

AN EVOLUTION OF SONG: OPERA, ORATORIO, AND ART SONG

by

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## **Abstract**

This master's report is a discussion of the selections and composers presented on my graduate recital performed in All Faiths Chapel on Thursday, April 28, 2010. This report is also an in-depth look at the history and evolution of opera arias, oratorio, and art songs beginning in the Renaissance period. The first chapter discusses song in the Renaissance period and the origin of opera. Chapter two discusses oratorio and the Baroque period. Chapter three discusses art song and opera arias in the Classical period, with particular emphasis on Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Chapter four discusses art song and opera aria in the Bel Canto style and Romantic period. Chapter four will also include information about the operetta. Chapter five discusses art song and opera aria in the Modern period.

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## **Chapter 1 - The Renaissance: A Birth**

Since the beginning of time man has expressed himself through song. Whether it was a Neanderthal celebrating a successful hunt or a Greek soldier performing a ritual sacrifice, song has been prevalent in human history. There are centuries of music history that can be explored but for the purpose of this paper we will begin at the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church.

### **Christianity and Liturgical Drama**

There has been debate over when the Roman Catholic Church was established; some scholars believe it began in the year 312 with the proclamation from Emperor Constantine that the Roman Empire must be united under one deity. Others believe it began in the year 380 when the Emperor Theodisius issued *De Fide Catolica*, declaring Christianity as the sole religion of the Roman Empire. No matter what the origin, the Roman Catholic Church was responsible for the guidelines and rules of music in worship and society.

Music was produced exclusively for and by the Roman Catholic Church. Secular music was discouraged and in some areas even outlawed. Musicians were raised and trained in the church, devoting their entire lives to the church and to music. Hymns, psalms, and chants were all common musical styles within the church.

As Christianity spread throughout Europe, consistent rules for worship began to take hold. As more churches and cathedrals began to conform to Roman Catholic standards of worship, the music also began to conform to standards set by the Roman Catholic Church. Music was used to aid in worship and eventually came to include “sacre rappresentazioni,” (meaning “sacred representation.”) These were religious plays that presented stories from both the Old and New Testaments. Modeled after mystery plays, which were popular religious plays in the vernacular of the country, music was used as interludes in these productions. Eventually music was added to all parts of the plays and evolved into liturgical dramas: Biblical stories that are set to music. These dramas had no costuming, sets, characters or actors, only singers; however they were highly effective in

transporting listeners into the story. The most popular types of liturgical dramas were those depicting the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ. The music used for these dramas was chant; the music differed from story to story, creating a diverse group of musical dramas. Liturgical drama would later evolve into the oratorio which will be discussed later in this paper.

## **Travelers and Legends**

Outside of the church throughout the Middle Ages (5<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries) to the Renaissance (14<sup>th</sup> century-1600) bands of musicians called “minstrels” or “jongleurs” would travel the countryside, seeking to entertain in exchange for food, shelter, or trade goods. Seen as outsiders, these men and women were often seen as social outcasts, and some were even denied the sacraments of the church, such as Holy Communion. Their songs were secular, often telling of love, bravery, and a love for nation. The performers did not write the music but they would often make up extra verses or instrumental interludes to suit their tastes. In the eleventh century the traveling bands created a fraternity, which was like an early workers union. In later centuries this brotherhood would help to establish many conservatories of music which would help to train more musicians. The skills and talents these educated musicians displayed helped to bring secular music into general popularity.

Offspring to the minstrels were noble performers, some called “troubadours” or “trouweres”, who would create secular music for their respective courts. Some members of these groups were even royalty themselves. Many of these gentlemen wrote and sang their own compositions yet they would not travel outside of their realm or duchy. The topics of these songs would range from morality, to pastoral settings, to love, all unique and full of ingenuity. The last of the trouweres Adam de la Halle (1237?-1288), wrote a musical play called *Jeu de Robin et de Marion* which is considered one of the first examples of an opera, even though it had “no historical connection with the later genre [of opera].”<sup>1</sup> However, his pastoral play had several traits that would be found in opera. It

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<sup>1</sup> Grout and Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 19.



had no narration and the “spoken dialogue is interspersed with a number of short songs or refrains, dances, and some instrumental music.”<sup>2</sup>

During the sixteenth century the madrigal, one of the most popular types of old music, flourished in Italy. Madrigals were often performed at social gatherings for the aristocracy but could also be heard in plays and other dramatic works. Madrigals in Italy were most often performed by amateurs; in 1570 the aristocracy began to hire professional madrigal singers for events. Madrigals were originally written for four voices (four individual singers) but in the mid-sixteenth century five and six voice madrigals became more common.

