johann Mainwaring. Handel's father, Georg, as a court surgeon would have most likely wanted his son to be a lawyer or some other sort of similar profession, but Handel showed a proclivity for music early on. A commonly referenced anecdote recalls how as young boy, Handel would sneak up to the attic to practice on a clavichord that he smuggled into the house. While at grammar school, Handel studied under Friedrich Wilhelm, Zachow organist of the Liebfrauenkirche in Halle, who taught him organ, harpsichord, violin, composition, harmony, and counterpoint. It is also perhaps here that Handel would have honed his compositional technique of borrowing and imitation, for Zachow would often encourage Handel to copy and imitate music from his own collection of German and Italian compositions.¹

Handel's time in Hamburg had a great impact on him, because at the time Hamburg was the only location in Germany that had a consistent opera life and was an important commercial center. Handel played violin and harpsichord for the opera and began a friendship with composer and theorist, Johann Mattheson, which was only interrupted by a brief, well-known duel in 1704. From 1706 until 1710, Handel made his way through the various artistic centers of Italy, such as Florence, Rome, Naples, and Venice. It was in Rome that Handel attained his first patrons who were not only leading men of the Church, such as the Cardinals Colonna, Pamphili and Ottobini, but also secular prince Francesco Maria Ruspoli. During this time Handel absorbed his Italian surroundings and relationships with Italian music and musicians into his personal style, but wrote few operas due to his extensive time in Rome and the papal ban on theatrical works. Among his more prominent works of his Italian years were his first opera, *Rodrigo* (1707) and the oratorio *La Resurrezione* (1708).

¹ Winton Dean, *The New Grove Handel* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), p. 2.

In February of 1710, Handel made his way north, stopping briefly in Hanover to secure the position of Kapellmeister, only under the condition that he be given 12-month leave immediately, to visit London. During his time in England, Handel enjoyed close relationships with royalty, such as Queen Anne, King George I (former Elector of Hanover) and his son George II. Perhaps his greatest personal asset, however, was John Jacob Heidegger, “whose house with its eighteenth-century frescoes of operatic scenes, still stands on Richmond Green. Heidegger was Handel’s collaborator for the next few decades and proved to be a good and reliable manager.”²

In 1718, several members of nobility and royalty joined forces to establish Italian opera in England. Subscribers would pay a fee that would guarantee them a permanent ticket to the King’s Theater. This became known as the Royal Academy of Music. Handel was granted permission to travel throughout Europe, but primarily Germany and Italy, to find the finest singers for the venture. The Academy would enjoy a few years of success, but ultimately it closed in 1728 due to a lack of subscription renewals. Despite the failure, Handel was increasing in fame and prosperity, and his music was becoming more and more in demand with the public. “On 13 February that year Handel had applied for English naturalization; it was granted by Act of Parliament a week later. By summer 1723 he had moved into a new house in Brook Street, near Grosvenor Square, where he lived for the rest of his life.”³

After a second try to maintain the Royal Academy of Music, London would witness a decline in opera and soon thereafter, Handel would devote his life almost entirely to the composition of the English oratorios, his more well-known including *Judas Maccabeus* (1746), *Jephtha* (1751), and the famous *Messiah* (1741). Handel suffered from mild health issues for much of his adult life, sometimes having to cease composing briefly to recover, but in 1759, he was too ill to take part on a journey to Bath and was left bedridden. On April 14th, 1759 Handel died in his home on Brook Street.

² H.C. Robbins Landon, *Handel and His World* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1984) p. 77.

³ Winton Dean, *The New Grove: Handel*, p. 35. This location, at 25 Brook Street, is not the site of the Handel House Museum.

Compositional Style

Handel wrote a plethora of music for a various genres, but as it is the purpose of this report to discuss his vocal literature it is his compositional technique and process that will be explored. His most famous vocal works, by modern standards, are his choruses, but to only acknowledge these in his oratorios and operas would be gross underrepresentation of this work. An argument can be made that they are the most important components of his vocal works and therefore took up much of his creativity in the compositional process. Handel's arias have been somewhat neglected mainly because most of them are *da capo* arias in the *opera seria* category. Modern critics are harsh on both because of the repetitive nature of the text which leaves the arias as "simply a vehicle for vocal improvisation and a shameless showcase for brilliant virtuoso singing rather than a form suitable for musical or dramatic expression."⁴ In a way, the critics are correct, because Handel did write his arias with specific voices in mind and a clear idea of the extent of their vocal abilities.

Most likely because of the influences of his travels to Italy, much of his writing was created with idea of Italian opera never far from his pen. When comparing both the style of aria and the compositional process all one really needs to do is look at the change of personnel from one Royal Academy to the next. For example, "Margherita Durastanti. . . was a thoroughly competent and experience Italian singer who was capable of considerable vocal virtuosity and dramatic expression."⁵ Therefore, during her tenure with the academy, Handel wrote pieces that reflected her wide range of abilities, which included pants roles. This of course differed from the arias he wrote for Durastanti's successor, Francesca Cuzzoni, who had a lighter, clear soprano tone compared to Durastanti's heavy, dramatic voice.

When Handel moved from opera to oratorio composition, there was no real breakdown in his attention to the aria. If anything, by this time Handel was well on his way to perfecting the connection of his music to the dramatic nature of the words. Perhaps, this is because oratorios relied on the text to carry the story, without the aid of full-fledged staging. While it is true that his choruses were significant, there can be no denying that the aria was the foundation of the

⁴ C. Steven LaRue, "Handel and the Aria" from *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, edited by Donald Burrows (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 11.

⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

development of his personal style and overall compositional career. “It is appropriate, therefore, that the Handel monument at his grave in Westminster Abbey, by sculptor Louis François Roubiliac, represents the composer at work not on one of his famous choruses, but on the aria ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’”⁶

Historical and Libretto Inspiration

On January 21st in 1751, George Frederic Handel began composing what was to become his last oratorio and in many ways the last major work of his life. Up until this point Handel has a healthy output of about two oratorios a season; however with *Theodora* and *Jephtha*, this pattern was inexplicably broken. *Theodora* was composed in 1749 and performed during the 1750 Lenten season, but no oratorio would be completed for performance during the 1751 season. From August to December in 1750, Handel did quite a bit of traveling through the Netherlands and possibly seeing family in Halle, and by the time he arrived back in London mid-December of 1750, he had no plans to write a new oratorio.⁷

When Handel began writing *Jephtha*, at the age of 65, his health was showing signs of waning. While he was writing the Act II final chorus, “How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees,” Handel made an inscription in the score indicating that the gradual loss of sight from his left eye was proving the task of composing too difficult at the time. He continued other musical forms of employment such as directing *Balshazzar* and performing an organ concerto until his 66th birthday, when he once again picked up the pen and completed Act II on February 27th. Once again, however, he spent some time away from the oratorio and would not begin composing the third act until mid-June, completing the entire oratorio August 30th, 1751.⁸ That summer Handel would lose vision in his left eye, with treatment having little to no effect in ailing his failing senses. The loss of vision sent him into a depression comparable to that of Beethoven when he lost his hearing, but nothing suggests that Handel was suicidal, merely left somber in contrast to his usually extroverted personality.

⁶ C. Steven LaRue., p. 121.

⁷ George Frideric Handel, *Jephtha: An Oratorio 1752* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus Publisher of Music), p. xv.

⁸ Christopher Hogwood, pp. 221-224.

The original story of *Jephtha* comes from the Book of Judges, Chapter 11: 1-40. In the story, Jephtha is an illegitimate child of Gilead and is therefore driven out by his people for his unfortunate parentage. When the Israelites find themselves in conflict with the Ammonites, they recall the strength and leadership of Jephtha and call upon him to lead their armies and the country to peace. Jephtha consents, and in a moment of haste, vows to God that if he should go to battle and win, he will sacrifice the first person who greets him as an offering to God. After the failure of peaceful talks, Jephtha is forced to lead his people to war. He is successful, but as fate would have it, his daughter is the first to greet him and he is remorseful of his vow. Resigning to her fate, his daughter asks that she be given time to mourn her virginity and her fate, and after that she will offer herself up as a sacrifice. In the Bible, Judges Chapter 11:39, and according to oral history she is sacrificed. As a part of tradition, the Israelite women mourn every year for four days for the lost daughter.⁹ The story itself is a unique in that human sacrifice was strongly detested and Biblical Jews would not have been proud of a leader that would place themselves in such a position. “Oral tradition had it that God punished both Jephtha (with physical afflictions the rest of his life) and the high priest who failed to stop the sacrifice.”¹⁰

Reverend Thomas Morell and Handel began a working relationship after the composer wrote a letter on the behest of the Prince of Wales. In crafting the libretto for *Jephtha*, Morell’s challenge was writing such a dark sacred work for an audience that would have found human sacrifice and deep tragedy less than appealing as entertainment. Therefore, he changed a key factor in the plot; the daughter lives. Morell expanded upon the personal story of Jephtha and added a variety of characters. Morell combined the implied many half-brothers into one character, Zebul. Jephtha’s wife has a much bigger role and is given the name, Storgè, taken from George Buchanan’s 16th-century play *Jephthe sive votum*. Morell also gives Jephtha’s daughter a name, Iphis. This character and much of the structure of Morell’s libretto is most likely a model from the Greek story, *Iphigenia at Aulis*. In the Greek story, Agamemnon is placed in a similar situation with his daughter Iphigenia.¹¹ A love interest, primarily for the

⁹ Bible, English Standard Version.

¹⁰ Howard Posner. "Jephtha (complete Oratorio) | LA Phil." *Jephtha (complete Oratorio) | LA Phil*. Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, 2014. Web. 08 Dec. 2014.

¹¹ Handel, *Jephtha: An Oratorio* 1752, p. xviii.

additional depth of the daughter's character, Hamor is added to the list of characters. He serves primarily as a way to show the daughter's capability of love apart from that of her family. Indeed, any true development of the love between Iphis and Hamor would go against the concept of the Patriot libretto¹²; therefore whenever Hamor declares discomfort of Iphis's fate, it is more as a child who is upset that something he very much wanted was taken away and less that of a lover facing the possible sacrifice of his betrothed.

Morell uses technicality in translation to get away with redeeming the character of Iphis. Rather than assuming that the vow meant sacrifice, Morell uses the concept that Jephtha made a vow to dedicate someone to God more for the "use of" or "dedication to" rather than the demand of a burnt sacrifice. As a secretary of the Anglican society and an Anglican curate with a doctoral degree in divinity from Cambridge, Morell was no doubt aware of and well versed in the debate surrounding this passage in the Bible. "The most substantial case is laid out in three folio columns of his biblical commentary by Samuel Humphreys, who argues that human sacrifice was specifically outlawed by God."¹³ With this, Iphis is forced to live life as a virgin, which in the Jewish fate is a sacrifice almost worse than death. Instead of perpetuating the line of Jephtha, there will be no progeny and his line will die with him. Furthermore, this would prevent Iphis from being able to fulfill the prophecy of bearing the long-awaited Messiah.¹⁴

Of course, Morell likely also knew that ancient Israelites had no concept of consecrating a *woman* to priestly work and believed that everyone should be married (as observant modern Jews and all modern Jewish mothers believe) and virginity much into adulthood was therefore a cursed condition, but Morell either had a different view of celibacy or simply figured it was better than being a burnt offering.¹⁵

If *Jephtha* were to be put into a category, it would be that of the Patriot libretto which entails a public conflict that mirrors the inner turmoil of the characters. "Highly characteristic of Patriot drama [is] using drama, predominantly family relationships, rather than those of lovers, as a source of trial, pain, and tenderness."¹⁶ God is just and ethical, success of the nation is the reward for virtue. The hero is not romantic but is likened to that of Shakespeare's Henry V: one

¹² To be defined and discussed further on in this section.

¹³ Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 343.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 343.

¹⁵ Posner, "Jephtha (complete Oratorio) | LA Phil." *Jephtha (complete Oratorio) | LA Phil.*

¹⁶ Smith, p. 341.

that is a willing to cooperate in the hopes of restoring national unity and strength, aside from their personal struggles.¹⁷ The story of Jephtha was a popular one of the time, having been set in 1737 by John Hoadly, the Prince of Wales' chaplain, and composer/organist Maurice Greene (1696-1755; Master of the King's Music). The conflict between the public and a private affair was a popular point of tension to write about at the time. Another characterization of the Patriotic libretto, is the fact that most of the drama stems from private concerns rather than just that of the people as a whole. Most of the fighting done in the story is in between acts and the sung drama is reserved for personal matters.

The cast appears as follows: Jephtha, is the leader of the Israelite army, played by a Tenor. His wife, Storgè, is portrayed by a Mezzo-soprano. His daughter, Iphis, is sung by a Soprano. Hamor, the love interest of Iphis, is an alto voice. Zebul, an Israelite warrior and Jephtha's half-brother is sung by a bass. The Angel that intercedes and saves the life of Iphis is sung by a Soprano. There are choruses of Israelites, Virgins, and Priests sung by a choir consisting of Soprano I/II, Alto, Tenor, and Bass voices. The original cast is as follows:¹⁸

Jephtha: John Beard
Storgè: Caterina Galli
Iphis: Giulia Frasi
Hamor: Charles Brent
Zebul: Robert Wass
Angel: Unnamed Boy Soprano

The orchestration of the oratorio contains the Traverse Flute, Bassoon I/II Oboe I/II, Horn I/II, Trumpet I/II, Violin I/II/III, Viola, and figured bass, including Cello, Bass, Bassoon, Harpsichord, and Organ. *Jephtha* was premiered on February 26th, 1752 at the Covent Garden Theater and would be repeated that season two other times. Though at this point Handel had lost vision in his left, and soon, right eye, he conducted the first performance. Comments of the work and how it was received at the time are not conclusive. It would seem as if the oratorio was well liked overall; however, "the few contemporary comments that survive make note [of] some special quality in the oratorio, either because of the work itself or because of the sense that this was probably Handel's last essay in the genre."¹⁹

¹⁷ Smith, pp. 274-275.

¹⁸ Handel, *Jephtha: An Oratorio 1752*, p. xviii.

¹⁹ Handel, *Jephtha: An Oratorio 1752*, p. xvi.

Musical and Poetic Analysis

In gentle murmurs will I mourn

In gentle murmurs will I mourn,
as mourns the mate forsaken dove;
and sighing wish thy dear return
to liberty, and lasting love.

As a character, Storgé, is a strong and willful woman. Handel wrote a great deal of characters who fit the model of Storgé; “the middle aged wife and mother to whom catastrophe comes suddenly, terribly, and in defiance of any kindly ordering of human affairs.”²⁰ This emotional expostulation of despair and anguish come in clear contrast to her daughter who is confident in her father’s abilities and sees little reason to wallow in sadness.

The aria has three distinct sections. The first is predominantly in E minor, which solidifies the ill omens and foreshadowing that Storgé feels. It sits in a lower tessitura, perhaps to represent the depth of her despair. Notice in the example below, how the tessitura does not ascend above C5.

²⁰ Percy M. Young, *The Oratorios of Handel* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1949), p. 196.

Figure 1-1 "In gentle murmurs will I mourn" mm.18-33

Figure 1-1 shows a musical score for the piece "In gentle murmurs will I mourn" (mm. 18-33). The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is G major (one sharp), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "In gen.tle In sanf.ten mur.mars will I mourn, as mourus the mate for sa - ken dove, Lau.ten stimm' ich dann ein Klag - lied wie die Tau - be an,". The piano accompaniment includes the dynamic marking "pp". The score is attributed to H. W. AX.

The second section seems to tonicize around the relative G major and maintains a higher tessitura. The change in key and placement hint at the range of personality and emotional depth of Storgé. This figure marks the beginning of the second section and the tonicization to G major is immediately apparent, from measure 61-70.

