

MASTER'S RECITAL AND PROGRAM NOTES

by

RICHARD ALLEN LOWEN

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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Presents

RICHARD LOWEN, Tenor

Bachelor of Music Education

Assisted by

MARLA LOWEN, PIANIST

JENNIFER EDWARDS, MEZZO SOPRANO

Wednesday, April 2, 1975

All Faiths Chapel

8:00 p.m.

A MASTER'S RECITAL
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Music

PROGRAM

CANTATA, "DALLE CIMERE GROTTI" . . . *Giovanni Legrenzi*
(1626-1690)

AN DIE FERNE GELIEBTE, OP. 98 . . . *Ludwig van Beethoven*
(1770-1827)

Poème d'un Jour, OP. 21 *Gabriel Fauré*
(1845-1924)

Rencontre
Toujours
Adieu

INTERMISSION

CANTICLE II, ABRAHAM AND ISAAC, OP. 51 . . . *Benjamin Britten*
(born 1913)

I. DALLE CIMERE GROTTE

The 17th century solo cantata was influenced by the stylistic and formal developments of the opera of that period. Stylistically, bel canto elements introduced in the opera are reflected in the simple, melodic vocal line of the cantata. Formally, the cantata assumes the alternation of clearly defined sections of recitative and aria, another direct influence of the opera. The cantata soon took the place of the madrigal as the most popular form of vocal chamber music. Eventually this popularity offered a valuable training ground for operatic composers. Experiments with new formal, melodic, and harmonic features appeared first in cantatas before being transferred to operatic arias and recitatives.

The first important composers of solo cantatas were Giacomo Carissimi (1605-1674), and Luigi Rossi (1598-1653). Both composers wrote for the aristocracy in Rome during a time in which the opera, because of religious reasons, was banned from performance. As a substitute, cantatas were produced in great numbers by both composers. Rossi and Carissimi gave the solo cantata its characteristic form of a dramatic or pastoral narrative poem set to a combination of aria, arioso, and recitative, with continuo accompaniment. Early examples of solo cantatas do not follow a strict structure. Some have only single arias, and others have as many as ten sections. But after 1670, the cantata developed a standard structural pattern of two contrasting arias, each preceded by a recitative.

One of the composers important in the development of this structure was Giovanni Legrenzi, born at Clusone, Italy on August 12, 1626. His father was a composer, so it is probable that his earliest musical training was in the home. His serious schooling was first undertaken at Bergamo, and continued later in Venice.


In 1654, Legrenzi was appointed organist at Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo, and three years later he moved to Ferrara as Maestri di Cappella at the Accademia dello Spirito Sancto. Legrenzi left Ferrara in 1672 and moved to Venice where he became the director of the Conservatorio di Mendicanti. Appointed Vice-Maestro at San Marco in 1681, Legrenzi was eventually elevated to Primo Maestro, the post he held at his death in 1690.

During his lifetime Legrenzi was best known as an opera composer. Of a large number of operas composed from 1657 to 1685, only five are still in existence. Il Giustino, written in 1683 in Venice, is perhaps the most famous. Legrenzi's operas are characterized by the use of short arias, which may number as many as seventy-five in a single opera.

Legrenzi was also active in the composition of instrumental music. His numerous collections of church sonatas, published between 1655 and 1682, are important in the development of this form. These sonatas establish a standard structure consisting of allegro fugal movements at the beginning and end, separated by a homophonic movement in a dance-like triple meter.

The secular vocal music by Legrenzi is contained in three volumes. The first volume, Cantate et Canzonette, Op. 12, was published at Bologna in 1676. This collection contains twenty-four compositions, twelve for soprano or tenor, and twelve for alto or bass. The second volume of vocal music, Idee armoniche estese per due e tre voce, Op. 13, was published at

Venice in 1678 and was followed by a publication in the same year of Echi di reverenza Cantate et Canzoni, Lib. II, Op. 14.

The cantata "Dalle Cimere Grotte", is from the first volume. The text, like all those included in this collection, is concerned with the torment of unrequited love. Formally, the cantata is cast into three contrasting arias, each preceded by a recitative. As in Legrenzi's operas, these arias are not long. The first aria, in D minor, is a short ABB form. It uses a dance-like $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, and makes consistent use of the rhythmic pattern . The second aria, in F major, is cast in a strophic form, and utilizes a contrasting duple meter. The final aria, again in triple meter, begins in D minor and modulates to F major. The continuo in all three arias is treated in a manner typical of Legrenzi, with the bass line actually more melodic than the line of the recitative. The bass line of the short ritornelli in the arias often anticipates the melody of the vocal line.