Most people think that madrigals originated in England but the song form was not introduced to the country until 1588, when Nicholas Yonge (?-1619) translated a collection of Italian madrigals into English in his “Musica transalpina.”<sup>3</sup> Madrigals flourished in England until the early 1600’s when the lute song (solo song performed with lute and viol accompaniment) became popular.

### ***Sumer is i-cumin in***

This song was originally a madrigal for four voices; this song has been arranged into an instrumental number, a polychoral motet, and a fugue for voices. This song can also be performed as a monody, which is a solo voice with one instrument. This tune is attributed to an anonymous composer but the poem is in old English. There are several composers of note during this time including Thomas Morley (1557-1602) who wrote *It was a lover and his lass*, Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623,) John Wilbye (1574-1638,) and John Dowland (1563-1626) who wrote *Come Again*, *Sweet Love* and *In Darkness Let Me Dwell*. For a listening example of *Sumer is i-cumin in*, please listen to Track 01.

Sumer is i-cumin in

lhude sing, cuccu.

Groweth sed and bloweth med

and springth the wde nu.

Summer is coming in

loudly sing, cuckoo.

Grows the seed and blows the wheat

and the woods spring anew.

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<sup>2</sup> Grout and Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 19-20.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

Sing Cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lambe

Luth after calve cu.

Bulluc sterteth, buck avairteth,

lude sing, cuckoo!

Sing cuccu,

wel singeth thu, cuccu

nay swick thu naver nu.

Sing Cuckoo!

The ewe bleats after the lamb

The cow lows to the calf.

The bull struts, the buck gambols,

and loudly sing, cuckoo!

Sing cuckoo,

well you sing, cuckoo

nor cease you ever now.<sup>4</sup>

### **Camerata**

Considered by some historians to be the fathers of opera, the Camerata (literally meaning “those who meet in a chamber”) were a group of poets, musicians, and artists who, starting in the early 1570’s, would meet at the home of Count Giovanni de’ Bardi of Florence (1534-1612.) While there, the group would not only discuss the role of music within drama, but they would also discuss the power of emoting through music. Through these conversations, several different forms of musical drama were born. Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) wrote the first example of “stile rappresentativo” (similar to our modern recitative) with his opera *Dafne*. Incidentally, this was also the first known work set to music from beginning to end. This style would mimic speech including flow, inflection, and syllables. “In this ‘sung speech,’ a singer delivered a recitative melody with an actor’s dramatic and oratorical skills, rendering the dramatic poetry in a clear and comprehensible form, and thus achieving the goal of providing the emotional impact to the text through the support of music.”<sup>5</sup> Other notable members of the Camerata included Ottavio Rinuccini, (1562-1621) a poet who wrote several operas; Giulio Caccini, (1551-1618) who helped set Rinuccini’s *Euridice*; Jacopo Corsi, (1561-1602) who wrote the

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<sup>4</sup> “Sumer is i-cumin in.” *Recmusic website*, (accessed 15 March 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Arnold and Carter, “Emilio de’Cavalieri,” *The Oxford Companion to Music*, (accessed 13 October 2009).

music for Rinuccini's *Dafne*; Emilio De'Cavalieri, (1550-1602) who claimed himself to be the inventor of "stile rappresentativo;" and Gabriello Chiabrera, (1552-1638) who composed *Il rapimento di Cefalo*.

## **The Secular Effect**

During the Renaissance the popularity of secular music grew. The Renaissance courts offered a plethora of entertainment: comedies, tragedies, poetry, music, and dancing. All of these diversions were offered at a variety of events such as banquets, jousting tournaments, festivals, coronations, and other prestigious affairs. Even though these musical offerings did not tell a whole story, they did serve to bring together several forms of entertainment: music, dancing, costumes, etc. This was done in "a single spectacle calculated to appeal equally to the eye, the ear, and the imagination. Scenes of this kind... came into opera very early in the seventeenth century and have remained characteristic of opera ever since."<sup>6</sup>

## **Claudio Monteverdi**

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) was a highly talented young man. He published his first collection of songs *Sacrae cantiunculae* when he was fifteen years old. He was a pupil of Marc'Antonio Ingegneri (1535-1592) who was the Choir Master of Cremona Cathedral. Ingegneri tutored the young Monteverdi in counterpoint, singing, and text-setting. In 1590 or 1591 Monteverdi moved to Mantua to work as a musician for Vincenzo I Gonzago, Duke of Mantua. Monteverdi excelled as a court musician and four of his canzonettas were published at this time. Monteverdi also married the court singer, Claudia Cattaneo, while in the employ of the Duke of Mantua.