Figure 1-2 "In gentle murmurs will I mourn" mm. 66-73

Figure 1-2 shows a musical score for the piece "In gentle murmurs will I mourn" (mm. 66-73). The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is G major (one sharp), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "and sigh-ing wish thy dear re - turn to und seh - nend ruf' ich dich zu - rüek zu". The piano accompaniment includes the dynamic marking "p".

The third section is heralded in with the repetition of the text in the first section, but the listener is never fully satisfied that the return to E minor has been made until the final cadence of the vocal line.

Figure 1-3 "In gentle murmurs will I mourn" mm. 106-112



This an aria of little words and big emotions. Handel uses elongated phrases and leading tones to impress upon the audience that this is a character who feels a deep amount of love for her family and consequently a deep amount of pain when tragedy seems impending.

Performance Practice

Handel's English oratorios were composed at a time when bel canto singing was the primary school of thought in vocal production. This required a specific kind of voice, one that maintains a natural vibrato, resonance space that allows the voice to naturally project, and an agile color to the voice that allows for virtuosity and flexibility.²¹ Although the range of Storgé's aria does not extend above E5, the vocalist is frequently asked to negotiate the lower register below B3. Regardless of where the pitches fall in the range of the singer, the amount of head resonance should remain the same. The head resonance and the space of the pharynx must be equally maintained in order for the singer to create a seamlessness between registers.²²

Frequently, Handel's oratorio arias are in da capo form, requiring the singer to ornament previous sections of the aria. *In gentle murmurs will I mourn*, however, is not a da capo aria and

²¹ Anthony Ransome, "Towards an authentic vocal style and technique in late baroque performance" in *Early Music* 6/3. (Jul 1978), p. 417.

²² Ibid., p. 417.

there the difficulty of performance does not lie in the virtuosic ability to ornament, but in the ability to sustain breath support and therefore maintain energy over long passages. Because the text used is limited to two distinct phrases, the singer must determine points of focus within each phrase and use those as points of emphasis. For example, the phrase “In gentle murmurs, will I mourn,” one would emphasize the words “murmurs” and “I” are both subjects and therefore, points of importance of the phrase. The singer must be intentional with the way she accents specific words in order to appropriately deliver the meaning of the text.

Because oratorios were not staged performances, the vocalist must be able to translate the emotion of the piece through her facial and vocal expression. A synthesized understanding of the musical and poetic analysis of the piece is necessary for the vocalist to appropriately and accurately bring the work to fruition, thus maintaining an even level of energy throughout and effectively engaging the audience.

Chapter 2 - Hugo Wolf – Spanisches Liederbuch

Biographical Information

Hugo Wolf was born March 13th, 1860 in Windischgraz in what was the former Austrian Empire. Wolf was the fourth child born to Katharina and Phillip Wolf, who would go on to have eight children. Phillip unwillingly took over his father's business as a leather manufacturer and would find solace in his musical pursuits. He was self-taught in piano, violin, flute, harp, and guitar and was his son's first music teacher in violin and keyboard, beginning when Hugo was around four or five years of age. Each of Hugo's siblings would be forced to endure some sort of musical instruction, but Hugo "took easily to this discipline and made rapid progress. He was no precociously gifted *Wunderkind*, but it became clear that he possessed a remarkable musical memory and phenomenally acute ear."²³ Thereafter, Wolf attended a variety of primary and secondary schools, some of which provided the environment suitable to a budding musician and others somewhat suppressing his interests. In the fall of 1875, Wolf's Aunt Katharina convinced his father to allow him to return home with her in Vienna.

At the Vienna Conservatory, Wolf studied piano with Wilhelm Schenner and harmony and composition first with Robert Fuchs and then with Franz Krenn.²⁴ Wolf was required to retake elementary harmony while at the conservatory and would often feel deep frustration coupled with his desire to tackle more advanced courses. These frustrations were abated by the fact that he was in the musical capital of the time. Wolf had plenty of opportunities to immerse himself in the musical life of his surroundings. In 1877, Wolf was expelled from the Conservatory for openly disagreeing with the methods of teaching and for believing "that his progress was being retarded in the routine of the Conservatory, and one day he announced to the director that he was leaving the establishment, where he was forgetting more than he was learning."²⁵ Wolf returned home as the disgraced son who failed at his misguided, chosen profession, but would return to Vienna around eight months later to work as a free musical agent.

²³ Frank Walker, *Hugo Wolf: a Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 4.

²⁴ Nicolas Slonimsky, ed. "Wolf, Hugo" in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, centennial ed. (New York: Schirmer Books, 2001), p. 3964.

²⁵ Walker, *Hugo Wolf: a Biography*, p. 43.

Wolf and Brahms had a brief encounter in 1879, where the latter advised the former to study counterpoint before further pursuing a career in song writing. Thereafter, Wolf ceased to seek out advice in relation to his compositional technique. That same year Wolf first met Melanie Köchert, the wife of the Vienna court jeweler, who would become his mistress by 1884 and was the inspiration of many of creative works. Previously Wolf was connected with Vally Franck, his first encounter with love and a tumultuous one that would leave him dejected and emotionally unstable. From 1884 to 1887, Wolf served as a music critic for the weekly *Wiener Salonblatt*, often taking out his frustrations on Brahms and his admirers. In 1887, he resigned his post at the magazine to pursue his composition career. “He became convinced that he was creating the greatest masterpieces of song since Schubert and Schumann, and stated his conviction in plain terms in his letters.”²⁶

The following few years, from 1888-1891, would prove to be a period of great productivity for the composer. During this time Wolf would compose many songs a day, completing whole volumes in just a few weeks. “During this period he completed over 200 songs- -all of the songbooks of Möricke, Eichendorff, Goethe, Geibel, Keller and Heyse.”²⁷ During the days of heavy composition, his friends and relations were advised not to disturb him, for he required solitude and silence to contemplate the musical ideas forming in his mind. As an example of his ferocity, if children were playing out in the street, he would quickly go outside and confiscate whatever instrument they were playing with that disturbed his peace.²⁸ After this period of immense output, Wolf suffered from two years of inactivity and mental illness. During 1895 and 1897, Wolf would write and complete his opera *Der Corregidor*, but by early 1897 it was clear that his mental state was unbalanced and deteriorating quickly.

In September of 1897, Wolf was admitted into a mental institution, but was discharged in just a few months later. After spending a brief time traveling, his mental condition relapsed. “In October 1889, he attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Traunsee in Traunkirkchen, but was saved and placed in the Lower Austrian provincial asylum in Vienna.”²⁹ Wolf’s condition

²⁶ Slonimsky, “Wolf, Hugo,” p. 3964.

²⁷ Carol Kimball, “Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)” in *Song: A Guide to Art Song, Style, and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2005), p. 112.

²⁸ Walker, *Hugo Wolf: a Biography*, p. 204.

²⁹ Slonimsky, “Wolf, Hugo,” pp. 3964-3965.

deteriorated in the years preceding his death. He suffered from memory loss, a paralysis that would go on to affect his speech, and by 1901, Wolf would endure paralytic convulsions. In 1902 Wolf suffered from a severe attack of bronchitis and in February of 1904 he contract a severe cold that inflamed his lungs and brought on more convulsions.³⁰ This second incarceration, starting in 1989, would prove to be the final one and on February 22nd, 1903 Hugo Wolf passed away at the age of 42. Despite his struggles with mental stability, Wolf composed to write over 300 songs, proving to be one of the masters of German lieder.

Compositional Style

It took Hugo Wolf until he was around twenty-eight before he would master the art of song, and in the nine years left of his life he wrote sporadically, but quickly. His songs would prove to live far beyond the life of the composer since the music is unique in its attention to the relationship between poetry and music. Wolf had the unique ability to interpret poetry and dictate the shifts in mood in the music, which is perhaps why his music has been able to transcend the changes in society and survive to the current times.

When dealing with the written word, rhythm is particularly important. It can help illustrate a brisk walk, a slow drudge, or even the beating of a heart. Hugo Wolf was able to paint the scene with his rhythmic motifs alone and he employed them especially in the piano. The accompaniment “supports the voice part, which is then left free for rhythmic digression without ever seeming over-elaborate or impeding the forward movement of the song as a whole.”³¹ That being said, the rhythms of his words are so precise that to notate them to a simpler form would be impractical, for they already perfectly match the stresses of the phrase. Any hesitation in a word or phrase is used intentionally as a means to enhance the musicality, not as a sign of a misunderstanding of the language. This is not to say that the melody is otherwise uninteresting, but rather that the true genius of Wolf’s melodic line is in its restraint and overall simplicity.

Common to composers of the time, Wolf would suffer from criticism that his music was overly dissonant, to which he hardly took notice. Wolf was not insensitive to the purpose of

³⁰ Walker, pp. 442-445.

³¹ Eric Sams, *Hugo Wolf* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 3.

harmonic dissonances; he simply used them to convey a point aside from bridging one key to the next. “Modulation in the ordinary sense, e.g. in a piano interlude serving solely as a bridge from one key to the next, is a great rarity in Wolf’s work. Instead, the harmony is moulded by the emotive significance of the words.”³² In a way, his critics were correct: Wolf used dissonance to shock the listener into a new mood of the poem. One could make the argument that his music was on the verge of programmatic.

The *Spanisches Liederbuch* marks the second period of the composer. His ability to evoke emotion through music is tested with this particular selection of poetry. “He is confronted with a series of rather flat lyrics, each mainly on one particular invariant theme or idea.”³³ Of course, the selections for this report are sacred in nature and therefore have more emotion infused into the words, just a passionate prayer; however, the effect is broader than it is intimate. The three pieces selected expose every facet of Wolf’s genius, including, but not limited to, his ability to paint scenes with the accompaniment, to mark mood shifts with harmonic dissonance, and intelligently give rhythmic importance to the text.

Historical Analysis and Poetic Inspiration

The forty-four songs that make up the *Spanisches Liederbuch* were taken from translations by Paul Heyse (1830-1914) and Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884) of Spanish poems that typify literary movements of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. About half of the poets of the original works are unknown and it should be noted that Wolf decided not to use poets such as Cervantes and Lope de Vega.³⁴ The poetry and the Song Book contain both sacred and secular works, but since the selections for this report are sacred in nature, the focus will be on that particular category.

Wolf had a very exotic idea of how the Spanish must live; ruled by emotion, religion, and the erotic. Especially in the sacred works, love and the sacred, are constantly dominating the minds and souls of the characters. Perhaps, the subject matter fails to create the same mystery as his other works, but the *Spanisches Liederbuch* is a passionate expression of the richness and

³² Eric Sams, p. 5.

³³ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁴ Walker, *Hugo Wolf: a Biography*, p. 252.

uniqueness of Spanish society. Despite the inconsistencies of the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, it is clear that “his [Wolf] mind was obsessed by his idea of Spain, and rejoice that this allowed him to reveal another aspect of himself.”³⁵

Overall, the three gentle portraits of the Holy Family are an anomaly in the sacred section, for Wolf chose more morbid, disturbing depictions of faith in the others. Those three are (Nun wandre, Maria; Die ihr schwebet; and Ach, des Knaben Augen) the three chosen for this report.

Musical and Poetic Analysis

Nun wandre, Maria

Nun wandre, Maria, nun wandre nur fort.
Schon krähen die Hähne und nah ist der Ort.

Nun wandre, Geliebte, du Kleinod mein,
Und balde wir werden in Bethlehem sein.
Dann ruhest du fein und schlummerst dort.
Wohl seh ich, Herrin, Die Kraft dir schinden;

Kann deine Schmerzen, ach, kaum verwinden.
Getrost! wohl finden wir Herberg dort;

Wär' erst bestanden, dein Stündlein, Marie,
Die gute Botschaft gut lohnt ich sie.
Das Eselein hie gäb'ich drum fort!
Schon krähen die Hähne, komm! nah ist der Ort.

Now journey on, Mary, journey on.
Already the cocks are crowing and the goal
is near.

Journey on, my beloved, my treasure,
And soon we shall be in Bethlehem.
You will rest well and sleep there.
I see clearly, my Mistress, that your strength
is failing.

Oh, I can hardly bear your suffering.
Have courage! We will surely find shelter
there.

If only your hour were past, Mary,
I would give a reward for the good news.
I would give our donkey here for it!
Already the cocks are crowing, come! The
goal is near.³⁶

The original poem was by Ocaña, translated by Heyse. This piece, from the perspective of Joseph, gives emotional weight to the story of the Holy Family's flight to Bethlehem after the decree of Caesar Augustus. Their footsteps are represented by the continuous movement of the piano, which moves primarily in thirds throughout the song. The motion only stops when Joseph utters the name Bethlehem, painting a picture that the family is in need of rest and contemplation.

³⁵ Walker, p. 259.

³⁶Hugo Wolf, *Wolf: 65 Songs (low) for Voice and Piano*. Waldo Lyman, translator (New York: International Music Company, 1961), p. ix.

Figure 2-1 "Nun wandre, Maria" mm. 9-11

Vocally, the melody lies within a small range, B4 to E5, and the piece rarely gets louder than a mezzo-forte dynamic marking. Unease and distress break through at “Wohl seh’ich, Herrin,” but resolves at “Getrost!” The piano even descends as if going downhill into the city.³⁷

Figure 2-2 "Nun wandre, Maria" mm. 21-23

We see Mary through the eyes of Joseph, not as one who is weak and needs to be carried along, but as a woman who is carrying the great burden of bearing not just a child, but a child that has been prophesied to change the world. Wolf discovered the male and female desire for companionship and paints a picture of warmth and encouragement.

Die ihr schwebet

Die ihr schwebet um diese Palmen
In Nacht und Wind,
Ihr heil’gen Engel, stillet die Wipfel!

Ye who hover over these palms,
Through the night, in the wind!
Ye holy angels, calm the treetops!

³⁷Sams, *Hugo Wolf*, p. 167.

Es schlummert mein Kind.
Ihr Palmen von Bethlehem in Windesbrausen,

Wie mögt ihr heute so zornig sausen!
O rauscht nicht also!
Schweiget, neiget euch leis und lind;
Der Himmelsknabe duldet Beschwerde,
Ach, wie so müd er ward vom Leid der Erse.

Ach num in Schlaf ihm leise gesänftigt die Qual
zerrint.
Grimige Kälte sauset hernieder,
Womit nur deck ich des Kindleins Glieder!
O all ihr Engel, die ihr geflügelt wandelt im Wind,
Stillet die Wipfel! es schlummert mein Kind.

My Child is asleep.
Ye palms of Bethlehem in the roaring of the
wind,
How can you rage so angrily today!
Oh, do not bluster so!
Hush, bend yourselves lightly and gently.
The heavenly Infant bears a burden.
Ah, He was so wearied by the sorrow of the
world.
Now His pain, gently soothed by sleep, has
departed.
Bitter, cold winds blow on Him.
With what shall I cover the Child's limbs?
Oh, ye angels who fly and rove through the
wind,
Calm the treetops! My Child is asleep.³⁸

Originally written by Lope da Vega and translated by Geibel, *Die ihr Schwebet*, is more of an emotional piece and could stand alone as a work of poetry, more so than perhaps the others would. Again, the piano sets the mood and provides for the turmoil of the wind. The first few bars determine how the rest of the piece is going to proceed.

Figure 2-3 "Die ihr schwebet" mm.1-2

The musical score for "Die ihr schwebet" mm.1-2 is shown. It is in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked "Ziemlich bewegt (poco animato)". The dynamics are "pp" (pianissimo) for the piano and "p" (piano) for the voice. The lyrics are in German and English.

German lyrics: Die ihr schwe - - bet
English lyrics: Ye that hover - - ing

The melodies hardly deviate from those first few measures and the piano continues. Mary and the wind are in a battle of endurance and she calls upon the angels to help her prevail. The piece works its way into a soft lull, until "Grimmige Kälte," when the wind picks up again and Mary pleads for its cessation.