Dalle Cimore Grotte (From the Chimerian Gaves)

Dalle Cimore Grotte sorgev' omai con tenebroso velo la nemica del die; Cintia nel Cielo spargea suoi vaghi argenti, quando in ombra mirai la gradita cagion de miei tormenti. Con volto sereno, con guancie di rose, con labbra vezzose, compartive d'Amor l'aspro veleno; E de miseri Amanti schernia gl'affetti, E si ridea dei pianti. Ma guari non andò si baldanzosa che la faretra ascosa tese Cupido rio, E piagò nel bel sen l'Idolo mio. Onde dal duol traffitta punta da strale aurato nel sembiante adorato, le lacrimanti e vaghe luci fisse, E si cantando disse: "Caro ben, unica spene, mio tesoro per cui moro, ver me vogli più serene le pupille i cari raì. Ne fia mai che si spezzi per me quel dolce nodo, per cui languisco e pur languendo i godo. Nell' albergo del tuo seno, da ricetta vezzosetto a quest' alma che vien meno, lascia il fier rigore. Che s'Amore del mio mal e cagion delle mie pene, io stringo i lacci e baccio le catene." Così Aurilla cantò vers' il stupido Amante, "Merce, pace implero." Ma di giel fatto a suoi canori accenti, sprezzò i sospiri e non curò i lamenti.

I saw the source of my torments, the enemy of day, emerge from the shadow of the Chimerian caves at night. With serene face, graceful eyes and cheeks of roses she jeers at the plight of unhappy lovers and laughs at their complaints. But the secret bow of Cupid wounded my idol in her breast. Overcome by grief and pierced by the golden arrow of Cupid, she fixed her tear-filled and lovely eyes on the face of her adored and said in a singing voice: "Dearest one, my only treasure, turn your eyes toward me. Never let that sweet bond which I long for break. Give this soul who is surrendering, who is losing her proud gaughtiness, the welcome shelter of your breast. If love is the cause of my trouble, I submit to its bonds. Give me mercy, my love, give me peace." Impervious to her words, she scorns her laments.

II. AN DIE FERNE GELIEBTE

The importance of Beethoven in the development of music at the close of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries is apparent in virtually every form with the exception of the solo song. Beethoven's songs, numbering only sixty-six, are a minor part of his total output, and many do not have an opus number. The majority of the songs were written to complete a commission or pay tribute to a patron, and as a result they are generally not as daring or influential as the rest of his works. This does not hold true, however, of the song cycle, An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98, Beethoven's most advanced and influential contribution to song literature.

An die ferne Geliebte consists of six songs, each set in simple strophic form. The notion of combining a group of songs was not new for Beethoven, as many of his songs were published in groups. The Six Sacred Songs by Gellert, Op. 48, and Three Songs, Op. 83, are examples of this grouping.

The six songs of Op. 98, however, represent a new concept of song writing. The separate songs of An die ferne Geliebte are unified not only by a continuous poetic idea, but also by a musical structure which binds the songs into a whole. Transitions in the piano accompaniment link each of the six songs, creating a continuous harmonic movement from the first song to the return of its melody in the final verse of the last song. The return of the original melody brings the musical structure full circle back to the beginning, unifying the six separate parts into one large musical form.

An die ferne Geliebte was written in 1816, toward the end of a period of both personal and musical crisis for Beethoven. Between the years 1812 and 1817, Beethoven's personal life was undergoing many pressures. Financial problems, lawsuits, and the responsibility as guardian to his nephew Karl were occupying much of his time. Furthermore, Beethoven's unsatisfactory relationships with women added to his problems. An die ferne Geliebte was apparently influenced by one of these relationships. In a letter of 1812, he refers to an "immortal beloved" whom he must be content to love from afar. It is quite possible that the song cycle An die ferne Geliebte (To The Distant Beloved) is directed to this same person.

Indeed it is hard not to go one step further and surmise that An die ferne Geliebte refers to a specific woman. Even Thayer remarked that the piece was composed shortly before Beethoven wrote to Ries, 'I found only one, whom I doubtless shall never possess', (May 8, 1816), and not long before he told Grannotasio del Rio that he had been in love hopelessly for five years.¹

Beethoven's musical development during this period was also under great stress. By 1812, he had composed eight of his nine symphonies, all five piano concertos, and a large majority of the piano sonatas and string quartets. After 1812, he composed nothing of importance until An die ferne Geliebte. This was followed by the cello sonatas, Op. 102, and the piano sonata, Op. 101. These sonatas are also experiments in the use of a loose cyclic structure. Although this type of musical organization was abandoned, these experiments led the way for Beethoven's final productive years.