Monteverdi continued to rise as a court musician in Mantua and in the early 1600's he had several responsibilities with his position as Maestro della Musica. These included teaching voice and directing a female vocal ensemble. It was at this time that Monteverdi was commissioned to write his opera *L'Orfeo*, which includes the beautiful *Ahi*,

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<sup>6</sup> Grout and Williams, *A Short History of Opera*, 21.

*vista troppo dolce*, for the coronation of Prince Francesco Gonzaga. Monteverdi was to become one of the most popular opera composers of the Renaissance. “He effectively combined the theatrical and compositional techniques of the Renaissance with the new techniques of the ‘stile rappresentativo,’ drawing on his madrigals and dance forms, synthesizing them in a highly theatrical way.”<sup>7</sup>

Monteverdi used the same forms and ideas that the Camerata had developed, yet he took them further. His first triumph in the world of opera was *L’Orfeo*, setting the myth of Orpheus to music. Orpheus, a lyre player who could influence the gods with his song, had been immortalized in music for centuries; other members of the Camerata, Peri and Rinuccini, had written musical dramas about the ill-fated lover. Yet Monteverdi wanted to use his music to convey the story rather than relying on the myth. His aim was for the music to embellish the drama and to bring the myth fully to life.<sup>8</sup>

### ***L’incoronazione di Poppea***

The first performance of *L’incoronazione di Poppea* was produced in Venice in 1642. Monteverdi’s last opera, with the libretto by Giovan Francesco Busenello (1598-1659,) is based on historical incidents chronicled in the Annals of Tacitus, a Roman historian. Set in Rome in 60 A.D. this is the story of Nerone, the Emperor of Rome, and his mistress Poppea. Throughout the opera, Poppea schemes to become Empress of Rome, while Nerone lusts for Poppea even though he is already married. At the end of the opera Poppea and Nerone are indeed married with Poppea becoming crowned as the Empress of Rome. For a listening example of *Pur ti miro, pur ti godo*, please listen to Track 02.

Poppea: Pur ti miro,

I adore you,

Nerone: Pur ti godo,

I embrace you,

Poppea: pur ti stringo,

I desire you,

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<sup>7</sup> Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 410.

<sup>8</sup> Fisher, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses*, 19.

Nerone: pur t'anno,	I enchain you,
Poppea: più non peno,	no more grieving,
Nerone: più non moro,	no more sorrow,
Poppea: o mia vita,	oh my dearest,
Nerone: o mia tesoro.	oh my beloved.
Poppea: Io son tua,	I am yours,
Nerone: Tuo son io,	You are mine,
Poppea: speme mia,	o my love,
Nerone: dillo, di', tu sei pur,	tell me, so, you are mine,
Nerone: l'idol mio,	my idol,
Poppea: tu sei pur	you are mine
Nerone: l'idol mio,	my idol
Poppea: sì mio ben,	yes my love,
Nerone: sì mia vita	yes my dearest
Poppea: sì, mio cor.	yes, my heart. <sup>9</sup>

One of the most beautiful duets of Renaissance opera, *Pur ti miro, pur ti godo* is the final scene of the opera, between Poppea and Nerone on their wedding day. It is ironic that Busenello would end his libretto with the joyous marriage and duet of Poppea and Nerone, when the entire opera is focused on the triumph of greed over morality. The story of Poppea and Nerone ends tragically, with Nerone beating the pregnant Poppea to death and later committing suicide.

Tragedy aside, Monteverdi was not only one of the most influential composers of the Renaissance period; he also led the way for the transition from Renaissance music to Baroque. Monteverdi used large orchestras for his productions, not the smaller ensembles used previously. He experimented with tone color and the power of the orchestra, and he

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<sup>9</sup> Busenello, *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, 115.

even claimed that the string tremolo and pizzicato were his own discoveries. Monteverdi also is credited with helping to bring opera to Venice, making it Italy's capital of opera.

## Venice

Opera moved from Rome to Venice in 1637 with a production of *Andromeda* in the Teatro San Cassino. This was a huge step for opera's popularity as Venice was seen as a place of moral and social freedom; the church was not a controlling factor here, as they were in Rome. Visitors wanted to dress in new fashions and attend extravagant balls, eat exotic foods, and experience the more lavish lifestyles Venice had to offer. Opera, with its grand productions, secular plots, and large theaters ideal for socializing, was the perfect addition to the dream of Venice.