³⁸Wolf, *Wolf: 65 Songs (low) for Voice and Piano*. Waldo Lyman, pp. ix-x.

Figure 2-4 "Die ihr schwebet" mm. 49-51

Grim - mi - ge Käl - te sau - set her -
Cold blows the wind, and moth - er is

After the final “stillet die Wipfel! es schlummert mein Kind,” the winds finally submit to Mary’s and by the end of the piece all is still.³⁹

Though Mary was burdened with the great purpose of raising the Son of God, this piece reminds us of the pure humanity of her character. At the end of the day she was just a mother trying to put her son to sleep, fighting against the elements.

Ach, des Knaben Augen

Ach, des Knaben Augen sind
Mir so schön und klar erschienen,
Und ein Etwas strahlt aus ihnen,
Das mein ganzes Herz gewinnt.
Blickt er doch mit diesen süßen Augen
Nach den meinen hin!
Säh er dann sein Bild darin,
Würd er wohl mich liebend grüssen.
Und so geb ich ganz mich hin,
Seinen Augen nure zu dienen.
Denn ein Etwas strahlt aus ihnen
Dass mein ganzes Herz gewinnt.

Ah, the Boy’s eyes appear
So sweet and clear to me,
And something radiates from them
That wins my whole heart.
With those sweet eyes
He looks into my own!
If He should see His image in mine,
He would surely greet me lovingly.
And so I surrender myself entirely,
Just to serve His eyes.
For something radiates from them
That wins my whole heart.⁴⁰

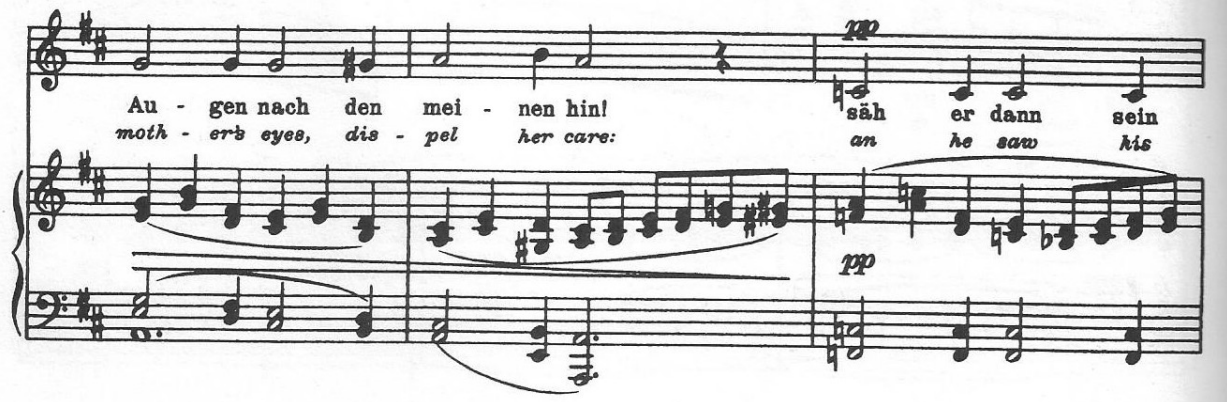
Ach, des Knaben Augen was originally written by Lopez de Ubeda and translated by Heyse. The piece is a sweet, prayer-like, melodically driven piece. Especially in the first verse, Wolf creates a gentle-swaying momentum in the vocal line, which moves either by repeating notes or through step wise movement. After “mein ganzes Herz gewinnt,” “there follows a

³⁹ Sams, *Hugo Wolf*, pp. 168-169.

⁴⁰ Wolf, *Wolf: 65 Songs (low) for Voice and Piano*, Waldo Lyman, p. x.

passage that, for melting tenderness and beauty, matches anything in Wolf's work. The change to A-flat major from F major at 'säh' er dann sein Bild darin' (if He should see His own image there) is particularly magical."⁴¹

Figure 2-5 "Ach, des Knaben Augen" mm. 11-13



Although there is no set narrator, I personally chose to approach the piece as if it were from the perspective of the Virgin Mary. The soothing lull of the melodic line, coupled with the intimacy of the thirds played by the piano offer more of a lullaby feel.

Performance Practice

Because Wolf put so much thought into the poetry that he was trying to set to music and was precise with the rhythm of the language, and therefore the rhythm of the music, the text should always be at the forefront of the mind of the vocalist. Aside from the necessity to practice good diction, the performer should speak the text out loud to master the rhythm of the language which will hopefully translate to the notated works. When finally put to music, the words should be rhythmically precise. Wolf set music to the words in a very specific way and the vocalist should not deviate far from the original thought of the composer.

Because of the intimate settings of the pieces, whenever possible, and as the skill of performer allows, the vocal line should be learned and practiced in conjunction with the piano part. There is no other way to understand the harmonies of the piece or connect the chromatic steps of the vocal line than with the harmonic progression in the piano. "Words and music are

⁴¹ Sams, *Hugo Wolf*, p. 170.

inextricably bound in Wolf's settings, to the point that it is extremely difficult to extract one from another."⁴² Wolf put enough thought into his Lieder that the vocalist and pianist need only to follow the directions written into the music to serve it justice.

⁴² Kimball, "Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)," p. 111.

Chapter 3 - Jules Massenet-Va! laisse couler mes larmes

Biographical Information

Jules Émile Frédéric Massenet was born to Alexis and Eléonore Massenet on May 12th, 1842 in Moutand, St Etienne. The marriage was his father's second; he had eight children from a previous marriage and four, including Jules, from his second. Alexis Massenet was an engineer and headed a firm that made agricultural machines. In 1847, due to turbulence in the business world, Alexis decided to send his family to Paris, where they would find an easier time finding schooling for the children, and joined them there two years later.⁴³

To help supplement the family income, Madame Massenet gave piano lessons and would eventually teach Jules his first piano lessons. "Within a few years he had made such progress under this maternal tuition that his parents decided to send him to the Conservatoire."⁴⁴ At his examination the judges were highly impressed with his training and the morning following his entrance test, October 10th, 1851, a letter was dispatched to his home admitting him to the Conservatoire. Over the years, Massenet developed a drive for hard work. He was not financially supported by his father and did not want to live on his sister's charity for an extended period of time. "He had his reward in the July of 1859, when he gained a first prize at the Conservatoire for his playing of Hiller's F minor piano concerto."⁴⁵

Massenet was careful when it came to spending his money and saw little value in fostering sentimentality over his penniless early days. He would earn whatever he could by way of giving piano lessons at a little school in the area and playing piano at a café in the Rue de Belleville. Massenet also had regular employment as a drummer at the Opéra, when he would work from midnight to six in the morning, three nights out of the week. On off evenings he would play wherever other operas were being played. It was during this time that Massenet received an informal, but practical apprenticeship in the theatrical arts.

In 1863, Massenet entered the Prix de Rome with his cantata *David Rizzio*. He went on to win the *premier grand prix* and traveled throughout Italy for two years. In his travels he met

⁴³ James Harding, *Massenet* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1970), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

Franz Liszt and through Liszt, Mademoiselle Constance de Sainte-Marie, who would later become his wife.⁴⁶ Massenet returned to Paris in 1866 and began earning a salary by teaching piano lessons and publishing songs and piano pieces. He and Constance, otherwise known as Ninon, married in October of 1866 and their only daughter, Juliette, was born in 1868.⁴⁷

In 1867 Massenet discovered a clause in the Prix de Rome regulations that offered the winner the opportunity to write a one-act opera to be performed at the Opéra-Comique. His first completed opera, *La grand' tante*, premiered on April 3rd, 1867 and would run for seventeen nights. "Massenet quickly became a member of a group of gifted young composers making their name in the capital."⁴⁸ These composers such as Bizet, Saint-Saëns, and Duparc would, like Massenet, try to write music for a variety of genres. Massenet would find the most difficulty and success in launching a career in opera. There were some, such as a critic who attended the premier of *La grand' tante*, who felt that his writing was more symphonic than theatrical. Massenet would find little success with his competition operas, such as *Manfred*, which would remain unfinished, and *Méduse*, which would be interrupted by the War of 1870, in which Massenet participated as a member of the national guard.

Massenet would go on to find great success as a composer for the stage. His twenty-five operas range from the controversial *Herodiade* (1881) to the colorful *Cendrillon* (1899), which are among the most well-known today. Massenet had an unobtrusive and passive personality and seems to have missed out on the bitterness that affected so many of his colleagues at the time. "This was in part due to the fact that he did not have to wrestle with his creativity to write his music nor fight with impresarios or publishers to get it heard."⁴⁹ He would also take up residence at the Paris Conservatoire as a teacher whose classes were popular and the resulting students successful.

On his seventieth birthday in 1912, he felt ill with symptoms of kidney failure. The next day, August 13th, Jules Massenet died surrounded by his family. His wife would go on to live until 1938, when she passed away at the age of ninety-seven. By that time Massenet's reputation

⁴⁶ Hugh MacDonald, et al., "Jules Massenet," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed April 2, 2015.

⁴⁷ MacDonald, "Jules Massenet."

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

had all but dissipated into memory. “Several decades were to elapse before the wheel turned again and a new generation began to discover the pleasures that lie at the centre of Massenet’s subtle art.”⁵⁰

Compositional Style

Massenet was meticulous when writing for the stage. When he chose a subject and a librettist he would live with the libretto until it was almost memorized, so that his music could serve the subject matter. “When I have reached the heart of my characters’ world . . . let about two years go by without writing a thing. I wait for inspiration which comes freely and I make up the music in my head. . . When the score is written in my head, that’s to say usually in about two years, I copy it out from memory, a task that takes me about six months.”⁵¹

The training provided at the Paris Conservatoire of the 19th century focused less on the theories behind the construction of the music and more on the fluidity of the vocal line. Massenet was able to overcome the challenges of orchestral timing and the balance of timbres, a clear indication of his training.⁵² Indeed, some did not look too favorably upon the style of Massenet. He was a creature of habit and did not deviate too far from what he knew and what made him a successful composer of his time. “His object was to seduce; and from the time when he found that his music proved effective and became popular he carefully avoided changing his manner.”⁵³ Regardless of his desire to affect the evolution of music, his melodies are graceful and elegant and do much for the beauty of the voice of the singer.

Historical and Libretto Inspiration

Massenet was introduced to the text that inspired the libretto of *Werther* to his longtime publisher and mentor Georges Hartmann. In 1886, Hartmann and Massenet took a trip to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal*, but Hartmann arranged a stop to the house where Goethe wrote his *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers* (*The Sorrows of the Young Werther*). When Hartmann presented Massenet with a French copy of the text, the composer was eager to read the famous

⁵⁰ Harding, *Massenet*, pp. 198-199.

⁵¹ MacDonald, “Jules Massenet.”

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ M.D. Calvocoressi, “Jules Massenet,” *The Musical Times* 53/ 835 (Sept. 1912), p. 565.

work. “He took Hartmann to the nearest tavern where, amidst the bitter aroma of beer and the noise of students, he read the intense and passionate letters of the young Werther with tears in his eyes.”⁵⁴ However, evidence exists that the subject may have been suggested as early as 1880.

Goethe’s *Werther* was a statement of rebellion and the people demanded individualism, freedom of expression, and independence. There are a few key contrasts from Goethe’s *Werther* to Massenet’s, whose libretto was written by Edouard Blau, Paul Milleiet, and Hartmann.⁵⁵ For one, in Goethe’s work, Charlotte is only a friend of Werther, but in the opera she falls deeply in love with the melancholy character. Also, unlike the novel, Charlotte marries Albert, to further enhance the sentiment of duty and unrequited love. With these few changes, Massenet enhanced the sentiment of sensuality.

The original seems to have been inspired by fact and autobiographical accounts. In 1772, Goethe fell in love with Charlotte Buff, the daughter of the Bailli of Wetzlar, who went on to marry Johann Kestner. Around the same time, Goethe’s friend Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem committed suicide over his love of a married woman. The letters Jerusalem sent to Kestner asking to borrow pistols is quoted in the novel and in the opera. The 1744 publication of the original work, stirred up controversy and was quickly adapted to the stage as early as 1792.⁵⁶

In the four-act *drame lyrique*, the characters Charlotte and Werther are in love, but Charlotte is betrothed to another. Charlotte has promised her dying mother that she would marry Albert, who is currently away traveling. The opera opens at the Bailli house, father of Charlotte and Sophie. Werther has fallen in love with Charlotte, but upon Albert’s unexpected return, Charlotte insists that she must keep her promise to marry her betrothed. Act two is set in autumn a few months into the marriage of Charlotte and Albert. Throughout the act, Charlotte assures Albert that she doesn’t have any regrets of their marriage and Werther assured him that he bears no ill will. Contradictory to his proclamations however, Werther, is deeply jealous and begins to contemplate suicide. Act three, set around Christmas, sheds a light on Charlotte’s feelings, when she is shown re-reading letters that Werther has written her. Sophie tries to convince Charlotte

⁵⁴ Otto T. Salzer, *The Massenet Compendium: Volume 1* (Fort Lee, NJ: Massenet Society, American Branch, 1984), p. 92.

⁵⁵ Rodney Milnes, “Werther,” *The Grove Book of Operas*, 2nd ed., Stanley Sadie, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 648.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 648.

to come to the Christmas party at their father's home, but after she leaves Werther appears. After trying to remain cordial and pleasant, Charlotte declares that they cannot meet again. Werther leaves in despair, but not before ushering a note to Albert asking to borrow his pistols. Despite Charlotte's protestations, Albert sends them to his friend. In Act four, Charlotte enters Werther's study and discovers him dying of a self-inflicted wound. He prevents her from calling for help and dies happily in her arms at last.⁵⁷

Musical and Literary Analysis

Va! laisse couler mes larmes The aria takes place in Act Three, when Charlotte, home alone, is re-reading letters from Werther. Her sister, Sophie enters, and in attempting to cheer her up mentions Werther's name, which provokes an exclamation from Charlotte on her present despair.

Va! laisse couler mes larmes-
elles font du bien, ma chérie!
Les larmes qu'on ne pleure pas
dans notre âme retombent toutes,
et de leurs patients gouttes
martèlent le cœur triste et las!
Sa résistance enfin s'épuise;
le cœur se creuse et s'affaiblit:

il est trop grand, rien ne l'emplit;
et trop fragile, tout le brise!

Go! Let my tears flow--
they do me good, my dear!
The tears that people do not shed
all sink into our souls,
and with their steady drops
hammer the sad and weary heart!
Its resistance is finally exhausted;
the heart becomes hollow and grows
weak:
it is too big--nothing will fill it up;
and too fragile--anything will break
it!

The opening line of the aria is enough to depict the depth of Charlotte's despair. In the first few measures, the piano is exclusively in the bass clef and the chromaticism hints at anguish. Charlotte's opening note is, in contrast, high and keening.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 649-650.

Figure 3-1 "Va! laisse couler mes larmes" mm. 1-4

This musical score snippet shows the first four measures of the piece. The vocal line (Charlotte) is in treble clef, starting with a *Très lent* tempo and a *f* (forte) dynamic. The lyrics are "Va! — lais - se cou - ler mes lar - mes —". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef, featuring a *très expressif* style with a *sf* (sforzando) dynamic in the first measure, a *f* dynamic in the second, and a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic in the third. The piano part includes a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure and a *p* (piano) dynamic in the fourth measure. The overall mood is one of intense emotional expression.

The vocal line is melodic and appropriately paints the picture of a breaking heart. Measures 17-19 provide breaks in the melodic line, which represents Charlotte's own fractured heart.