An die ferne Geliebte is dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz, one of the many patrons and friends who influenced Beethoven's life in Vienna.

¹Joseph Kerman, "An die ferne Geliebte", Beethoven Studies, ed. Alan Tyson (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973), p. 130.

Along with Prince Kinsky and Archduke Rudolph, Prince Lobkowitz contributed a yearly annuity of 4000 gulden to Beethoven, thereby allowing him to compose without the restrictions of a court position. After Napoleon's invasion of Austria, the value of Austrian money declined and the Prince fell into financial disaster, making the fulfillment of his obligation to Beethoven impossible. Beethoven attempted to sue the Prince for his share of the income but lost the case. After the legal decision in his favor, Prince Lobkowitz decided to pay his contribution in full and made arrangements for its continuation after his death. In return, Beethoven dedicated many works to the Prince, in recompense for the actions he had taken against him.

The text of An die ferne Geliebte is a cycle of six poems by Alois Isidor Jeitteles (1794-1858). Jeitteles was a young medical student who achieved some prominence as a poet in Vienna around the years 1815-1820. His literary career was encouraged by one of Beethoven's friends, Ignaz Castelli, who published many of Jeitteles' poems in his almanac Salam. The text of the cycle exists only in musical sources. It is possible that Beethoven obtained the poems from the poet as a result of their common friendship with Castelli.

Beethoven's attraction to the Jeitteles poems is two-fold. First, the subject matter of the poems--the yearning for a distant beloved--could be identified with his own longing for the immortal beloved. Secondly, the poetic structure of six separate but closely linked poems suggested a new type of musical structure. The similarities between the first and last poems were decisive in the development of the cyclic form.

An die ferne Geliebte, the first example of the song-cycle form, holds an important place in the history of song. But it also represents one of

Beethoven's experiments in musical form which affected his last great works and therefore influenced the development of romantic tendencies in 19th-century German music.

An die ferne Geliebte (To The Distant Beloved)

I.

Auf dem Hügel sitz' ich, spähend
In das blaue Nebelland,
Nach den fernen Triften sehend,
Wo ich dich, Geliebte, fand.

Weit bin ich von dir geschieden,
Trennend liegen Berg und Tal
Zwischen uns und unserm Frieden,
Unserm Glück und uns'rer Qual.

Ach, den Blick kannst du nicht sehen,
Der zu dir so glühend eilt,
Und die seufzer, sie verwehen
In dem Raume der uns teilt.

Will denn nichts mehr zu dir dringen,
Nichts der Liebe Bote sein?
Singen will ich, Lieder singen,
Die dir klagen meine Pein!

Denn vor Leidesklang entweicht
Jeder Raum und jede Zeit,
Und ein liebend Herz erreicht,
Was ein liebend Herz geweiht!

I.

On the hill I sit, staring
into the blue, misty land,
looking toward the distant pastures
where I found you, my beloved.

I am far away from you,
separating us lie hill and valley,
between us and our peace,
our happiness and our torment.

Ah, you cannot see my eyes
searching so ardently for you,
and my sighs dispersed
into the space that separates us.

Will then nothing any longer reach you,
nothing be a messenger of love?
I will sing you songs
complaining of my agony!

For song effaces
all space and all time,
and a loving heart attains
that to which a loving heart consecrates itself.

II.

Wo die Berge so blau aus dem nebligen Grau
 schauen herein,
 Wo die Sonne verglüht, wo die Wolke umzieht,
 möchte ich sein!
 Dort im ruhigen Tal schweigen Schmerzen und Qual.
 Wo im Gestein
 Still die Primel dort sinnt, weht so leise der Wind,
 möchte ich sein!
 Hin zum sinnigen Wald drangt mich Liebesgewalt,
 innere Peⁱⁿ,
 Ach, mich zö^g's nicht von hier, könn^t'ich, Traute, bei dir
 ewiglich sein!

II.

Where the blue mountains
 look down from the misty gray,
 where the sun ceases to glow, where the cloud encircles,
 there would I be!
 There in the restful valley pain and affliction are still.
 Wherever among the stones
 silently the primrose meditates, wherever the winds stir so
 lightly,
 there would I be!
 To the dreaming forest love's power urges me on,
 sickness of heart,
 ah, I would not stir from here if, dear, I could
 be forever with you!

III.

Leichte Segler in den Höhen,
 und du Bächlein klein und schmal,
 könnt mein Liebchen ihr erspahn,
 grüsst sie mir viel tausendmal.

Seht ihr Wolken sie dann gehen
 sinnend in dem stillen Tal,
 lasst mein Bild vor ihr entstehen
 in dem luft'gen Himmelssaal.