Venetian opera has been credited with introducing one new addition to the spectacle of opera: admission by ticket. In creating admission, opera was no longer the entertainment of just the noble – anyone who could afford admission had access. Wealthy locals would build and contribute to opera houses, creating boxes that could be rented by nobility, or floor space that required a ticket. More people had access to the operas and the number of productions increased to three or four per week. More theaters were built and from the introduction of opera to Venice in 1637 to 1728, one hundred fifty productions were mounted. By the time opera reached its peak in Venice it was the center of activity for those climbing the social ladder. Historical accounts of this period “suggest the audience paid scant attention to what was happening on stage or in the orchestra...the social performance could be at least as important as the musical and theatrical one.”<sup>10</sup> Eventually, attendees would use the first act as a social experience, attend the second act, and leave before the third act.

By the end of the Renaissance period, Italian opera had established the main characteristics that would be prevalent for the next two hundred years. These characteristics were “concentration on solo singing to the detriment of ensembles and instrumental music; the separation of recitative and aria; and the introduction of

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<sup>10</sup> Raeburn, *The Chronicle of Opera*, 12.

distinctive styles and patterns for the arias.”<sup>11</sup> The relationship between text and music was also changing; the words were now an accessory to the music, instead of music being born from the poetry.

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<sup>11</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 278.

## Chapter 2 - The Baroque Period and the Oratorio

Music in the Baroque period (1600-1750) is seen as heavy, highly ornamented, and excessive; all of these are perfect traits for opera at this time. Librettists began to meet the demands of high priced singers by adding more demanding dramatic roles while composers began to write more arias. Arias were vocally demanding, often seen as a mark of a highly talented singer and by the end of the 1670's, there were sixty arias in a majority of the operas written. Opera also moved to Germany, with the help of Italian composers Carlo Pallavicino (1640-1688) and Agostino Steffani (1654-1728).

From 1678 to 1738, opera enjoyed a popular following, yet most librettos were either imitations or direct translations of Venetian poetry. The music also was highly reminiscent of music of both Venice and France. However, Germany created its own version of opera, "sing-spiel," which means "sing-play." Songs were mixed with spoken dialogue and eventually the spoken dialogue evolved into recitative. "When German composers replaced the spoken dialogue with recitative, they adopted wholesale the recitative style of Italian opera. In their arias, however, they were both more eclectic and more independent."<sup>12</sup>

### France

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, opera was a popular art form in every European country but France. Many historians credit King Louis XIV and his love of ballet for the lack of interest in opera. King Louis XIV not only loved ballet but he also participated in it; he was seen as one of the best dancers of his generation. His patronage of ballet influenced opera in France for a century, creating two new traditions for the French opera: ballet as a part of the opera, and the classical French tragedy. It was Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687,) an Italian composer who had moved to France when he was fourteen years old, who was able to combine these distinctive new trends; "After tentative experiments... Jean-Baptiste Lully succeeded in reconciling the demands of drama,

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<sup>12</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 322.



music, and ballet in the new genre of theatrical work, ‘tragédie en musique,’ later named ‘tragédie lyrique.’”<sup>13</sup>

## England

In England, opera earned a modest following, but it did not take hold with the public or composers the way it did in Italy. Staged plays were against the law; plays set to music were considered a concert, so opera was legal. Due to the ban, most plays were considered semi-operas: dramas with a lot of solos, ensembles, choruses, and instrumental music. The only two composers of this time who wrote full operas were John Blow (1649-1708) who wrote *Venus and Adonis*, and Henry Purcell (1659-1695) who wrote *Dido and Aeneas*, which contains the aria *When I am laid in earth*. The Restoration (1660 - 1685) disposed of these bans, so opera was able to flourish in England for a while.

During the Baroque period the general public became dissatisfied with the seriousness of opera, and the noble themes of popular opera were ridiculed. Some composers embraced the scorn that opera seria was receiving and John Christopher Pepusch is perhaps the most prominent of them all. Pepusch wrote *The Beggar’s Opera*, a lampoon on the opera seria, where the characters are not legends, but beggars and vagabonds. “Though the work presumed to be a serious opera, its purpose was totally satirical: to present the antithesis of the noble themes of the opera seria and ridicule them.”<sup>14</sup> Some audiences in England still wanted serious entertainment and the answer was oratorio.