Figure 3-2 "Va! laisse couler mes larmes" mm. 16-19

This musical score snippet shows measures 16 through 19. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "las! — Sa ré - sis - tan - ce en - fin s'é - pui - se; le cœur — se creuse —". The dynamics for the vocal line are *mf* (mezzo-forte) for "Un peu animé", *dim.* (diminuendo) for "en - fin s'é - pui - se;", and *p* (piano) for "le cœur — se creuse —". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef, starting with a *dolce* (dolce) dynamic and a *p* (piano) dynamic. The piano part features a *p* dynamic in the first measure and a *p* dynamic in the second measure. The overall mood is one of emotional exhaustion and despair.

The piece is primarily in minor and the mood is a dark one. Only at the end is there harmonic repose and as resolution to the pain that Charlotte has previously expressed.

Figure 3-3 "Va! laisse couler mes larmes" mm. 23-27

et trop fra - gi-le, tout le bri - se, tout le bri - se!

She does not find peace in her feelings for Werther, but is resolved to accept their fate to be apart from one another.

Performance Practice

Massenet writes well for the voice, providing fluid and memorable melodies that are beautiful on their own. Throughout the piece, the singer needs to be constantly connected to the air. The piece does not demand extremes of range, but within any given melodic line there are shifts in register that seamlessly happen in the music. For that reason, it is important for the placement of the soft palate to remain lifted and the vowels to be forward. The French language is one that needs to be energetic in the lips and the front of the mouth in order for the words to remain fluid and unaffected. For example, in this excerpt, in order for the sweeping nature of the vocal line, the breath needs to be quick, but efficient.

Figure 3-4 "Va! laisse couler mes larmes" mm. 13-15

et de leurs pa - ti - en - tes gout - tes mar - tè - lent le cœur triste et...

Though the tempo is relaxed, the lifts are not enough for the singer to take liberties. This passage is representative of the constant movement of the melodic line. The arpeggiated motive appears often in the vocal line and represents the build-up of Charlotte's emotions, with a release at the top of the treble staff. The aria is a great piece to focus on breath support and the importance of forward placement.

Chapter 4 - Claude Debussy--Trois Chansons de Bilitis

Biographical Information

In the realm of song composition, the name Achille-Claude Debussy is synonymous with innovation and music impressionism. Much like the seeming ambiguity of his music, the personal and professional relationships of his life were almost as tumultuous. He was born August 22nd, 1862 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a town near Paris, France to a family of working class background. He did not have a formal education and thus had many gaps in any intellectual training. He enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire in 1872 with the aid of Antoinette Mauté, and trained with Antoine Marmontel for piano and Albert Lavignac in solfège. “They quickly recognized that he had a good ear and was an able sight reader, although they regarded him as ‘a little backward in the rudiments.’”⁵⁸

The animosity between Debussy and his parents was two-fold. His father was imprisoned for a time for revolutionary acts and had a difficult time holding employment. It is implied that his father hoped that his son’s talents would save the family from destitution. However while, Debussy’s piano prowess cannot be denied, “even if he was snobbishly billed as ‘Achille de Bussy’ and hailed as ‘this little Mozart [sic]’.... he secured only a single Second Prize in piano during his unhappy years at the Paris Conservatoire.”⁵⁹ After this “failure” he enrolled in Emile Durand’s harmony course and thus began the journey to a career in composition. Debussy was also irresponsible with money, even when he was successful enough to maintain a living as a composer. Whatever money he made from his compositions was supplemented by piano lessons and generous friendships, such as one with Ernest Chausson, who gave him financial and moral support. In a letter from Paul Vidal (who had won the Prix de Rome a year before Debussy) in 1883 to Henriette Fuchs, Vidal exclaims how the young composer has the potential to support his parents, but instead wastes his money on books and useless artifacts. “Debussy’s first wife, Lily, frequently despaired when he selfishly spent the

⁵⁸ François Lesure and Roy Howat, “Debussy, Claude,” *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed January 10 2015.

⁵⁹ Robert Olredge, “Debussy the man,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 10.

money from piano lessons in an antique dealer's shop."⁶⁰ Debussy would go on to win the Prix de Rome in 1884 for his cantata *L'enfant prodigue*.⁶¹

Debussy kept his inner circle small. According to Olredge, "his moral irresponsibility and pursuit of pleasure rather than passion with women caused many of his male friend to desert him."⁶² Although Debussy reputation as a womanizer was perhaps more exaggerated because of the times, even though we have already seen a man who is more interested in the pursuit of pleasure rather than sincerity. Although according to Pierre Louÿs, the poet of the *Chansons de Bilitis*, Debussy only could claim having had intimate relations with five women by 1896, none of whom were "degenerate," the fact remains that he was married twice and had affairs with other women who were themselves married. From 1890-1898, Debussy broke societal civility by living with Gaby Dupont, despite the fact they were not married and during which time he proposed to two other women. He would marry Rosalie (Lilly Texier, a model) in 1899 only to leave her in 1904 for amateur singer Emma Bardac. He would go on to marry Emma in 1908, three years after their daughter was born.

Debussy was not just a man of immoral pleasure and irresponsible finances. He loved children, especially his daughter, whom he affectionately called Chouchou. He was a great lover of nature, and his garden would be the source of inspiration for composition. "He loved his garden, laid out his own plans, which contained flowers and shrubs chosen by him, and which he looked after himself. He would walk round it slowly for a long time, in silence, then, suddenly, he would turn back towards the house where he would ask the upright. . . to repeat for him the musical idea he had just had."⁶³

Regardless of his personal temperaments, it remains true that his music remains among the most influential of the time. Perhaps Debussy described himself best in an interview when he said, "There will always be an enormous break between the soul of a man as his is and the soul he puts into his work. A man portrays himself in his work, it is true, but only part of himself. In real life, I cannot live up to the ideas I have in music. I feel the difference there is in

⁶⁰ Robert Olredge, "Debussy the man," p. 11.

⁶¹ François Lesure and Roy Howat.

⁶² Robert Olredge, "Debussy the man," p.12.

⁶³ Robert Olredge, "Debussy the man," p. 16.

me between Debussy the composer and Debussy the man.”⁶⁴ Debussy died March 25th, 1918 in his home in Paris of rectal cancer.

Compositional Style

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, visual art was undergoing an identity crisis. Many artists were venturing away from the traditional techniques and styles that decorated the walls of museums and palaces and were embarking on a new path to expression. Impressionism, claiming the art of Monet, Renoir, and others, centered on abandoning the studio and the techniques employed there and painting what the artist saw and felt rather than what he knew. In this narrow definition of the art form, Debussy’s philosophy of music does seem to fit. Debussy was “violently opposed to any form of academicism, and his art is an example of perpetual renewal.”⁶⁵ No argument can be made against the fact that Debussy inspired subsequent composers to mimic his work or oppose it in their own. Debussy gave the melody and the harmony independence from one another, wrote in a style that was partly modal and partly harmonic, and the argument can be made that he reinvented orchestral and piano technique.⁶⁶ Is that enough however, to label his music as Impressionist?

The term Impressionism was first applied to Debussy’s music in a report at the end of 1887, by the Secretary of the *Académie des Beaux-Arts*. “He clearly has a strong feeling for colour in music which, when exaggerated, causes him to forget the importance of clarity in design and form. It is very much to be hoped that he will be on his guard against that vague ‘Impressionism’ which is one of the most dangerous enemies of truth in any work of art.”⁶⁷

It is clear, that the term was used to give warning to the young composer that there were those in the musical community were wary of the new fad that seems to be taking hold of the artistic world. Impressionism was a term that was used, less to describe the scholarly definition we are familiar with, but more to describe any, form of art that contradicted what traditional technique and taste were known to produce. Perhaps Emilie Vuillermoz described it perfectly

⁶⁴ Robert Olredge, “Debussy the man,” p. 24.

⁶⁵ Stephan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. from the French by Rollo Myers (London: Eulenburg Books, 1976), p. 162.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.163.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

when he stated, “If the word ‘bolshivism’ had been invented at that time, it would most certainly have been applied to this unruly youngster who dared to write in a key with six sharps.”⁶⁸ It is not so much that Debussy’s music fit into the current working definition of Impressionism, but more that because of his innovative compositional style, no one yet knew how to decipher it. The critics and general public did not feel emotionally tied to his works because it was new and unstudied. They felt deep emotion from the works of Beethoven because his music, for the most part, fit into their realm of understanding and they were used to it.

In discussing the specific selection chosen for this report, I will discuss in depth the structural aspects, of the pieces. For now, it is sufficient to say that Debussy’s music does fit the modern definition of Impressionism. More than two thirds of Debussy’s output was in song, so it would therefore be inappropriate to separate the poetry from the music. Through the combined study of the harmony, melody, and text we uncover the emotion of piece and therefore begin to understand the Impressionism of Debussy’s music.

Historical Analysis and Poetic Inspiration

The word *erotic* does not rest quietly on the page. It is a word that tempts and eludes us. It hides behind its dictionary definition – ‘of, devoted to, or tending to arouse sexual desire’ – which cannot begin to touch the numerous spheres that it encompasses.⁶⁹

With the threat of syphilis among the general public due to prostitution, the subsequent Christian affirmation that sex is born directly from sin, the declining French birth-rate, the legalization of divorce for reasons aside from marital infidelity, and the rise of the aforementioned prostitution, French society was on the verge of losing its ideal of tradition and propriety and were therefore desperate to avoid social disorder. It was clear that the only way to save their way of life was to maintain that the role of the woman was “to be domestic angels, sexless, and selfless,” while the “male sexual fantasies were saved for the brothel.”⁷⁰ Michel Foucault makes the assertion that the constant testimonies against sex suggested that the French did not simply repress their innermost

⁶⁸ Stephan Jarocinski, p. 13.

⁶⁹ Julie McQuinn, “Exploring the erotic in Debussy’s music” in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise ,et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 117.

⁷⁰ Julie McQuinn, p. 118.

feelings, but were obsessed with keeping them at bay. This is perhaps the reason why Debussy and some of his colleagues were so keen to make sex the subject of their work.

Both men and women were drawn, and repelled by Debussy because of the underlying eroticism in his music. His second wife, Emma Bardac, for example, had already developed a professional attraction to him, if not a personal one, simply because she was performing his works long before actually meeting him. Debussy himself agreed that his music had the unique ability to draw in the musician and listener and evoke feelings of deep passion. “It is necessary to abandon yourself completely, and let the music do as it will with you.”⁷¹ This aligns with Debussy’s opinion that above understanding and analyzing, music needs to be felt.

The *Chansons de Bilitis* are a perfect example of eroticism in Debussy’s music. The poems, of which only three were used, were written by one of Debussy’s closest friends, Pierre Louÿs, in 1897. The three pieces first appeared in performance on the 17th of March 1900 by singer Blanche Marot accompanied by Debussy.⁷² Louÿs has a small reputation as a poet at the time, which was probably aided by his determination to withdraw from the public eye and live in partial seclusion.⁷³ Debussy, a man who preferred to be associated with men of literature and who was always on the verge of financial ruin, found a perfect friend in Louÿs, who had inherited comfortable wealth and was generous with his friend. After a decade of friendship, however, the only music they collaborated on was the *Chansons de Bilitis*.

According to Arthur Wenk, the collaboration is “one of the most celebrated literary hoaxes of the nineteenth century.”⁷⁴ In 1895, Louÿs published a collection of poems that he implied were translations of poets from the Greek poetess, Bilitis. In reality, the poems were original Louÿs poems, with quite the erotic inspiration. The first inspiration was that of a young girl, Meryem ben Ali, whom Louÿs met when she was just sixteen. Louÿs met the young woman in 1893, when he changed his travel plans to meet her in Biskra. In a letter from the poet to the composer, Louÿs stated “we met over

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 120.

⁷² Arthur B. Wenk, p. 177.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 171.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

there a young personage of sixteen, whose morals are extremely depraved.”⁷⁵ It was after this meeting that Louÿs found inspiration for the Bilitis poems. “La chevelure” was inspired by a similar meeting with a woman, Zohra ben Brahim in Algeria in 1897. Louÿs broke through the boundary between purity and eroticism by bringing Zohra to Paris to live with him.

The poetess Bilitis, was born in Pamphylia and was seduced and fell in love with a goatherd, Lykas, had a child and abandoned said child all before the age of sixteen. This the section of poetry that Debussy set to music and that we find in the *Chansons de Bilitis*.⁷⁶ In the first song, Bilitis reflects on her first love and the emotional climax, in the second it has reached a high level of passion, and in the third, winter has fallen and the feelings have waned.⁷⁷

Poetic and Musical Analysis

La Flûte de Pan

Pour le jour des Hyacinthies
il m’a donné une syrinx
faite de roseaux bien taillés,
unis avec la blanche cire
qui est douce à mes lèvres comme le miel.
Il m’apprend à jouer, assise sur ses genoux;

mais je suis un peu tremblante.
Il en joue après moi,
si doucement que je l’entends à peine.
Nous n’avons rien à nous dire,
tant nous sommes près l’un de l’autre;
mais nos chansons veulent se répondre,
et tour à tour nos bouches
s’unissent sur la flute.
Il est tard;
voici le chant des grenouilles vertes
qui commence avec la nuit.
Ma mère ne croira jamais

For Hyacinthus day
he has given me a pipe
made of well-cut reeds,
bound with white wax
that is sweet to my lips like honey.
He teaches me to play, sitting on his
knee;
but I am a little tremulous.
He plays it after me,
so softly that I scarcely hear it.
We have nothing to say,
so close are we to each other;
But our songs wish to respond
and from time to time our mouths
join upon the flute.
It is late;
here is the song of the green frogs
that begins at nightfall.
My mother will never believe

⁷⁵ Julie McQuinn, pp. 126-127.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

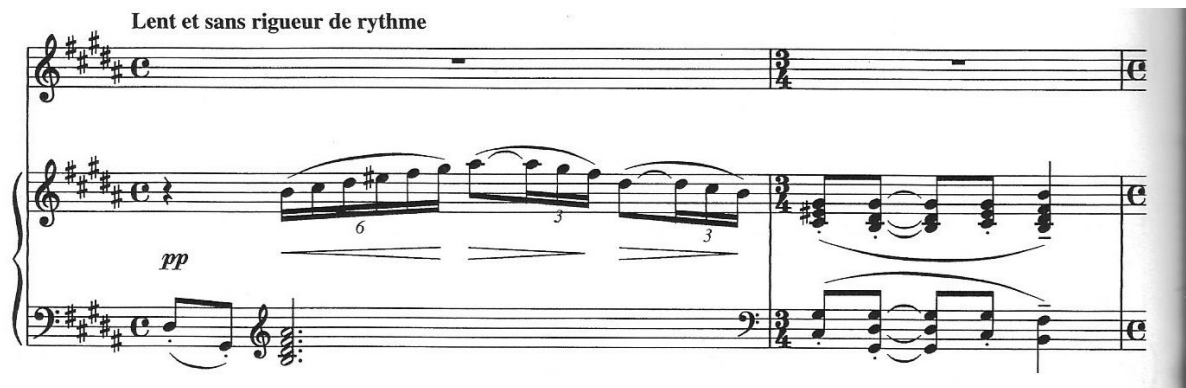
⁷⁷ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song*, trans. of song text by Winifred Radford (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), p. 195.

que je suis restée si longtemps
à chercher ma ceinture perdue.

that I have stayed so long
to look for my lost girdle.⁷⁸

In his scene, Bilitis describes a particularly erotic lesson with her lover, Lykas. The poem has an underlying reference to Syrinx, who was a nymph pursued by Pan, but was transformed into a reed by Diana, from which Pan makes a flute. In this piece the melody takes the forefront. In the opening measures the piano plays an opening ascending ritornello that evokes the image of a flute player. This is followed immediately by alternating chords that “only adds to the ambiguity already set up between G-sharp minor and B major.