Wird die an den Büschen stehen,
 die nun herbstlich falb und kahl,
 klagt ihr, wie mir ist geschehen,
 klagt ihr, Vöglein, meine Qual!

Stille Weste, bringt im Wehen
 hin zu meiner Herzenswahl
 meine Seufzer, die vergehen
 wie der Sonne letzter Strahl.

Flüstr' ihr zu mein Liebeslehen,
 lass sie, Bächlein klein und schmal,
 treu in deinen Wogen sehen
 meine Tränen ohne Zahl.

III.

Light clouds above,
 and you, brooklet, small and narrow,
 should my love spy you
 greet her for me many thousand times.

Ye clouds, if you see her walking
 thoughtfully in the silent valley,
 let my image arise before her
 in the airy hall of heaven.

Should she stand by the bushes,
 now withered and lifeless in the autumn,
 lament to her of what has happened to me;
 complain to her, little bird, of my torment!

Silent West Wind, as you drift
 yonder to my heart's chosen one,
 bear my sighs, which die
 like the last rays of the sun.

Whisper to her my love's entreaty,
 let her, brooklet small and narrow,
 truly see in your rapids
 my numberless tears.

IV.

Diese Wolken in den Höhen,
 Dieser Vöglein munt'rer Zug
 Werden dich, o Hulðin, sehen.
 Nehmt mich mit im leichten Flug!

Diese Weste werden spielen,
 Scherzend dir um Wang' und Brust,
 In den seid'nen Locken wuhlen.
 Teilt' ich mit euch diese Lust!

Hin zu dir von jenen Hügeln
 Emsig dieses Bächlein eilt.
 Wird ihr Bild sich in dir spiegeln,
 Fließ zurück dann unverweilt!

IV.

These clouds above,
 these birds in happy passage,
 will see you, my goddess.
 Take me with you in gentle flight!

This West Wind will drift
 playfully about your cheek and bosom,
 blow through your silken hair.
 Oh that I could share this pleasure!

Away from that hill to you
 eagerly this brooklet hurries.
 If her image should be reflected in you,
 flow back then without delay!

V.

Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au'
 Die Lüfte, sie wehen so milde, so lau,
 Geschwätzig die Bäche nun rinnen.
 Die Schwalbe, die kehret zum wirtlichen Dach,
 Sie baut sich so emsig ihr brautlich Gemach,
 Die Liebe soll wohnen da drinnen.

Sie bringt sich geschäftig von Kreuz und von Quer,
 Manch' weicheres Stück zu dem Brautbett hieher
 Manch' warmendes Stück für die Kleinen.
 Nun wohnen die Gatten beisammen so treu,
 Was Winter geschieden verband nun der Mai,
 Was liebet, das weiss er zu einen.

Es kehret der Maien, es blühet die Au',
 Die Lüfte, sie wehen so milde, so lau,
 Nur ich kann nicht ziehen von hinnen.
 Wenn alles, was liebet, der Frühling vereint,
 Nur unserer Liebe kein Frühling erscheint,
 Und Tränen sint all ihr Gewinnen.

V.

May comes again, the meadows are in bloom,
 the breezes stir so gently, so warmly,
 chattering, the brooks are now running.
 The swallow returns to the hospitable roof,
 she builds so eagerly her bridal chamber,
 love must dwell in it.

She brings busily from all directions
 many a soft piece here to the bridal bed,
 many a piece to warm the little ones.
 Now the couple live so faithfully together,
 what winter has parted, May binds together;
 whatever is in love, he can unite.

May comes again, the meadows are in bloom,
 the breezes stir so gently, so warmly,
 only I cannot go away from here.
 Though all things in love are united by spring,
 to our love alone no spring appears,
 and tears are its only reward.

VI.

Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,
 Die ich dir, Geliebte, sang,
 Singe sie dann Abends wieder
 Zu der Laute süßem Klang!

Wenn das Dämm'rungröth dann ziehet
 Nach dem stillen blauen See,
 Und sein letzter Strahl vergluht
 Hinter jener Bergeshöh,

Und du singst, was ich gesungen,
 Was mir aus, der vollen Brust
 Ohne Kunstgepräg' erklungen,
 Nur der Sehnsucht sich bewusst.

Dann vor diesen Liedern weichet,
 Was geschieden uns so weit,
 Und ein liebend Herz erreicht,
 Was ein liebend Herz geweiht.

VI.

Take them, then, beloved, these songs,
 which I have sung to you.
 Sing them again in the evening,
 to the sweet sound of the lute!

When the red of twilight moves
 toward the still blue lake,
 and its last ray dies out
 over yonder mountaintop,

and you sing what I have sung,
 what from my full breast
 has artlessly sounded,
 conscious only of its longing.