## History of the Oratorio

Oratorio is defined as a composition for solo singers, chorus, and instruments, usually dramatic and on a biblical or religious subject. Oratorios and opera each use recitative, arias, duets, instrumental preludes, and ritornellos. Oratorios included spoken

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<sup>13</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 315.

<sup>14</sup> Fisher, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses*, 25.

narration, while operas would be completely sung. Oratorios were never staged with actors; instead, choruses were used to tell the story. The oratorio was very popular in Rome, where the music was performed in the oratory, the section of the church where the lay members met for sermons and devotional music. Oratorio was also a chance for the masses to be entertained during religious periods of abstinence from music and theatrics. Therefore, the oratorio relied upon its musical brilliance and melodic enticements to draw a crowd. Opera did not begin to take hold in Rome until 1623, and most of those operas were of a religious nature.

Some historians believe that Emilio de' Cavalieri (1550-1602) wrote the first oratorio, *Rappresentazione di Anima, et di Corpo* in 1600. Performed in Rome, the oratorio "was performed in the manner of an opera, albeit with a spiritual theme and an allegorical plot. Much of its music is in the 'speech-song' of the *stile rappresentativo* (as the title has it, 'per recitar cantando'), but there are also madrigalian, strophic, and dance-like songs and simple, effective choruses."<sup>15</sup> De' Cavalieri was not only a famous religious composer, but also a prominent member of the Camerata.

## **Handel and the Oratorio**

There are many successful composers of oratorio to be found in the Baroque period, but perhaps the most successful was George Frederic Handel (1685-1759.) Handel wrote many serious and tragic operas, also called opera seria, including *Rodelinde* and *Giulio Cesare*, which contains the lovely aria *V'adoro pupile*, which was his most famous opera seria. As an answer to the changing attitude of Baroque English audiences, Handel switched from composing opera to composing exceptional oratorios, creating masterpieces such as *Messiah* and *Samson*.

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<sup>15</sup> Fisher, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses*, 17.

### *Messiah: The Quintessential Oratorio*

Handel seemingly perfected the art of English oratorio in the summer of 1741, when he composed *Messiah*, which premiered in 1742. The lyrics for *Messiah* were taken from several books in the Bible, including Isaiah, Haggai, Luke, and John; the Psalms were taken from the Church of England Book of Common Prayer. It tells the story of the birth, the passion, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The thirty-eighth movement in *Messiah* is “How beautiful are the feet,” with text taken from the book of Romans, chapter ten, verse fifteen. A short song of only 24 bars, it is the simplicity of the accompaniment and melodic line that make this song so unique. For a listening example of *How beautiful are the feet* please listen to Track 03.

How beautiful are the feet of them  
that preach the gospel of peace,  
and bring glad tidings of good things!<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Shaw, *Handel Messiah: The New Novello Choral Edition*, 149.

## Chapter 3 - The Classical Period and Mozart

Beginning in 1732, four years after *The Beggar's Opera* debuted, composers in Naples began to imbue their operas with comedic intermezzi and composers “were investing opera buffa with qualities which would allow it to rival and eventually invade the territory occupied by opera seria.”<sup>17</sup> Opera buffa, also known as comic opera, began to really take hold in the mid eighteenth century. Many historians believe this is due to the deteriorating socio-economic societies of many European countries. It is important to point out that it would be only forty years later when England would engage in a war with one of its colonies, and France would be preparing for its own Revolution: the people needed distractions, and opera was the perfect escape for those who could afford it.

Born from the opera buffa are the “intermezzo”, which are short Italian comedic operas that were presented between acts of an opera seria. They are related to the intermezzo, as they are presented between scenes of dramatic works. Many composers would write intermezzo to be presented with their own opera seria. Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) wrote *La serva padrona*, an intermezzo with three characters, strings, and continuo, to be performed between acts of his opera seria, *Il prigionier superbo*. Its performance in 1752 in Paris started the *Querelle des bouffons* (*Quarrel of the comic actors*), which was a war of pamphlets brought on by “long simmering critical opposition to the old-fashioned, state-subsidized French opera.”<sup>18</sup> The French objected to the presence of an Italian opera company in Paris that had earned extraordinary revenue in only two seasons of opera buffa and intermezzi. There were those who supported the Italian import, and those who supported the French operas and were outraged over the money lost to French composers and opera companies. Many composers strayed into the arguments, yet the Italian opera company continued to perform and compete.

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<sup>17</sup> Raeburn, *The Chronicle of Opera*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 442.