Figure 4-1 "La flûte de Pan" mm. 1-2



All the while the melody of the flute, intertwined with the harmony, rises and falls.⁷⁹ The repetitive nature of the melodic line of the vocal entrance suggest that as Bilitis reflects on the encounter she “becomes so entangled in this memory that she cannot break from her repetitive melodic pattern, and then everything stops on the phrase ‘like honey.’”⁸⁰

⁷⁸Pierre Bernac, p. 196.

⁷⁹ Julie McQuinn, p. 130.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 130.

Figure 4-2 "La flûte de Pan" mm. 3-4

3 *p* *doux et soutenu*

Pour le jour des Hy-a - cin - thi - es, il m'a don-né u - ne sy -

Louÿs uses vivid images to enhance the erotic nature of the poem, such as “sweet to my lips like honey,” “he teaches me to play, sitting on his knee,” and “from time to time our mouths join upon the flute.” Debussy continuously reminds us of the flute by bringing back the floating melody. “Suddenly the piano must give an impression of immobility, imitating the little sounds of the evening, and the girl realizes all at once that it is late.”⁸¹ Debussy also reveals his love of nature and fully utilizes the image of the frogs in the piano. The triplets in the right hand is clear text painting of either the “song of the frogs” or the leaping of the frogs. The sweeping melody of the middle section gives the final section that much more of a solemn feel to it.

⁸¹ Pierre Bernac, p. 197.

Figure 4-3 "La flûte de Pan" mm. 24-26

24

Pressez un peu *pp* Presque sans voix

Ma mère ne croi-ra ja -

26

mais que je suis res-tée si long-temps à cher-cher ma cein-tu-re per -

più pp

As if Bilitis has returned to reality, the final phrase is spoken almost at a whisper and is all on the same note. If the first two thirds of the piece represent an awakening to love and passion, the final phrase represents the French repression of sex of which Debussy was all too aware.

La Chevelure

Il m'a dit:
'Cette nuit, j'ai rêvé,
J'avais ta chevelure autour de mon cou.

J'avais tes cheveux comme un collier noir
autour de ma nuque et sur ma poitrine.

Je les caressais, et c'était le miens;
et nous étions liés pour toujours ainsi,
par la même chevelure la bouche sur la bouche,
ainsi que deux lauriers n'ont souvent qu'une racine.
Et peu à peu, il m'a semblé,
tant nos membres étaient confondus,

He said to me:
'Tonight I dreamed,
I had the tresses of your hair around my
neck.
I had your hair like a black circlet
around the nape of my neck and on my
breast.
I caressed it and it was my own;
and we were united for ever thus,
by the same tresses mouth upon mouth,
like two laurels that often have but one root.
And little by little, it seemed to me,
so intermingled were our limbs,

que je devenais toi-même
ou que tu entrais en moi comme mon songe.
Quand il eut achevé,
il mit doucement ses main sur mes épaules,
et il me regarda d'un regard si tender,
que je baissai les yeux avec un frisson.

that I became part of you
or you entered into me like my dream.'
When he had done,
he put his hands gently on my shoulders,
and he looked at me with so tender a look,
that I lowered my eyes with a shiver.⁸²

This piece is the story of a man recalling his dream to his lover. Centered on the imagery of her flowing hair, he seductively paints a picture of their spiritual and physical union. The opening phrase is marked to be played expressively and slowly to emphasize the dreamlike state of the storytelling. The girl begins her recollection of the storytelling in a voice similar to recitative, which builds in sexual tension and anticipation as she reaches the climax of the story. "The sinuous, chromatic motion on the downbeats in combination with the repeated chords on the offbeats together create an erotic tension that is 'relieved' only during the two points."⁸³ This occurs at measure 12, when the man speaks of their mouths intertwined and again at measure 18 when she enters him, perhaps a symbolism of her invading his metaphorical and physical soul.

Figure 4-4 "La Chevelure" mm. 12

With the aid of crescendo markings and changes in tempo this symbolizes the climax of the interaction within his dream. The effect of the pedal, the return to the original tempo, and the

⁸² Pierre Bernac, pp. 197-198.

⁸³ Julie McQuinn, p. 130.

end of his recount of the dream return the girl to reality and in a way to the beginning of the dream.⁸⁴ They have in a way gone back in time before the climax of their interaction.

Figure 4-5 "La Chevelure" mm. 19-20

19

son - ge.

Tempo I, plus lent

ff

p très expressif

Le Tombeau des Naïades

Le long du bois couvert de givre, je marchais;
mes cheveux, devant ma bouche,
se fleurissaient de petits glaçons,
et mes sandales étaient lourdes
de neige fangeuse et tassée.
Il me dit: 'Que cherches-tu?'
--'Je suis la trace du satyre.
Ses petits pas fourchus alternant
comme des trous dans un manteau blanc.'
Il me dit: "Les satyres sont morts.
Les satyres et les nymphes aussi.
Depuis trente ans il n'a pas fait un hiver aussi
terrible.
La trace que tu vois est celle d'un bouc
Mais restons ici, où est leur tombeau.'
Et avec le fer de sa houe.
il cassa la glace de la source où jadis riaient les
naïades.
Il prenait de grands morceaux froids,
et les soulevant vers le ciel pâle
il regardai au travers.

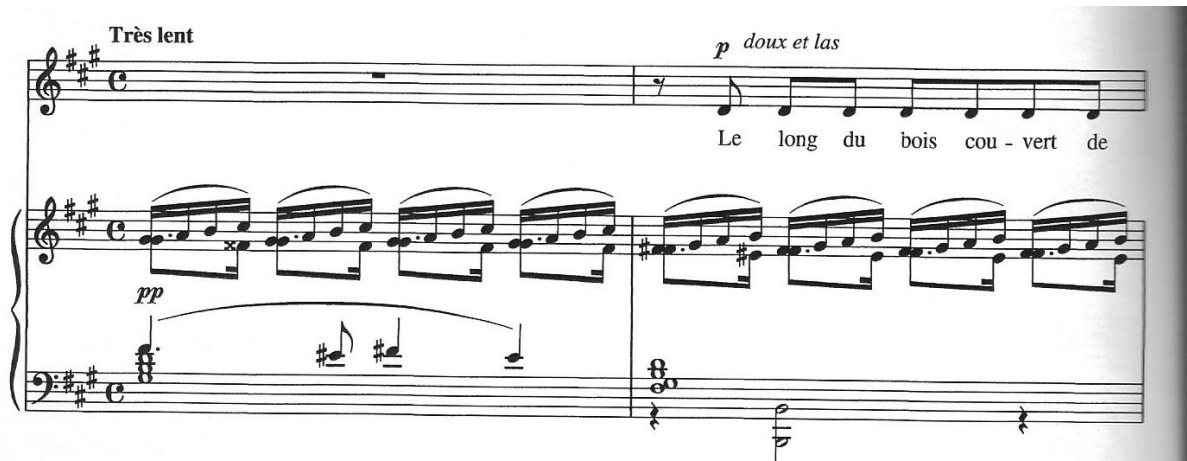
Along the wood covered with frost, I
walked;
my hair, hanging down before my mouth,
was bespangled with little icicles,
and my sandals were heavy
with muddy, packed snow.
He said to me: 'What do you seek?'
--'I follow the track of the satyr.
His little cloven hoof marks alternate
like holes in a white mantle.'
He said to me: 'The satyrs are dead.
The satyrs and the nymphs too.
For thirty years there has not been so terrible
a winter.
The track that you see is that of a buck.
But let us stay here, where their tomb is.'
And with the iron of his spade
he broke the ice of the spring where
formerly the naiades had laughed
He took some big, cold pieces,
and raising them towards the pallid sky
he looked through them.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Pierre Bernac, p. 199.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

In this final song, Bilitis is recalling a past love and drawing upon the intense emotion of regret. Keeping in mind that the selected poems took place before Bilitis turned sixteen, we can note that this is not reflection at the end of a life, but at the end of a phase of life, at the end of innocence. In the poem, symbolism abounds. If water represents life and abundance, then the frozen form can easily be a symbol of death and loss. Indeed when Bilitis's companion cuts a hole in the ice and looks through it, the action can be seen as reflecting upon the past. To represent nostalgia, Debussy uses the Lydian mode, rather than major or minor to open the piece.

Figure 4-6 "Le tombeau des Naïades" mm. 1-2



It first appears when Bilitis remarks upon the footprints of what she believes is a satyr. "This mode color the entire first section and the conclusion of "La flûte de Pan." It occurs briefly in "La Chevelure" at the words 'par la même chevelure, la bouche sur la bouche.'"⁸⁶ The music, much like the subject, is recalling moments of the past.

To represent the slow walk in the winter, Debussy sets specific rhythms and tempos. There is not a single measure in the piece in which the right hand does not play a set of sixteenth notes. This can represent the relentlessness of time; even though Bilitis is determined to recall the past, time is unforgiving. The opening tempo is slow, representing the weary walk of the travelers and perhaps foreshadowing the discovery that Bilitis is chasing a dream. Neither the voice of Bilitis or the voice of her companion stray far from the *piano* marking, other than the climax on the last page when her companion recalls the laughter of the nymphs.

⁸⁶ Arthur B. Wenk, pp. 189-190.

Figure 4-7 "Le tombeau des Naïades" mm. 24-25

It is important more so in this piece than perhaps in the others that the piano pushes forward after the last word fades.

Figure 4-8 "Le tombeau des Naïades" mm. 28-32

The sixteenth notes continue, representing the forward motion of time, and they ascend in the same manner as the final words of the voice do a few measures before. A chapter may have ended in Bilitis's life, but it is by no means over.

Performance Practice

Like most vocal literature, Debussy placed high importance on the emotion of the poem. The vocalist holds the responsibility of serving not only the composer, but also the poet. Debussy once said “Musicians who understand nothing about poetry ought not set it to music.”⁸⁷ The same could be of those who endeavor to interpret the pieces. The three poems, while highly erotic and sensual, are from the perspective of a sixteen-year-old girl. It is therefore necessary, that in addition to musical practice, the vocalist should spend an equal amount of time translating and analyzing the text, because while it contains many sexual nuances, at times it also exhibits instances of hesitation, tenderness, and innocence.

The three pieces are melodically driven, but the harmonic structure, while at times ambiguous, is important to the overall structure of the character. Therefore, the vocalist who chooses to undertake this cycle should be constantly aware of what the piano is playing underneath. Playing individual notes can serve the purpose of hearing the melody of the voice, but in order to understand the function the melody serves in conjunction with the harmony, the vocalist would be better served by playing the harmonic progression while simultaneously singing the vocal line. Pianist and vocalist should combine forces as soon as possible in order to make decisions not specified by the composer. Although some publications of the piece and performance practice publications may suggest specific tempo markings, Debussy himself opposed the idea of metronome markings. He thought that metronome markings may serve their purpose for a measure, but beyond that they are incapable of conveying the purpose of the piece overall. That being said, Debussy put a great deal amount of thought into fairly representing the words of the poet. Celebrated vocalist Claire Croiza, having known the composer and his works well, advises: “Debussy has caught the poet’s rhythm so perfectly that the poem can be declaimed without changing anything in the rhythm. . . . The singer has only to follow the notation as closely as possible . . . musically everything must be rigorously exact.”⁸⁸ The *Chansons de Bilitis* contain a great deal of symbolism and feeling. While a good musician can put sound to the notes on the page, an intelligent and responsible musician has the ability to

⁸⁷ Stephan Jaroncinski, p. 111.

⁸⁸ Richard Langham Smith, “Debussy on Performance: Sound and Unsound Ideals,” in *Debussy in Performance*, ed. James R. Briscoe (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 19.

create depth. Debussy remarked after a pianist played some of his piece for him, “There are people who write music, and people who edit it: and this man who does as he wants. . . . All I want is a faithful interpreter.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

Chapter 5 - Lori Laitman--Daughters

Biographical Information

Lori Laitman, American composer, was born January 12th, 1955, in Long Beach, New York. Laitman has quickly gained acclaim for all of her music, but especially for the voice. According to her website, she has composed three operas, an oratorio, choral works, and over 250 songs.⁹⁰ Laitman attended Yale College (B.A., magna cum laude, 1975) where she studied music and composition and received her M.M. from the Yale School of Music, where she studied flute performance, graduating in 1976.⁹¹ Laitman has studied flute with John Wummer, Herbert Tichman, and Thomas Nyfenger, all prominent figures in flute performance, and composition with Jonathan D. Kramer, Robert Morris, and Frank Lewin.⁹² “She has composed for film, theatre, and various chamber ensembles, but since 1991 she has concentrated on composing for the voice.”⁹³ Laitman credits her friend, Lauren Wagner, as the catalyst for her interest in writing for the voice when Wagner commissioned her first song *The Metropolitan Tower*. “Laitman says: ‘I found my voice writing for the voice.’”⁹⁴

Laitman has worked with the text of a plethora of poets, including contemporary authors such as Mary Oliver, Thomas Lux, and Paul Muldoon. She has also set to song the texts of classic poets such as Emily Dickinson and William Carlos Williams. Recently her works have been performed at The Cleveland Institute of Art, The U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and The Kennedy Center.⁹⁵ “Ms. Laitman’s works have received critical acclaim. *The National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Journal* calls Laitman ‘an exceptionally gifted genius . . . who deservedly stands shoulder to shoulder with Ned Rorem for her uncommon sensitivity to

⁹⁰ Lori Laitman, “Lori Laitman” <artsongs.com> accessed April 2nd, 2015.

⁹¹ Paul André Bempéchant, “Laitman, Lori” *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 9.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Carol Kimball, “Lori Laitman,” *Song: A Guide to Art Song, Style, and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Co, 2005), p. 339.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 339.

⁹⁵ Lori Laitman, *Daughters* (Riverdale, NY: Enchanted Knickers Music, 1998).

text, her loving attention to the human voice and its capabilities, and her extraordinary palette of musical colors and gestures.”⁹⁶

Laitman has won a plethora of awards including the Boston Art Song Competition (2000), the Best American Art Song Competition (2004) for her *Men with Small Heads*, and has more than once received the Maryland State Arts Council’s Individual Artists Award in Music Composition.⁹⁷

Looking towards the future, Opera Colorado will premiere Laitman’s newest opera *The Scarlet Letter* (2008), originally commissioned by the University of Central Arkansas, in May of 2016.

Compositional Style

Those who have listened to Laitman’s works have compared them to the song styles of Ned Rorem and Samuel Barber, to which she credits to an understanding of the text and using the music to serve the poetry. The rhythm and meter are chosen based on the rhythm and sounds of the words themselves. This neo-Romantic approach to song writing is unpredictable, but the results are smooth and lyrical melodies. Tessitura and range of the voice is considered with importance and the tempo moves as the emotion and mood of the piece changes.⁹⁸

Laitman uses postmodern harmonies to enhance the emotion of piece. Her music lacks key signatures, which makes it easier for her harmonies to fluctuate. “My tonal centers shift so often that it would be impractical to utilize key signatures in my music. Regarding accidentals, they are relevant only for each individual measure.”⁹⁹ Her accompaniments are as complex or simplistic as she feels the poetry demands. Like any other facet of her compositions they are written with a distinct purpose. That being said, she does not complete the accompaniment until the vocal line is completely realized.¹⁰⁰ When interviewed by Kathleen Watt, Laitman had the following to say about her music. “I would hope it’s timeless. I think it’s beautiful, and it’s certainly lyric. . . . I want my music to speak to all people, not just to singers.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Laitman, *Daughters*.

⁹⁷ Paul André Bempéchant, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Carol Lines, “The Songs of Lori Laitman,” *Journal of Singing* 64/1 (2007), p. 32.