Then these songs will cause to yield
 that which has kept us so far apart
 and a loving heart attains
 that to which a loving heart consecrates itself.

III. POÈME D'UN JOUR

Gabriel Fauré's place in the history of song depends on his contributions to the development of a new French song form, the melodie. Although Fauré has sometimes been termed the "French Schumann", this statement holds true only in that both these composers, in the art of song writing, are typical of their respective countries. The style of Fauré's more than one hundred songs exemplifies the basic differences between the French melodie and the German lied. Unlike the German, Fauré's songs bear no popular or folk inspiration, they are free from the poetic strophic structure, and they lack the sentimental, uninhibited outpourings of the "Romantic spirit".

Gabriel Fauré was born May 12, 1845 in the small town of Pamiers, France. Unlike the majority of his contemporaries, he did not receive his musical training at the Paris Conservatory but attended the "Ecole de Musique Religieuse et Classique", founded by Louis Niedermeyer in 1853. The unusual training, which included thorough study of Gregorian chant and a method of adding an accompaniment to it, was instrumental in the development of Faure's highly personal and subtle harmonic style. After completing his studies in 1865, he obtained his first professional post as organist in the church of Saint-Sauveur at Fennes. After the resignation of Saint-Saëns in 1877, he became Maître de Chappelle at the Madeliene church in Paris. In 1897 Fauré joined the teaching staff at the Paris Conservatory and was appointed Director of the Conservatory in 1905. He left the

conservatory in 1920 and spent his last years in retirement, continuing to compose until his death, November 4, 1924.

Fauré's songs comprise a large portion of his total output. Song composition did not fall into a particular period of his life but was an important part of his entire career. His earliest songs are dated around 1865, and his last cycle, L'Horizon Chimerique, was written in 1922. There are approximately three periods of Fauré's song composition. The first, from 1865 to 1887, includes settings of various French poets. In the second period, from 1887 to 1906, the songs are all settings of poetry by Paul Verlaine. The final period begins in 1906 and includes four song cycles.

Poème d'un Jour, Op. 21, written in 1881, is a setting of poems by Charles Grandmougin. The three songs form a small triptych. In the first song, "Rencontre", the poet meets a woman and, falling in love with her, wonders if she is going to be the ideal woman he has always pursued in vain. In the second song, "Toujours", he cries out in despair when she speaks of leaving him. But in the last song, "Adieu", the poet is solaced by the fact that even the longest loves are short, so---farewell.

Poeme d'un Jour (Poem of a Day)

I. Rencontre

J'étais triste et pensif quand je t'ai rencontrée,
 Je sens moins aujourd'hui mon obstiné tourment;
 O dis-moi, serais-tu la femme inespérée,
 Et le rêve idéal poursuivi vainement?
 O, passante aux doux yeux, serais-tu donc l'amie
 Qui rendrait le bonheur au poète isolé,
 Et vas-tu rayonner sur mon âme affermie,
 Comme le ciel natal sur un cœur d'exilé!

Ta tristesse sauvage, à la mienne pareille,
 Aime à voir le soleil décliner sur la mer:
 Devant l'immensité ton extase s'éveille,
 Et le charme des soirs à ta belle âme est cher;
 Une mystérieuse et douce sympathie
 Déjà m'enchaîne à toi comme un vivant lien,
 Et mon âme frémit, par l'amour envahie,
 Et mon cœur te chérit sans te connaître bien!

I. Meeting

I was sad and thoughtful when I met you;
 today I feel less my persistent pain.
 O tell me, could you be the un hoped-for woman
 and the ideal dream, vainly pursued?
 O passer-by with the sweet eyes, can you then be the friend
 who will restore happiness to the lonely poet,
 and will you shine upon my steadfast soul
 as the native sky upon an exiled heart!

Your shy sadness, like mine,
 loves to watch the sunset on the sea!
 Faced with immensity, your ecstasy awakens,
 and the charm of the evening is dear to your beautiful soul.
 A mysterious and sweet sympathy
 already binds me to you as with a living tie,
 and my soul trembles, invaded by love,
 and my heart cherishes you without knowing you well!

II. Toujours

Vous me demandez de me taire,
 De fuir loin de vous pour jamais,
 Et de m'en aller, solitaire,
 Sans me rappeler qui j'aimais!

Demandez plutôt aux étoiles
 De tomber dans l'immensité
 A la nuit de perdre ses voiles,
 Au jour de perdre sa clarté!

Demandez à la mer immense
 De dessécher ses vastes flots,
 Et, quand les vents sont en démençe,
 D'apaiser ses sombres sanglots!