In England, the opera buffa and *The Beggar's Opera* opened the way for ballad operas which were operas that consisted of popular tunes, ballads (slow music) and the occasional humorous arias that imitated familiar operatic arias. Ballad operas were written in English; like France, the English wanted their own operas in their own languages. They resented foreign interference which severely reduced the number of operas available to the British public. The only notable English composer in the eighteenth century was Thomas Augustine Arne (1710-1778) who was one of the founder-members of the Society of Music (later to be named the Royal Society of Musicians) and wrote the music for the patriotic *Rule, Britannia*.

In Germany, librettists began to translate the texts of English ballad operas into German, to great success. Soon they began to translate French comic operas as well as ballad operas, but they composed new music for the text. Many of the sing-spiel tunes were to be found in German song collections and over time became folk songs, even though many of them were translations of English or French texts. In northern Germany sing-spiel merged with opera, becoming a regular practice. In southern Germany farce became the new fashion, with exciting music that was influenced by Italian opera buffa. It is important to note that the inclusion of sing-spiel in German opera became an important forerunner of the German-language operas of Wolfgang Mozart (1756-1791.)

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) was a child prodigy in music performing brilliantly on the violin, organ, and piano forte. His father, Leopold Mozart (1719-1787) was a composer and assistant director of the archbishop's chapel in Salzburg. The elder Mozart left his life as composer and took his son and daughter Marianne (also called "Nannerl") on a European tour that showcased their musical talents. By the time he was nine Mozart was able to sightread, improvise fantasias and fugues, and had written his first symphony. Due to his extensive travels as a child, Mozart was exposed to the various musical styles that were popular in Western Europe; he was greatly influenced by J. C. Bach (1735-1782) and Franz J. Haydn (1732-1809) who wrote the art songs *Piercing Eyes* and *She never told her love*.

As Mozart grew, so did his abilities; he eventually left Salzburg for Vienna to be in the employ of Emperor Josef II. During this time in Vienna, Mozart wrote many of his most popular operas; *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, which contains the impressive soprano aria *Welcher Wechsel herrscht in meiner Seele...Traurigkeit ward mir zum Lose*, was performed repeatedly to an adoring public. Mozart wrote several styles of opera popular for his time, including the opera seria, the opera buffa, and the sing-spiel. Mozart's opera seria are not as widely performed as his opera buffa, and for good reason. The opera seria are serious, dramatic operas that focus mostly on ancient gods, a topic which does not resonate well with modern audiences. The most popular Mozart operas are his opera buffa, which include the three classics, *Don Giovanni*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and *Così fan Tutte*.

### ***Un moto di gioja***

Originally from the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro*, many opera companies will opt to not include this song in their productions, which has earned this song the nickname “alternate Susanna aria.” In its place many companies will have Susanna sing *Venite inginocchiatevi*. In Act Two, Susanna, who is betrothed to Figaro, is disguising the page boy Cherubino as a woman, when Susanna sings this song. For a listening example of *Un moto do gioja*, please listen to Track 04.

Un moto di gioja  
mi sento nel petto,  
che annunzia diletto  
in mezzo il timor;

An emotion of joy  
I feel in my heart,  
that announces delight  
amid the fear;

Speriam che in contento  
finisca l'affanno,  
non sempre, non sempre □ tiranno,

Let us hope that contentment  
will end our distress  
not always, are they tyrants,

il fato ed amor, il fato ed amor.

fate and love, fate and love.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Die Zauberflöte***

Mozart was not only accomplished at composing Italian opera, he also composed German operas, including sing-spiel. The first sing-spiel Mozart composed was *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* with libretto by Gottlob Stephanie (1741-1800,) based on a play by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner (1748-1807.) All operas had been written in Italian up to this point; not only because the birth of opera happened in Italy, but because Italian was considered to be the only language refined enough for opera. Mozart had to have the permission of Emperor Josef II in order to write his opera in German.

Sing-spiel, the first style of opera to include speaking, is obviously a precursor to the operetta and musical theatre. The most famous example of sing-spiel is *Die Zauberflöte* with libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder (1751-1812.) This libretto was also in German, and was considered an opera for the masses. It premiered on September 30, 1791; set in ancient Egypt, with large serpents, magical instruments, and mysterious rituals, it was the perfect escape from everyday life. Masonic historians were not pleased however when the opera revealed many secrets and traditions of the order. Some historians claim that Mozart was asked to leave the Masons after the premiere of *Die Zauberflöte*, while others claim that the rumors of Masonic involvement have been greatly exaggerated. One of the most famous selections from this opera is the duet between Papageno and Papagena.