⁹⁹ Laitman, “Lori Laitman.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Kimball, p. 339.

Historical and Poetic Inspiration

Laitman is very particular when she chooses a text for a new song. She will not choose a piece unless she has an emotional attachment to the text. Laitman is particularly drawn to Holocaust theme poetry, but she finds particular joy in working with living poets. “Their excitement fuels my creative process. I am particularly proud that many times, poets have told me that I revealed things to them about their poetry that they didn’t know.”¹⁰²

For *Daughters* (1998), Laitman chose her texts from poets Anne Ranasinghe and Karen Gershon. Both poets write a great deal of Holocaust-themed poetry, which is perhaps what drew Laitman to their words. Both were German-born Jews who were sent to England for safety. Anne Ranasinghe, author of *Mascot and Symbol* and *A Letter to My Daughter*, was born Anneliese Katz in Essen, Germany on October 2nd, 1925. Ranasinghe experienced much tragedy during World War II; she witnessed the burning of her synagogue during the “Kristallnacht,” her father was arrested and sent to Dachau which left him emotionally and physically unstable, and while she was in England shunted from her family to a boarding school, her parents and all other family were murdered by the Nazis. “She married a Sinhalese Professor of the Colombo Medical School, moved to Sri Lanka (where she has been the only resident Jew), raised a family, and began writing poems and prose.”¹⁰³ Translated in seven languages, her nine books have won many awards.

Karen Gershon (born Kaethe Löwenthall in Bielefeld, Germany in 1923) experienced similar tragedies during the Holocaust. She too was sent to England for safety with her sisters and her parents suffered the same tragic fate. Karen married husband Val Tripp in 1948 and had four children, including a daughter named Stella. “The family emigrated to Israel at the end of 1968. In 1971 Stella returned to England to attend art college -- a parallel to Karen leaving her own parents. The poem “Stella Remembered” was written in 1972.” In 1973, Karen and her husband returned to England and after a heart-bypass operation in 1993, Karen died. In total she wrote six collections of poetry, three non-fiction books, and three novels.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Laitman, “Lori Laitman.”

¹⁰³ Laitman, *Daughters*.

¹⁰⁴ Laitman, *Daughters*.

According to Laitman, “Each of these poems focuses on a mother-daughter relationship filtered through the lens of time. As the mother of three (including one daughter), these poems touched me on a very emotional level.”¹⁰⁵ The cycle was commissioned by pianist, Kirsten Taylor and was Laitman’s first work for mezzo-soprano and piano trio.

Musical and Poetic Analysis

Mascot and Symbol (Anne Ranasinghe)

My little daughter made a head of clay
Then tiring of it
Gave the thing away
To me.
I put it on the window sill in front
Of my desk, with sky and tree
And moving cloud beyond.

In the mind’s reflected eye
On all my mental journeys
This discarded piece of forgotten play
Became mascot and symbol--
My love
Caged in a lump of clay.

At first I hardly noticed it, at least
Not consciously--
A rough and odd-shaped head
That could belong to either man or beast.
But seeing it there both day and night
In changing patterns
Of shadow and light
And traveling with me

The opening song has a playfulness that is missing from the other two in the cycle. The mother in this poem, written in the 1970’s, is reflecting on a present from her young daughter, a creative craft that many parents receive from their young children. The piano figures are rhythmically stated, representing playfulness, perhaps even the quick uneven steps of a young child.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Figure 5-1 "Mascot and Symbol" mm. 5-7

Figure 5-1 shows the musical score for measures 5-7 of "Mascot and Symbol". The score is in 3/4 time and features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a five-measure rest, then enters in measure 6 with the lyrics "lit - tle daught - er made a head of clay Then tir - ing of it gave the". The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with a melodic line and a left hand with a bass line. The dynamic marking *mp* (mezzo-piano) is present. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and slurs.

Laitman used the interplay between cello and violin to enhance the playfulness in the piece, specifically calling for them to be “quirky” at measure 48.

Figure 5-2 "Mascot and Symbol" mm. 48-51

Figure 5-2 shows the musical score for measures 48-51 of "Mascot and Symbol". The score is in 5/8 time and features a violin and cello part. The violin part is marked "Quirky" and "mf" (mezzo-forte). The cello part is marked "Pizz. Quirky" and "mf". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs.

In measure 57, Laitman quickly changes the mood of the work with the violin and cello, which heralds the melancholy entrance of the voice in measure 59.

Figure 5-3 "Mascot and Symbol" mm. 57-60

57 *meno mosso* *mf*
This dis - card - ed piece of for-got-ten play

mp
mp

57 *meno mosso*
Pedal each chord until m. 70

At the end of the piece the voice is sustained as if it really were “caged,” while the other voices maintain the play stated at the beginning of the piece.

Figure 5-4 "Mascot and Symbol" mm. 71-73

71 *mp*
My love caged

mp
mp

71 *subito p*
Ped. Ped. Ped.

Stella Remembered (Karen Gershon)

Stella remembered doesn't move,
as if my mind, storing up sight,
made of it something like pressed flowers.

Now I am ready to barter years
of photographs for a memory
showing her turning towards me.

I used to look at her day and night
when she was a baby, not to lose
anything through the sieve of hours.

As previously stated, Gershon's daughter, Stella, had moved away to England for school much like how she left her family for England, albeit under less dire circumstances. The overall mood of the piece is one of somber recall. The mother is remembering a time when her daughter was young and still depended on her. It starts with violin and cello, at first stoic and then the cello breaks off into a lyrical motif.

Figure 5-5 "Stella Remembered" mm. 1-4

Violin

Cello

legato, dark

mp

f

The image shows the first four measures of the piece for Violin and Cello. The Violin part is in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It begins with a half note B-flat, followed by a half note D-flat, and then a half note F. The Cello part is in bass clef, 3/4 time, with the same key signature. It begins with a half note B-flat, followed by a half note D-flat, and then a half note F. Both parts are marked 'legato, dark' and 'mp' (mezzo-piano). In measure 4, both parts increase in volume to 'f' (forte).

When the voice finally enters in measure 19, Laitman uses the text to dictate the rhythm. Notice in measure 20 how the stress of the word "remembered" is enhanced by the leap of the perfect 4th and the eighth note of the first syllable followed by the quarter note of the second.

Figure 5-6 "Stella Remembered" mm. 18-22

16

18

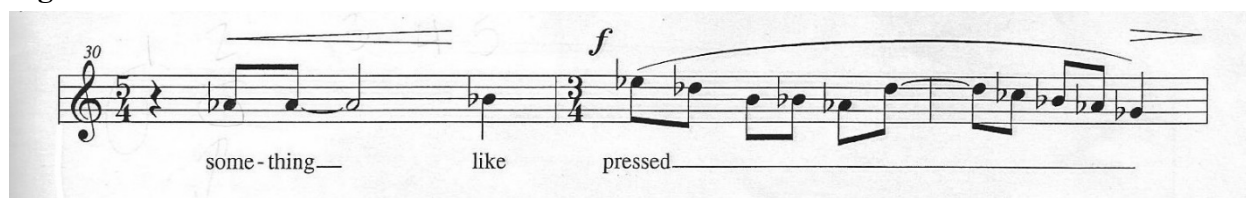
mp

Stel - la re - mem - bered does - n't move

The image shows the vocal line for measures 18-22. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The melody begins in measure 18 with a half rest, followed by a half note B-flat in measure 19. In measure 20, there is a perfect fourth leap from B-flat to E-flat, followed by an eighth note D-flat and a quarter note C. The melody continues with a half note B-flat in measure 21 and a half note A in measure 22. The lyrics are: 'Stel - la re - mem - bered does - n't move'. The dynamic is marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and there is a crescendo line over measures 19-22.

A melodic theme introduced in the voice at measure 31 is echoed by the violin in 33, and again by the cello towards the end of the piece at measure 58.

Figure 5-7 "Stella Remembered" mm. 30-32



The descent of the line and the decrescendo hint at a fading, perhaps of the physical presence of the daughter after she has left. At various points of the piece the violin and cello play a short motif of leaping octaves, as seen in the last measure of the piece.

Figure 5-8 "Stella Remembered" mm. 79-84

In a way the sound is jarring, almost representative of the departure of the daughter and the unease felt by the mother.

A Letter to My Daughter (Anne Ranasinghe)

My mother walked softly round her silent house
While images faded from darkening mirrors
And the grey ash of fear
Fell. She knew
There would be no return, as I know

Your childhood is sealed for ever,
A ship in a stoppered bottle. Now
You travel strange roads, sleep
In strange beds and your dreams
Are the dreams of a stranger. Your life
Speaks with a different tongue.

Memories grow transparent
I search for your essence
In hastily scrawled letters, and
Recoil from the apprehension
Of your total absence. The wind

That sweeps over sea and over land
Effaces all tracemarks--it measures
The distance between us. And distance
Takes many forms--of space and time,
Heart, mind and darkness.
So I shall light
A lamp in my window every night,
To comfort myself and also
To guide you safely home.

This song is the last and longest of the cycle and by far the most melancholy. The movement is slow in the beginning, just block chords in the piano until the violin enters with a melodic and rhythmic motif that appears throughout.

Figure 5-9 “A Letter to My Daughter” mm. 1-3

The image shows the first three measures of the piece. The top system consists of a violin and a cello/bass line. The violin enters in measure 3 with a melodic line starting on a half note G#4, followed by quarter notes A#4, B4, and A#4, then a half note G#4. The cello/bass line is silent in these measures. The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment. Measures 1 and 2 feature block chords in the right hand (F#4, A#4, C#5) and single notes in the left hand (F#3, A2). Measure 3 features a sustained chord in the right hand (F#4, A#4, C#5) and a half note F#3 in the left hand. The tempo marking 'Ad.' is written below the piano part in measures 1, 2, and 3. The dynamic marking 'p' is present in the violin part in measure 3 and the piano right hand in measure 1.

When the voice enters, the lyrical nature of Laitman’s compositional style is apparent. The line is fluid and appropriately matches the prosody of the text.

Figure 5-10 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 15-17

The image shows measures 15, 16, and 17 of the piece. The vocal line is written in a single staff in 6/8 time. Measure 15 starts with a half note G#4, followed by quarter notes A#4, B4, and A#4. Measure 16 starts with a half note G#4, followed by quarter notes A#4, B4, and A#4. Measure 17 starts with a half note G#4, followed by quarter notes A#4, B4, and A#4. The lyrics are written below the staff: "moth-er walked soft - ly round her si - lent house while i - ma-ges fad - ed from". The tempo marking 'Ad.' is written below the staff in measures 15, 16, and 17. The dynamic marking 'p' is present in the vocal line in measure 15.

Throughout the piece, instrumental interludes heighten the emotion that is not readily apparent in the vocal line. For example, starting at measure 56, the quickened tempo, cello trill, and steady pulse in the piano suggest an urgency, almost panic behind the mother’s despair of the daughter’s departure.

Figure 5-11 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 56-58

56 $\text{♩} = 120$

mf

tr

mp

mf

56 $\text{♩} = 120$

p

mf

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *simile..* *Red.* *Red.*

This urgency momentarily subsides but does not fully transition to a calmer feeling until measure 90, when Laitman clearly states so in the music. At measure 96, the voice has what is perhaps the most lyrical line of the piece. Laitman uses text painting in measure 97 on the words “sweeps” with the dotted quarter note slurred to the eighth note and the movement to the neighbor tone.

Figure 5-12 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 96-99

96

wind that sweeps o-ver sea and o-ver land

She employs text painting again at measure 104 and measure 109 on the word “distance,” when the voice jumps octaves.

Figure 5-13 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 104-107

104

meas - ures the dis - tance be - tween us

At the end of the poem the mother finally resolved to light a candle to show the way home, should her daughter need it. Rhythmically, at measures 131-132 and again measures 133-134, Laitman employs a 7/8 meter followed by a 2/4 meter to represent the uneasiness of the absence of her daughter and the safety that the mother wishes to provide.

Figure 5-14 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 130-132

130

self and al - so to guide you safe - ly

Red.

She does this again at measure 137 but this time using a 5/8 meter into a 3/4 meter, combined with the low tessitura of the voice, which further enhances the depth of the mother's despair.

Figure 5-15 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 137-140

137 freely

guide you safe - ly home

At the very end, the harmonic rhythm continues to slow until eventually the sounds of the instruments fade away and the voice enters on a final "home," almost as if the mother was reinforcing the idea that when everything else fades away, her love and home will remain.

Figure 5-16 "A Letter to My Daughter" mm. 149-153

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system features a vocal line starting at measure 149, marked with the tempo instruction 'freely' and the performance instruction 'close mouth slowly to a hum'. The vocal line includes a long note on the word 'home' and another long note on 'mm'. The second system shows the piano accompaniment for the vocal line, with a piano (p) marking at the beginning. The third system shows the piano accompaniment for the piano part, with a 'Ped.' marking at the beginning and a '*' marking at the end.

Performance Practice

The nature of the cycle, whether one considers the four separate voices, the lack of key signature, or frequent shifts in time signature, make it a difficult one to practice. I would recommend that the singer rehearse with the strings and pianist early to solidify the musical relationship of the four voices. The cycle is difficult to learn just by playing the individual line of the voice, since the voice often enters chromatically when compared to the previous pitch of the other instruments. Therefore, the use of recordings is crucial to understanding the movement of the voice. Laitman's work is lyrical and does much to enhance the sound of the voice, just by the sheer beauty of the line, but in performance many details can easily be taken for granted. Diction is imperative and often overlooked in English cycles performed by English speaking performers. In order for the words to be understood over the timbres of the violin, cello, and piano, the consonants need to be forward and clear. Because of the chamber style of the cycle, the use of music in performance by the vocalist is appropriate. The cycle contains long interludes in which the voice is silent and the other parts rise in importance, but the expression in the face of the vocalist cannot dissipate or falter. If the singer looks detached during these interludes, the facial expression will drop, focus will waver, and not only is the concentration and breath of the

singer not in control, but the audience will be less invested in the performance and succumb to boredom. Laitman is appreciative of the range limits of the voice types she writes for, but still the cycle requires a vocalist who is comfortable at both extremes. Therefore, the vocalist must be in constant connection with breath support and relinquish control of the back of the tongue and laryngeal position. If the vocalist relies on or is tense in any part of the phonatory system, including the breathing, vibratory, or resonance mechanisms, they will soon tire and complicated passages will grow in difficulty. Laitman uses such exquisite text and intelligent vocal leading, that the vocalist need only to relax and trust the music.

Chapter 6 - Enrique Granados--La maja dolorosa

Biographical Information

Enrique Granados was born July 27th, 1867 in Lérida, a city in the western part of the Catalan region in Spain. The son of a military father, the family moved around from Lleida, to Santa Cruz de Tenerife, before taking up residence in Barcelona in 1874. It was here that Granados first began taking piano and solfege lessons from family friend, Captain José Junquera. In 1879, Granados began studying piano with Francesc Jurnet, at Barcelona's Escolania de la Mercé, but his studies were interrupted with a short stay in Olot, where his older brother was stationed. When he returned to Barcelona, Granados began studying piano with Joan Baptista Pujol, who was considered the best piano teacher in Barcelona at the time. While studying with Pujol, Granados won the Concurs Pujol, an academy-sponsored competition, which was also the first time Granados would come into contact with Felip Pedrell, his first composition instructor.¹⁰⁶

After a brief time working as a café pianist and the “best-paid piano teacher in Barcelona,” Granados soon came to the understanding that if he wanted a well-rounded musical education, he needed to study in Paris. With the help of Catalan businessman, Eduard Condé, in September 1887, Granados was finally able to leave for Paris.¹⁰⁷ By the time Granados recovered from a bout of typhoid, he was too old to take the entrance exams to the Paris Conservatoire, and therefore began studying piano with Charles Wilfrid de Bériot, who was on staff at the Conservatory. Granados was exposed to many great techniques including pedaling and improvisation, and was able to enhance many of his natural abilities, but he was unsuccessful in his attempts to find interest from the Parisian publishers. On July 14th, 1889, Granados returned to Barcelona.¹⁰⁸

Granados had a reputation for being a great pianist and he performed many of his compositions that were written for the concert platform. In Barcelona, he had an easier time having his works published. As soon as he arrived he was able to get his *Twelve Spanish Dances*

¹⁰⁶ Carol A. Hess, *Enrique Granados: A Bio-bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), pp. 5-6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

published, which later proved to be one of his most famous works. In 1891, Granados helped found the Orfeó Catalá, a chorus that would perform traditional and new works by Catalan composers, and other such classical repertoire.