Mais n'espérez pas que mon ame
 S'arrache à sas après douleurs
 Et se dépouille de sa flamme
 Comme le printemps de ses fleurs!

II. Forever

You ask me to be quiet,
 and flee from you forever,
 and to go my way alone
 without remembering the one I loved:

Rather ask the stars
 to fall into space,
 the night to lose its veils,
 the day to lose its brightness!

Ask of the huge sea
 to dry its vast waves,
 when the winds are raging,
 to calm their melancholy sobs!

But do not hope that my soul
 can tear itself from its bitter sorrows
 and cast off its flame
 as the spring does its flowers!

III. Adieu

Comme tout meurt vite, la rose
 Déclose,
 Et les frais manteaux diaprés
 Des prés;
 Les longs soupirs, les bien-aimées,
 Fumées!

On voit dans ce conde léger
 Changer;
 Plus vite que flots des grèves,
 Nos rêves,
 Plus vite que le givre en fleurs,
 Nos coeurs!

A vous l'on se croyait fidèle,
 Cruelle,
 Mais Mélas! les plus longs amours
 Sont courts!
 Et je dis en quittant vos charmes,
 Sans larmes,
 Presqu'au moment de mon aveu,
 Adieu!

III. Farewell

How quickly everything dies, the rose
 Uncloses,
 And the fresh colored mantles
 Of the meadows;
 The long sighs, the beloved ones,
 Disappear in smoke!

We see, in this fickle world,
 Change
 Faster than the waves at the shores,
 Our dreams!
 Faster than dew on flowers,
 Our hearts!

One believed in being faithful to you,
 Cruel one,
 But alas, the longest loves
 Are short!
 And I say, leaving your charms,
 Without tears,
 Almost at the moment of my confession,
 Farewell!

IV. CANTICLE II, ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Benjamin Britten is the most widely known and influential of living English composers. In A History of British Music, Percy Young writes: "For practical purposes Benjamin Britten, so far as the world is concerned, is English music. It is certain that no other English composer at any time has so effectively conquered prejudice and gained universal acclaim during his lifetime." The major portion of Britten's successful career has been concerned with the vocal idiom in all its forms, but most importantly the opera and solo song. He has always responded deeply to words and has been concerned with the proper relationship between words and music. "He is not inhibited about words like some composers, but is capable of assessing the different values of the syllable, the word, and the idea behind the word, and knows how to give them a musical gravity of their own."¹ Britten's numerous operas and songs have brought him international recognition and have supplied a catalyst for increased interest in both forms among other English composers.

Benjamin Britten was born on November 22, 1913, at Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. His father was a dentist and his mother was an active amateur singer. Music was an important part of the Britten household, and Benjamin Britten's talents were evidenced at an early age. He began to compose at the age of five. These earliest attempts were simply patterns drawn on the page, with no understanding of their relation to sound, but later attempts

¹Eric Walter White, Benjamin Britten, His Life and Operas, (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 91

produced short "tone-poems" for the piano which depicted occurrences of his homelife. He began studying the piano with a local teacher when he was eight and started lessons on the viola two years later.

Britten's first composition studies were with Frank Bridge in 1927. Bridge's strict and professional attitude had a great influence on Britten. The respect Britten had for Bridge is made clear by Britten's work for string orchestra, "Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge", written in 1937 for the Salzburg Festival.

In 1930, Britten entered the Royal College of Music. Upon Bridge's suggestion, he studied composition with John Ireland and piano with Arthur Benjamin. The years spent at the College were most important in his opportunities to hear music, especially contemporary music. 20th-century composers who influenced Britten's work during these years were Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Berg. He was so impressed with a performance of Berg's Wozzeck that, having received a small traveling scholarship, he decided to journey to Vienna to study with Berg. But this plan did not work out, because the school suggested to his family that Berg's influence would be an immoral one.

Following his departure from school, Britten supported himself by composing for films. From 1935 to 1939 he wrote incidental music for eighteen documentary films, and one feature film. It was while working on one of these projects that Britten first met the poet W. H. Auden. The friendship with Auden proved to be a profitable one, resulting in the collaboration on many works. Britten's first song cycle, On This Island, written in 1937, uses five lyrics by Auden. "There is no doubt that this friendship with Auden had a great effect on Britten... But his valuable and lasting gains were probably a fuller sense of the artist's political

responsibility, a deeper appreciation of the beauties of poetry, and a growing awareness of the aesthetic problems involved in setting of music and words."²

Early in the summer of 1939, Britten made an important decision to leave England and live in the United States. This decision was prompted by the lack of performances of his works in England and by Auden's journey to the United States to escape the political situation in England.