### ***Papageno! Papagena!***

Tamino, a young man, is entrusted with a quest by the Queen of the Night and her three spirits, which can appear as women or young boys: find and rescue Pamina, the Queen's daughter, from the evil Sarastro. With the help of Papageno, the bird catcher, Tamino battles his way to Pamina and her love. At the end of the opera, Papageno laments his loneliness, after which the three ladies return to tell him that his true love is

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<sup>19</sup> "Un moto di gioia." *Recmusic website* (Accessed 12 March 2011).

waiting for him. Papageno sets eyes upon an old woman, who sheds her disguise to reveal herself as Papagena, his true love. Their sprightly love song, “Papageno! Papagena!” has been a favorite of opera listeners for centuries. For a listening example of *Papageno! Papagena!*, please listen to Track 05.

Papageno: Bist du mir nun ganz ergeben?	Are you now completely mine?
Papagena: Nun bin ich dir ganze ergeben.	Now I am completely yours.
Papageno: Nun, so sei mein liebes Weibchen!	Now, be my dear little wife!
Papagena: Nun, so sei mein Herzens täubchen!	Now, be the dove of my heart!

Welche Freude wird das sein	What joy that will be
Wenn die Götter	when the gods
uns bedenken,	shower us with gifts
Unsrer Liebe Kinder schenken,	and bestow children upon us,
So liebe kleine Kinderlein.	dear, sweet little children.

Papageno: Erst einen kleinen Papageno.	First a small Papageno.
Papagena: Dann eine kleinen Papagena.	Then a little Papagena.
Papageno: Dann wieder einen Papageno,	Then again a Papageno,
Papagena: Dann wieder einen Papagena.	Then again a Papagena.

Es ist das höchste der Gefühle,	It is the loftiest of feelings,
wenn viele Papageno	when many Papagenos
der Eltern Sorgen	will be the blessing
warden sein.	of their parents. <sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Papageno-Papagena Duet.” *IPA Source website* (Accessed 22 February 2011).



## Chapter 4 - Bel Canto: A Period

Bel canto was first introduced in seventeenth century Venetian opera, when one would speak of smooth melodies and easy rhythms that appealed to and gratified the singer. This type of vocal writing would influence other composers of vocal and instrumental music and would be prevalent throughout Europe, beginning in the Baroque period. When one thinks of the Bel Canto period of music, four composers are drawn to mind: Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) who wrote *La pastorella delle Alpi*; Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) whose opera *Don Pasquale* contains the playful aria *So anch'io la virtu magica*; Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835); and Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) who wrote *Perduta ho la pace*. For the purpose of my paper, I am using Bel Canto as a way to describe the music that was written during the popularity of Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi.

### Bel Canto Opera

Bel Canto Opera, an Italian practice, is light with a vocal range that consists of perfect legato production and flexible delivery. Bel Canto opera is focused upon the solo singer and on the melodic line; in short, it is focused upon beautiful singing; this is evidenced in Verdi's *Aida* and Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. Bel Canto is the opposite of the German opera practices of the time, in which the music was heavier and more speech-inflected. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) was outspoken about the vapid spirit of Bel Canto Opera, claiming that it was more important for the music to draw upon the spirit of expression.<sup>21</sup> Bel Canto opera does not rely heavily upon the orchestra; "there is little orchestral color and almost no counterpoint. The orchestra merely provides a simple harmonic support for the soaring, sometime divinely beautiful, lines of the voice."<sup>22</sup> One of the most beloved Bel Canto arias *Il dolce suono...Sorge il tremendo fantasm...Spargi d'amaro pianto* is from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Soprano Dame Joan

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<sup>21</sup> Harris and Jander, "Bel Canto," *Grove Music Online* (Accessed 22 March 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Wright, *Listening to Music, Third Edition*, 279.

Sutherland would often perform this haunting aria as an encore at her performances, even if it was a different opera!

## **Bel Canto Song**

The Italian composers of the Bel Canto period all excelled at composing operas as well as *de camera*, also called *composizioni da camera*, which means art song or music for the chamber.<sup>23</sup> *De Camera* were composed for amateur singers to perform in the home and salon. Many of the songs have operatic elements, such as cadenzas and embellishments. *De Camera* were created for a specific setting and therefore there was not much deep thought given to the connection between the music and the poetry.