In 1892, Granados met the woman who would become his wife, Amparo Gal y Lloberas, and in the subsequent years, Granados's name all but disappeared from Barcelona musical life. This period of musical hiatus has been coined by biographers as "the long silence." In 1893 the couple was married and in July of 1894 their first child Eduardo, was born. The couple would go on to have five other children.¹⁰⁹

Granados spent a number of years promoting and performing his own pieces with various groups such as the Philharmonic Society, a group whose goal was to promote chamber music in an otherwise opera-oriented society. Around mid-1898 Granados went to Madrid for the premiere of his first stage work, the zarzuela *Maria del Carmen*, which premiered on November 12th, 1898 at Madrid's Teatro de Parish. The work met with reasonable success and would receive a total of nineteen performances.¹¹⁰

In 1900 he continued his conducting career with a series of concerts in Barcelona and established a music school in 1901, named Academia Granados.¹¹¹ Granados disliked the authoritarian style of teaching of his former instructor Pujol and instead believed in "the importance of cultivating the individual student's musical personality."¹¹² The academy embraced new teaching trends and graduated a number of professional and semi-professional musicians, such as Frank Marshall, who would go on to direct the Academy after Granados's death, and Conchita Badia who studied with Granados himself and premiered *Tonadillas*.

Granados would go on to write more music for the theater, but his "fame as a composer rests squarely on his masterpiece, *Goyescas* (1911), a suite of six imaginative, colorful piano pieces inspired by the paintings and sketches of Spanish painter Francisco Goya."¹¹³ He would go on to write an opera of the same name with a libretto written by Fernando Periquet. Scenes were taken primarily from Goya's paintings and music of the piano suite as a model for the vocal

¹⁰⁹ Hess, p.10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12

¹¹¹ Nicolas Slonimsky, "Granados (y Campiña), Enrique) in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 2001), p. 1347.

¹¹² Hess, *Enrique Granados: A Bio-bibliography*, p. 22.

¹¹³ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song, Style, and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Co., 2005), p. 499.

parts. The opera, *Goyescas*, was premiered in 1916 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York to great acclaim.

On the return journey, Granados and his wife, Amparo sailed to London and after a few days set sail again on the *S.S. Sussex*. On March 24, 1916, while crossing the Channel, the ship was torpedoed by a German submarine and both the composer and his wife drowned. It took some time for the word of the Spanish composer's death to spread, due to fantastic tales of their demise. Eventually, the Spanish King, Alfonso XIII, implemented a collection to benefit the Granados children left behind. Because of disagreements with the Schirmer publishing company, the eldest son, Eduardo, authorized the withdrawal of Granados's musical works from the company. This most likely contributed to the fact that Granados's music was performed almost solely in Barcelona in the decades after his death. "More-over, the horrors of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) contributed to the loss of manuscripts and biographical documents."¹¹⁴ Granados was Spain's only true Romantic composer and because of his untimely death, we cannot know what other musical ventures he would have embarked upon.

Compositional Style

Enrique Granados was already well-established as a concert pianist and it is to no surprise that his vocal works would rely heavily on the accompaniment. The accompaniment is intimately connected to the voice and often mimics the guitar, which is regarded as the national instrument of choice for accompanying. "The spontaneity and brilliance of these accompaniments combine fine piano technique and style with a melodic line rooted firmly in Spanish vocal idioms."¹¹⁵

In the early part of the twentieth century a national movement tried to "revive" the music of Spain's past. Musicians such as Francisco Asenjo Barbieri and Felip Pedrell, has previously "unearthed the musical treasures of Spain's past while simultaneously drawing upon the wealth of living folk-lore preserved in the popular oral tradition."¹¹⁶ Granados's vocal works are categorized as *tonadillas*, which to Granados meant a simply song that evoked emotion and

¹¹⁴ Hess, *Enrique Granados: A Bio-bibliography*, pp. 32-34.

¹¹⁵ Kimball, *Song: A guide to art song style and literature*, p. 499.

¹¹⁶ Denis Stevens, editor, *A History of Song*, revised edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1970), p. 390.

painted pictures of eighteenth-century Madrid. Although he briefly studied in France, the pull of his native tongue and its music is evident, especially in his tonadillas. “The innate simplicity and modesty of structure, the supple line of melody, the vague moods of nostalgia, the tendency of over-ornamentation, all these are strikingly similar to Montañesa music, which is curiously unlike that of its neighbors.”¹¹⁷

To the foreign ear there is a certain expectation for Spanish music to “sound Spanish.” But one forgets that there are different facets of Spanish culture and therefore different tastes of music. According to Mason, Granados was a true patriot composer and led the revival of Spanish music as a national leader.¹¹⁸ Indeed Granados’s music and style would go on to influence many of his younger contemporaries, such as Manuel de Falla, who would use piano figures that mimicked the accompanying guitar.¹¹⁹

Historical and Poetic Inspiration

The *tonadilla* is derived from the word *tonada* which is a theatrical character song. Over time, *tonadillas* became much like Italian intermezzos and would be performed on stage by singers in full costume. In his *tonadillas*, Granados tried to paint a picture with music much like Francisco Goya did with his artwork. In fact, Granados was inspired by the paintings of “majos” and “majas” by Goya, who were men and women of eighteenth-century Madrid.¹²⁰

After the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14), there was much pressure felt across Spain to be modernized in the European fashion. Especially those belonging to the middle class felt a pull to adopt the fashions and trends of the Europeans. Therefore a gap began to form between the bourgeoisie and the lower class, which still clung to traditional Spanish culture. The word *majo* is derived from Roman culture and the celebration of the first day of May. Young ladies would perform on instruments outside of their homes and essentially compete for prizes. In the seventeenth century, *majos* were synonymous with gentlemen from city suburbs representing bravery and beauty, but by the eighteenth century the thought shifted to those of the

¹¹⁷ A. L. Mason, “Enrique Granados,” in *Music and Letters*, 14/3 (July 1933), p. 233.

¹¹⁸ Mason, p. 233.

¹¹⁹ Carol Kimball, p. 499.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 500.

lower class dressed in gaudy costumes. Out of the desire to remain close to Spanish tradition and as a way of revolting against the Europeanization of Spain, the *tonadilla* was born.¹²¹

The works of Goya and his contemporaries were used as visual tools to represent the evolution of Spanish society and influenced theater just as much as theater was trying to influence their work. Goya would use his paintings as a way to criticize the movement towards Europeanization. “The paintings by Goya’s circle representing the characters and situations of everyday life have several common points with the *tonadilla*.”¹²² The middle class was able to connect with the music as a tool on their way to European enlightenment and the lower class make connections with the overall themes of music. Whether one looks at the period of time in which the paintings and the *tonadillas* emerged as a deviation or cultivation of Spanish society, their influences upon the people of Spain is undeniable.

Musical and Poetic Analysis

The following three songs join to form a triptych. They portray the emotional turbulence of a woman whose lover has died unexpectedly.

La maja dolorosa No. 1

¡Oh muerte cruel! ¿Por qué tú a traición
Mi majó arrebataste a mi pasión?
No quiero vivir sin él,
¡Porque es morir así vivir!
No es posible ya sentir más dolor:
En lágrimas deschecha mi alma esta.
¡Oh Dios! Torna mi amor,
Porque es morir así vivir.

Oh cruel death! Why did you by treachery
Take my majó, my passion?
I don’t want to live without him,
For it is death to live so.
It is impossible now to feel more pain:
My soul is dissolved in tears.
Oh God! Return my love,
For it is death to live so.¹²³

The dominating emotion in this song is anger and anguish. The vocal line extends from an A-flat above the staff to a G-natural below, all in the span of about eight measures. The leaps

¹²¹ Ruth Piquer Sanclemente and Gorka Rubiales Zabarte, “Music Representation and Ideology in the Paintings of Francisco Goya and His Contemporaries” *Music in Art* 34/1-2 (Spring-Fall 2009), see pp. 177-181.

¹²² Ruth Piquer Sanclemente and Gorka Rubiales Zabarte, p. 189.

¹²³ Enrique Granados, *11 Songs (Tonadillas): for voice and piano*, Waldo Lyman, translator (New York: International Music Company, 1952), p. 12.

in the melody and the wide range all help to paint the picture of a woman in the throes of grief and despair.¹²⁴

Figure 6-1 "La maja dolorosa No.1" mm. 7-13



Figure 6-2 "La maja dolorosa No.1" mm. 14-20



La maja dolorosa No. 2

Ay! Majo de mi vida, no, no tú no has muerto!	Oh, majo of my life, no, no, you have not died!
¿Acaso yo existiese si fuera eso cierto?	Would I still be alive if that were true?
¡Quiero loca besar tu boca!	Wildly I desire to kiss your lips!
Quiero segura gozar mas de tu ventura.	I want in faithfulness to share your destiny.
¡Ay! de tu ventura.	Alas! Your destiny!
Mas ¡Ay! deliro, sueño, mi majo no existe,	But oh! I am raving, I dream, my majo no longer exists,
En torno mío el mundo lloroso esta y triste.	The world about me is weeping and sad
A mi duelo no hallo Consuelo.	I find no consolation in my sorrow,
Mas muerto y frío	But even dead and cold
Siempre el majo seráa mio. ¡Ay! siempre mío.	My majo will always be mine. Oh! Always mine! ¹²⁵

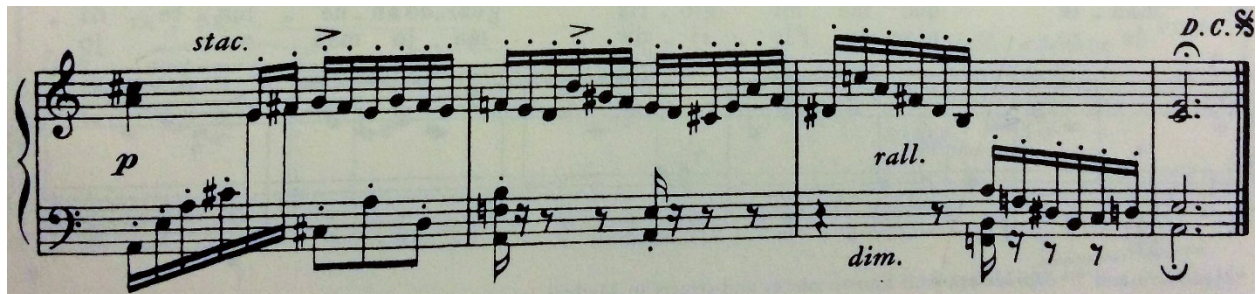
The second piece is lyrically driven and in the beginning we see examples of the guitar-like nature of the accompaniment. Though the despair still remains it now takes the form of nostalgia and remorse for the love that has been lost. Between the two stanzas is a piano

¹²⁴ Carol Kimball, p. 500.

¹²⁵ Granados, p. 14.

interlude that, with its staccato articulation and step-wise movement, reinforces Granados' tendency to create accompaniment like that of a guitar.

Figure 6-3 "La maja dolorosa No.2" mm. 19-22



La maja dolorosa No. 3

De aquel majo amante que fué mi gloria
 Guardo anhelante dichosa memoria.
 El me adoraba vehemente y fiel
 Yo mi vida entera di á él.
 Y otras mil diera,
 Si el quisiera,
 Que en hondos amores,
 Martirios son flores.
 Y al recorder mi majo amado,
 Vam resurgiendo ensueños
 De un tiempo pasado.
 Ni en el Mentidero ni en la Florida
 Majo más majo paseo en la vida.

Bajo el chamergo sus ojos vi

Con toda el alma puestos en mi,
 Que á quien miraban enamoraban.

Pues no halle en el mundo
 Mirar mas profundo
 Y al recorder mi majo amando,
 Vam resurgiendo ensueños
 De un tiempo pasado.

Of that beloved majo who was my glory
 I cherish a happy memory.
 He loved me ardently and truly
 And I gave my whole life to him,
 And I would give it again a thousand times,
 If he desired it,
 For when feelings are profound,
 Torments are sweet.
 And as I think of my beloved majo,
 Dreams come back
 Of a time gone by.
 Neither in the Mentidero nor the Florida
 Was a majo more handsome ever seen to
 stroll.

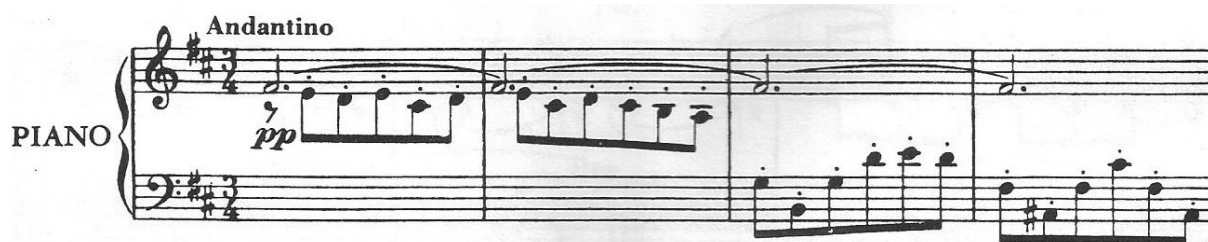
Beneath the broad-brimmed hat I saw his
 eyes
 Fixed upon me passionately,
 For they caressed the one on whom they
 rested.

In all the world I have never seen
 A more piercing look
 And as I think of my beloved majo,
 Dreams come back
 Of a time gone by.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Granados, p. 16.

Again in the beginning of this piece we see figures in the accompaniment that would seem to mimic the playing of a guitar.

Figure 6-4 "La maja dolorosa No.3" mm. 1-4



In this piece, the woman is recalling happy memories of the time spent together with her lover and cites specific places in Madrid where they spent time together.¹²⁷ For example, in the second stanza, Mentidero and Florida refer to street names in the city. While again the overarching emotion is that of despair, there are moments of happiness are represented by the relationship of thirds and major triads outlined by the voice and the accompaniment in the final measure of the following excerpt.

Figure 6-5 "La maja dolorosa No.3" mm. 35-39

Performance Practice

Although these three pieces are short, they are still vocally demanding. The ranges alone are enough to challenge the mezzo-soprano who has a difficult time navigating the chest and head registers within one melodic line. Exercises that practice negotiating the *passaggio* are

¹²⁷ Kimball, p. 500.

crucial and special attention must be made to the character of the piece. Although the pieces are emotionally driven and the singer must give life to the anguish of a woman who has lost her lover, emotion must not overcome vocal health. Due to the nature of the *tonadillas*, it is easy for the singer to force the sound and increase volume by adding tension to the vocal folds; however, the opposite is needed. There must be a constant awareness of the breath, the back of the tongue must be relaxed and never utilized, and the energy of the vocal line must be maintained through to the end of the phrase.