Britten was accompanied on this journey by his friend, Peter Pears. Since 1939, the association with Pears has been one of the most influential aspects in Britten's career. The majority of the song cycles and many opera roles have been written with Pears's unusual voice and artistry specifically in mind.

Britten remained in the United States until March of 1942. After his return to England, he encountered his first operatic success with Peter Grimes, completed in 1945. This highly successful venture into the operatic idiom was not only the first of many, but it gave Britten the opportunity to see the lack of concern for new English opera in his own country. Realizing that this lack of concern could deter his own developments in operatic forms, Britten, along with Pears and other musician friends, formed the English Opera Group in 1946. This organization allowed Britten to experiment with the operatic form and, more importantly, guaranteed performances of his works, which in turn stimulated an awareness of a new tradition in English opera.

Another important aspect of Britten's career was the organization of the Aldeburgh Festival in 1948. The success of the English Opera Group's

²Ibid. , p. 26

performances of Britten's works at other international festivals prompted the formation of an English festival, centered around the production of new English opera. The festival has been highly successful and has grown steadily in scope and size, involving an international program of performers and composers. The Aldeburgh Festival has played an important role in Britten's career, since many of his works have been composed specifically for performance at this yearly event.

As previously stated, Britten's primary output as a composer has been in the field of opera and song. To date, he has written fifteen operas. Among many striking innovations are the use of the smaller scale chamber opera (The Rape of Lucrecia, 1946, The Turn of the Screw, 1954) and the incorporation of opera into the church (Curlew River, 1964, The Burning Fiery Furnace, 1966, The Prodigal Son, 1968).

Benjamin Britten's songs are generally grouped into cycles, which are varied in style and include settings for voice and string orchestra, voice and piano, and voice, horn, and piano. The most unusual of his works for solo voice, however, are three pieces titled "Canticles". As used by Britten, the term does not designate the usual meaning of a liturgical song taken from the bible. Britten gave canticle the personal meaning of an extended song for solo voice, or voices, with piano accompaniment, on religious or quasi-religious texts.

Abraham and Isaac, composed for the English Opera Group's recitals of early 1952, is the second of Britten's three canticles (Canticle I, My Love is Mine, Op. 40, was written in 1947; Canticle III, Still Falls the Rain, Op. 55, was written in 1954). It is a setting for tenor, contralto, and piano of the medieval Chester Miracle Play, depicting the biblical story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac. The setting casts the tenor as

the father, Abraham, and the contralto portrays his son, Isaac. The voice of God is depicted by combining the two voices in a style suggesting medieval organum.

The musical form of Abraham and Isaac relies upon the dramatic structure of the miracle play. The dramatic quality of the work is carried out in an operatic style, using recitative and aria forms, organized similarly to an extended operatic scene. The drama is divided into three major sections; 1) God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, and Abraham's obedience to this command, 2) the confrontation between Isaac and his father, involving Isaac's realization and resignation to his fate, 3) God's interruption of Abraham's sacrifice, and the Envoi, which states the moral of the story. The musical structure is also divided into three major sections. The following outline shows the canticle's musical structure and its relation to the drama:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| I. THE COMMANDMENT | <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em;"></div> | Duet--E ^f major
Recitative--transition
Duet--A major |
| II. THE SACRIFICE | <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em;"></div> | Recitative--transition
Duet--D minor
Recitative--transition
Duet--D ^b major
Recitative--pedal C (D) |
| III. GOD'S INTERVENTION | <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; margin-bottom: 2px;"></div> <div style="border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em;"></div> | Duet--E ^b major
Recitative
Duet--E ^b major (Envoi) |

This three part structure can loosely be considered a sonata form, as the return to the original key also involves a return of the original thematic material. The idea of recapitulation is further carried by using thematic material from the A major duet in the Envoi, but transposed to the tonic, E^b major.

Canticle II, Abraham and Isaac

GOD SPEAKETH: Abraham! My servant Abraham, take Isaac, thy son by name, that thou lovest the best of all, and in sacrifice offer him to me upon that hill there besides thee. Abraham, I will that so it be, for ought that may befall.

ABRAHAM RISETH AND SAITH: My Lord, to Thee is mine intent ever to be obedient. That son that Thou to me hast sent offer I will to Thee, Thy bidding done shall be.

HERE ABRAHAM, TURNING TO HIS SON ISAAC, SAITH: Make thee ready, my dear darling, for we must do a little thing.

HERE ISAAC SPEAKETH TO HIS FATHER, AND TAKETH A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND BEARETH AFTER HIS FATHER: Father, I am all ready.

ABRAHAM: This woode do on thy back it bring, we may no longer abide.

ISAAC: Father, I am all ready.