When it comes to the performance of the pieces, these techniques would ideally become second nature. There is an element in Spanish music that is observed, specifically when it comes to dancing, but because of the dance-like elements in these pieces it is appropriate to apply the following philosophy. Duende is more of a philosophy than a singing technique. “The Duende is not in the throat, the Duende rises from within, from the soles of the feet, that is to say it is not a question of faculties but of true live style, that is to say of blood, of very old culture and at the same time of the act of creation.”¹²⁸ To the Spanish culture, Duende is the ultimate connection between the artist and their medium. It is submission to emotion and an intimate relationship with the music.

¹²⁸ Juan Cruz, “Game and Theory of Duende,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry* 3 (2001), see p. 108.

Chapter 7 - Gioacchino Rossini--Cruda Sorte! . . . Già so per pratica

Biographical Information

Gioacchino Rossini was born February 29th, 1792 in Pesaro, to a musical, but poor family. Rossini's father was the town trumpeter and a reputable horn player, but was imprisoned for a short time when his republican views became too vocal for the Austrian government. His mother was the daughter of a baker and it is often incorrectly implied that she was forced to provide for herself and her son after her husband's imprisonment. She actually began to revive her operatic career a year before her husband was sent to jail. Regardless, in 1855 Rossini expressed to Ferdinand Hiller "that his mother had a beautiful voice 'which she used out of necessity.'" ¹²⁹ It was perhaps from his mother that he acquired his good ear for melody and his remarkable musical memory, for his mother, while unable to read music, was able to learn roles quickly.

Rossini's first teacher in the musical arts was his father, but his first substantial exposure to music was when he became acquainted with the Malerbi family in Lugo. For three years, Rossini had access to the family music library. "The Malerbi library: a collection of music, much of it by Haydn and Mozart, was to leave a permanent mark on his compositional style."¹³⁰ Rossini began his formal music education when the family moved to Bologna. In 1806, he was accepted into the Accademia to study the art of singing. While at the academy, in addition to singing, Rossini took courses under Padre Stanislao Mattei in composition, but in 1810 he decided to take his education to real world application. Rossini found success in Venice and in Milan during 1811 and 1814 and his stance in the world of the vocal arts was quick and firm. Successful operas from his time include *Tancredi* and the subject of this report, *L'Italiana in Algeri*. His success and subsequent new status as a sought after composer, led the Teatro San Carlo in Naples to offer him a contract in 1815. The press was none too friendly, but that did not prevent Rossini from having an impressive output of vocal music. "Rossini wrote eighteen operas in the six-and-a-half years between his arrival in Naples in 1815 and his departure in

¹²⁹ Alan Kendall, *Gioacchino Rossini: The Reluctant Hero* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1992), p. 10.

¹³⁰ Richard Osborne, *Rossini: His life and works*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 7.

March 1822, nine of them for the San Carlo company.¹³¹ This of course excludes short excursions to Rome, where he premiered his most famous operas at the time, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *La Cenerentola*.

It was also during this time that he met, soprano Isabella Colbran, whom he would marry when the couple departed Naples for Northern Europe in 1822. His first marriage however, would prove to be a turbulent one, mainly because of her poor health and financial habits. The couple continued on through Europe, and it seemed that wherever they went, whether it be Vienna, London, or Paris, the people were infatuated with the composer. It would seem that of all of the places Rossini would work and live in, Paris did hold a special place in his heart. “By 1830, 55 percent of the registered electors of Paris were immigrants to the city. Rossini arrived in the right place at the right time.”¹³² Following the death of Louis XVIII, Rossini entered into a contract which would give him the responsibilities of running the Théâtre Italien, administrative power in the Opéra, and having to compose whatever works were required of him. Unfortunately his personal life was not as successful: during his time in Paris, his mother died and Isabella’s health was also failing. When the couple left Paris in 1829 for Bologna, Isabella would not return.

In the summer of 1830, the French government fell and Charles X was forced into exile. “Committed to policies based on ‘fairness’ and ‘accountability,’ the new government slashed investment in the Civil List, cancelling Rossini’s lifetime annuity and invalidating his contract with the Opéra.”¹³³ It was perhaps because of the dissolution of his contract and an impressive output of compositions in a short amount of time that Rossini desired to retire from the composition of opera. Indeed, Rossini wrote thirty-nine operas over the span of nineteen years and few of them were not considered masterpieces or did not achieve high popularity. By 1831, Rossini was mostly established in Paris and began work on his *Stabat Mater*. In 1832, Rossini met the famous courtesan, Olympe Pélissier; Rossini and Colbran had been separated for some time, and Olympe and Rossini would marry after the death of Colbran in 1845.

¹³¹ Richard Osborne, *Rossini: His life and words*, p. 15.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹³³ Richard Osborne, “Rossini’s life” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, ed. Emanuele Senici (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 19.

Over the years however, Rossini's health began to rollercoaster and Olympe would often take the role of caregiver over lover. In 1855, she insisted that they return to Paris, so that Rossini could receive help from French doctors and medicine. During this stay in Paris, Rossini lived a highly scheduled life with small compositions leading up to his final major work. He would hold a series of *samedi soir*, starting in December 1858, which were musical parties held by the couple and mainly comprised of new works by the composer. Invitations to these gatherings were highly coveted, Rossini's last major work, *Petite messe solennelle*, was written in 1864 for the dedication of the private chapel of Countess Pillet-Will.¹³⁴

In 1866, Rossini suffered a mild stroke, from which he fully recovered, but his health was of no minor concern. "He was pathologically obese, however, with hardening of the arteries in his legs making walking increasingly difficult."¹³⁵ After a series of successful surgeries to remove a malignant tumor, Rossini eventually succumbed to infection from unsterile medical equipment used in the procedure on November 13, 1868.¹³⁶

Compositional Style

Plenty of anecdotes exist that recall compositional quirks of Rossini, and that add more to his personality rather than his compositional techniques. One such is the fact that Rossini would often compose in bed and rather than retrieving a paper that slipped through his grasp, he would simply start over on a new page. Indeed, this demonstrates his ability to compose quickly, regardless of the time of day. Early in his career, Rossini was writing several operas each year and it is during that time, before 1818, that Rossini often resorted to self-borrowing in his music. Starting in 1820, Rossini would limit his opera compositions to one each year.¹³⁷

Self-borrowing is common among the most famous Western composers of our past, especially those of the Baroque such as Handel. Rossini most likely borrowed from himself because of the short life of many of his operas, especially his one-act operas. These *farse* would

¹³⁴ Osborne, "Rossini's life" in *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, p. 23.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

¹³⁷ Philip Gossett, "Compositional Methods" in *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, ed. Emanuele Senici (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 70.

be written for specific theaters that specialized in such operas, for example, Teatro San Moisè of Venice. It is most likely that Rossini, believing in the extreme unlikeliness that these piece would be revived, chose to recycle musical ideas. It is also important to note that Rossini wrote twenty-seven operas between 1812 and 1819, a massive compositional feat that most likely critics were unable to distinguish style and imitation merely because of the sheer amount of music being introduced each year.¹³⁸

Perhaps because of Rossini's experience as a vocalist, his operas were intentionally melodically driven. He believed in the tradition of Italian music which emphasized expressiveness over imitation. "Its aim is to give pleasure and its means of doing so are based on rhythmic clarity and melodic simplicity."¹³⁹ Through means of techniques such as *contrafacta*. Rossini broke a long established rule that the music should serve the libretto, not vice versa.

In Rossini's operatic arias, the beginning statements were often declamatory in nature, with the orchestra providing punctuations, often in tutti. Vocal phrases are short, with dramatic pauses in between, but each has a rhythm that is unique and complex. The beginning of each phrase is syllabic and the end of each phrase is ornate. It is easy to concede that in the beginning of the aria, the music would seem to serve the text. As the piece moves forward however, the texture morphs from an open arrangement to a more closed and formulaic environment. The orchestra becomes more consistent and falls easily into a flowing repetitive state. The melodic line is then given longer phrases that are not only more fluid but also closer together. "A Rossinian melodic phrase. . . often lacks the character of a theme. . . . This quality of Rossini's melodic language is perfectly suited to a musical dramaturgy blissfully ignorant of reminiscence themes and leitmotifs."¹⁴⁰ Rossini used his arias to serve the ability of the vocalist(s). Other thematic nuances serve the purpose only of giving movement to the story line.

Historical Analysis and Libretto Inspiration

Rossini was composing operas at a time when the whole industry existed to serve the singer. This philosophy, coupled with Rossini's experience as a vocalist, allowed him to create

¹³⁸ Philip Gosset, pp. 80-81.

¹³⁹ Damien Colas, "Melody and ornamentation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, ed. Emanuele Senici (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 104.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.110-112.

works that were not meant to serve specific singers, but rather for the voice in general. In particular, Rossini loved writing for the contralto voice and equally preferred the resonance of the castrato. He went as far as to say that all other voices or instruments should be gauged to the contralto voice. If you focus too much on the high *prima donna* or the low *basso profondo*, “this will leave you with nothing in the middle.”¹⁴¹ It seems that Rossini was born at the best time for his love of composing for the low female voice to come to fruition. In the 1770’s, about two decades before Rossini was born, Italian society began to evolve. Power and the importance of the individual voice was becoming easier to express. Admission to academic programs was becoming easier for the average person, music was in high demand and was cheaper to enjoy, and women had an easier time finding work on the stage. For example, Anna Rossini has the opportunity to supplement the family income with her earnings as a singer.¹⁴²

The libretto for *L’Italiana* was written by Angelo Anelli (1761-1820). It was previously used by composer Luga Mosca for his opera of the same name, which is just more evidence of Rossini’s priorities when composing for the stage. Where the words came from mattered less than how he could express them through the music. In the opera, Isabella is shipwrecked along the coast of Algeria. In the scene that contains this aria, she searches for her love, Lindoro, but soon she and other passengers of the ship are captured by Ali, the captain of one of Bey Mustafa’s pirate vessels. Surrounded by the pirates, Isabella remarks on her courage and her ability to manipulate the situation with charm and femininity.¹⁴³ In his book simply titled *Rossini*, Richard Osborne explains; “That *L’Italiana in Algeri* is Rossini’s first full full-fledged comic masterpiece. . . stand[s] out even more clearly when Rossini’s treatment of Anelli’s text is set side by side with Mosca’s, which is long on bustle and charm but short on stylistic self-awareness and formal control.”

It seems that the text of *L’Italiana in Algeri* provided the perfect character, an independent young woman, for Rossini to utilize a favorite tessitura and serve the libretto.

¹⁴¹ Leonella Grasso Caprioli, “Singing Rossini” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rossini*, ed. Emanuele Senici, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 192.

¹⁴² Richard Osborne, *Rossini: His life and works*, p. 6.

¹⁴³ Robert Larsen, ed., *G. Schirmer Opera Anthology: Arias for Mezzo-Soprano*, (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. 1991), p. 9.

Musical and Literary Analysis

Cruda sorte! . . . Già so per practica

Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno!
Questo è il premio di mia fe':
non v'è orror, terror,
nè affanno
pari a quell ch'io provo in me.
Per te solo, o mio Lindoro,
io mi trovo in tal periglio;
da chi spero, oh Dio! consiglio?
Chi conforto me darà?

Qua ci vuol disinvoltura;
non più snami, nè paura:
di coraggio è tempo adesso....
or chi sono si vedrà.

Già so per practica
qual sia l'effetto
d'un sguardo languido,
d'un sospiretto.
So a domar gli uomini come si fa,
sì, so a domar gli uomini come si fa.
Sien dolci o ruvidi,
sien flemma o foco,
son tutti simili a presso a poco.
Tutti la chiedono,
tutti la chiedono,
tutti la bramano
da vaga femmina felicità.
Sì, sì...

Cruel fate! Tyranical love!
This is the reward of my faith:
there is neither horror, terror,
nor anguish
equal to that which I feel in me.
For you alone, oh my Lindoro,
I find myself in such peril;
From who do I hope, oh God, for advice?
Who will give me comfort?

Here deftness is wanted;
no more frenzies or fear.
Now it's time for courage. . . .
now they'll see who I am.

I already know through experience
what may be the effect
of a languid glance,
of a little sigh.
I know how men are tamed,
yes, I know how men are tamed.
Be they gentle or rough,
be they coolness or fire,
they are all the same, more or less.
They all ask for it,
They all ask for it,
they all desire it:
happiness from a lovely woman.
Yes, yes. . . .¹⁴⁴

It is clear, when analyzing this aria, that Rossini wished to strengthen the character of Isabella. The text to this aria is an expansion of Anelli's text and was augmented to employ the needs of the composer. Throughout the opera, Isabella is allowed to use her charm and sexuality as a weapon, but it is probably the clearest in this aria. "What is more, the heroic style is

¹⁴⁴ Robert Larsen, *G. Schirmer Opera Anthology: Arias for Mezzo-Soprano*, Martha Gehart, translator (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. 1991), p. 9.

carefully balanced by much lighter, catlike writing. 'Cruda sorte!' . . . follows heroic posturing with the lightening 'Già so per pratica.'"¹⁴⁵

Musically and poetically, the aria is sectioned into three distinct themes. In the first section, Isabella is remarking on her unfortunate circumstances and is lamenting over her sad fate. The vocal line is fluid and in keeping with legato style singing. The tempo for this section is marked *andante* and there are a variety of sections in which the vocalist is expected to ornament and freely express.

Figure 7-1 "Cruda Sorte...Già so per pratica" mm. 1-3

Andante ISABELLA: Giachino Rossini

Cru - da sor - te! A - mor ti - ran - no! Que - sto è il

In the second section the tempo is quicker, *allegro*, and the vocal phrases are quicker, and sharper. Isabella has decided to remain firm and not be fearful. She and the orchestra are planting their feet, ready to fight.

¹⁴⁵ Osborne, *Rossini: His life and works*, p. 210.

Figure 7-2 "Cruda sorte...Già so per practica" mm. 27-34

Allegro

ff

p

Qua ci vuol di-sin-vol - tu-ra;

ff

In the final section, the vocals are flexible, precise, and fluid. The character of Isabella has reached a state of confidence in her abilities as a woman and is prepared to use her feminine skills to her advantage. In a similar manner, this section is the most demanding of the vocalist, who must traverse quick melismas and diction while maintaining proper vocal balance in keeping with the bel canto technique.

Performance Practice

Rossini composed during a time when the opera industry was almost completely centered on the singer. That, joined with his personal relationships with singers, his mother, his first wife, and his own career as a singer, Rossini was well versed in the bel canto style. Rossini was protective over the voices that would sing for him and took great care in composing for the instrument. He believed that bel canto singing required three elements: “the instrument itself (what he called ‘the Stradivarius’), technical skill, and style (‘taste and feeling’).”¹⁴⁶ Throughout the piece are phrases that require precision and practice. Adopting Rossini’s approach to this aria, the approach to the piece should be clear. Melismas should be taken under tempo to assure

¹⁴⁶ Osborne, *Rossini: His life and works*, p. 13.

that each pitch is being properly sung and then slowly returned to tempo. In keeping with Rossini's thoughts to bel canto singing, vibrato should not be forced or used excessively, but each note should contain color. For a long time, the Italian school of singing was passed down orally from teacher to student, so while it is important to sing what was on the page, there are moments when the singer must consult an expert of the aria. Rossini took great care in writing out exactly what he wanted the performer to sing, but much of the embellishments are those that would have been second nature to performers of the time. This piece requires the vocalist to have mastered the concept of healthy, legato singing. Otherwise the vocal folds will tire quickly and easily. Because of the difficulty of the third section in general, the singer must understand how to pace and recognize when they are forcing their voice to move at a rate that would quickly burn through energy. "Soft, dark timbre; broad range; natural flexibility; expressivity, powerful agility; versatility across different genres,"¹⁴⁷ are descriptors of many Rossini heroines, including Isabella. Therefore, the singer must take care in the study of their arias and have patience in their own progress.

¹⁴⁷ Osborne, *Rossini: His life and works*, p. 210

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