ABRAHAM: A sword and fire that I will take, for sacrifice behoves me to make; God's bidding will I not forsake, but ever obedient be.

ISAAC: Father, I am all ready to do your bidding most meekely, and to bear this wood full bayn* am I, as you commanded me.

ABRAHAM: Now, Isaac son, go we our way to yonder mount if that we may.

ISAAC: My dear father I will essay to follow you full fain.

ABRAHAM BEING MINDED TO SLAY HIS SON ISAAC, LIFTS UP HIS HANDS, AND SAITH THE FOLLOWING: O! My heart will break in three, to hear thy words I have pitye; as Thou wilt, Lord, so must it be, to Thee I will be bayn. Lay down thy faggot* my own son dear.

ISAAC: All ready father, lo, it is here. But why make you such heavy cheer? Are you anything adread?

ABRAHAM: Ah! Dear God! That me is woe!

ISAAC: Father, if it is your will, where is the beast that we shall kill?

ABRAHAM: Thereof, son, is none upon this hill.

ISAAC: Father, I am full sore afeared to see you bear that drawne sword.

ABRAHAM: Isaac, son, peace, I pray thee, thou breakest my heart even in three.

* Bayn- willing; Faggot- bundle of sticks.

ISAAC: I pray you, father, layn* nothing from me, but tell me what you think.

ABRAHAM: Ah! Isaac, I must thee kill!

ISAAC: Alas! Father is that your will, your owne child for to spill upon this hilles brink? If I have trespassed in any degree, with a yard you may beat me; put up your sword, if your will be, for I am but a child. Would God my mother were here with me! She would kneel nown upon her knee, praying you, father, if it may be, for to save my life.

ABRAHAM: O Isaac, son, to thee I say, God hath commanded me today sacrifice, this is no nay, to make of thy body.

ISAAC: Is it God's will I shall be slain?

ABRAHAM: Yea, son, it is not for to layn.

ISAAC: Father, seeing you muste needs do so, let it pass lightly and over go; kneeling on my knees two, your blessing on me spread.

ABRAHAM: My blessing, dear son, give I thee and thy mother's with heart free; the blessing of the Trinity, my dear son, on thee light. Come hither my child, thou art so sweet, thou must be bound both hands and feet.

ISAAC: Father, do with me as you will, I must obey, and that is skill, Godes commandment to fulfil, for meeds so it must be.

ABRAHAM: Isaac, blessed must thou be.

ISAAC: Father, greet well my brethren ying, and pray my mother of her blessing, I come no more, under her wing, farewell for ever and aye.

ABRAHAM: Farewell, my sweete son of grace!

ISAAC: I pray you, father, turn down my face, for I am sore adread.

ABRAHAM: Lord, full loth were I him to kill!

ISAAC: Ah, mercy, father, why tarry you so? Now, father, I see that I shall die; Almighty God in majesty! My soul I offer unto thee!

ABRAHAM: Jesu! On me have pity, that I have most in mind. To do this deed I am sorrye.

HERE LET ABRAHAM MAKE A SIGN AS THOUGH HE WOULD CUT OFF HIS SON ISAAC'S HEAD WITH HIS SWORD; THEN GOD SPEAKETH: Abraham! My servant dear Abraham! Lay not thy sword in no manner on Isaac, thy dear darling. For thou dreatest me, well wot I, that of thy son has no mercy, to fulfill my bidding.

* Layn- hide.

ABRAHAM RISETH AND SAITH: Ah, Lord of Heav'n and King of bliss, Thy bidding shall be done, iwiss! A horned wether here I see, among the briars tied is he, to Thee offered shall he be anon right in this place. Sacrifice here sent me is, and all, Lord, through Thy grace.

ENVOI

Such obedience grant us, O Lord! Ever to thy most holy word. That in the same we may accord as this Abraham was bayn; and then altogether shall we that worthy king in Heaven see, and dwell with him in great glorie for ever and ever, Amen.

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MASTER'S RECITAL AND PROGRAM NOTES

by

RICHARD ALLEN LOWEN

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

Department of Music

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1975

ABSTRACT

The Master's Report consists of two sections. The first section is a tape recording of a public recital, which includes the following song literature: Cantata, "Dalle Cimere Grotte", by Giovanni Legrenzi (1626-1690), An die ferne Geliebte, Op. 98, by Beethoven (1770-1827), Poème d'un Jour, Op. 21, by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), and Canticle II, Abraham and Isaac, Op. 51, by Benjamin Britten (born 1913).

The second section of the report consists of program notes on the above literature. The program notes include historical and biographical information concerning each selection and its composer. Texts and translations are also included in the notes.