## **Vincenzo Bellini**

Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835) was gifted in music from an early age, ably playing the piano by age five. Bellini began to write music when he was six and began to study composition when he was seven. Bellini won a scholarship to the Real Collegio di Musica in Naples when he was eighteen. In 1825, Bellini graduated and was commissioned to write an opera for the school.<sup>24</sup>

Many know that Vincenzo Bellini was a prolific opera composer but he was also a master of composing art songs. Bellini preferred his operas, all ten of them, to be serious and full of passion and action; he was adept at creating *opera semiseria* (a serious plot combined with Romantic scenery and Romantic sentiments.)<sup>25</sup> Bellini's songs are highly expressive, combining the text and music to create songs that utilize the expressiveness of the voice while clearly setting the text. Bellini endlessly worked towards expressing the words in as clear a manner as possible, and preferred to explore the dramatic potential of a melody before writing harmonies or setting the text.

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<sup>23</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Music, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 604.

<sup>24</sup> Smart, et al., "Vincenzo Bellini," *Oxford Music Online* (Accessed 25 March 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Music, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 607.

Bellini wrote the majority of his songs over a span of fifteen years, which was the same time in which he was composing his operas. There are many similarities between his operas and songs, with *La ricordanza* mirroring many of the thematic elements found in *I Puritani*.<sup>26</sup> Yet Bellini also succeeded in recreating the melody as a means of communication by exploring the effect of pauses, changing rhythms, and using the voice in a more speech-like manner.<sup>27</sup> Bellini was not inclined to use narration in his songs but the stories of love lost, love found, and love longed for. For a listening example of *La ricordanza*, please listen to Track 06.

Era la notte, e presso di Colei  
 Che sola al cor mi giunse  
 e vi stà sola,  
 Con quel pianger  
 che rompe la parola,  
 Io pregava mercede  
 a' martir miei.

It was night, and to Her  
 who alone reaches my heart  
 and there remains,  
 in faltering speech  
 interrupted by my sobbing,  
 I begged her to  
 take pity on my suffering.

Quand'Ella dechinando  
 giocchi bei,  
 Disse (e il membrarlo  
 sol da me invola):  
 "Ponmi al cor la tua destra,  
 e ti consola;  
 Ch'io amo  
 e te sol amo intender dei."

Then She, lowering her  
 beautiful eyes,  
 said (and just the memory  
 of it uplifts me):  
 "Place your right hand over my heart  
 and be comforted;"  
 You must understand that I love you  
 and you alone."

Poi fatta per amor,  
 tremante e bianca,  
 In atto soavissimo mi pose  
 La bella faccia solla  
 spalla manca.

Then, overcome with love,  
 trembling and pale,  
 in the most gentle way she rested  
 her beautiful face on my  
 left shoulder.

Se dopo il dolce assai  
 più duol l'amaro;  
 Se per me...nullo istante...  
 a quell'rispose...  
 Ah! Quant'era in  
 quell'ora il morir caro!

Since after sweetness  
 bitterness hurts even more,  
 if to me...in that instant...  
 she had answered nothing...  
 Ah! How dear death then  
 would have been to me!<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Battaglia, *Vincenzo Bellini: Conzoni Per Voce E Pianoforte, Voce acuta*, 95.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

## Chapter 5 - The Romantic Period – The Return of Nationalism

In the eighteenth century Nationalism saw a necessary return; works which would have been written in Latin were now written in the vernacular. Resistance to Italian influence led Handel to abandon the language and begin composing in his adopted language, English. The Napoleonic Campaigns (1796-1809) saw a move away from monarchies and tyrants, with revolutions springing up in various regions of France. Italy itself was not a recognized country (this would not occur until 1870) but consisted of Spanish rule, Papal rule, Hapsburg rule, and French rule.<sup>29</sup>

Nationalism was not a new idea by any means but in the late 1800's, Europe was beginning to experience increasing social discontent and marked tension between countries, which would eventually culminate in World War I. These changes in the world led to changes in the arts; music became more experimental, to the chagrin of audiences. Composers began to break out of the traditions of tonality that had ruled the Classical period, thus ushering in the renewal of Nationalism.

The beginnings of the return of Nationalism can be attributed to Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) who abhorred the effects of foreign music, particularly those of German composers.<sup>30</sup> Verdi wrote many of his early operas to include choruses that were a rallying cry for his Italian compatriots to unite; this period of time in Italian history is called the “Risorgimento” or “national rebirth.”<sup>31</sup>

### Germany

Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) whose opera *Der Freischütz* contains the aria *Und ob die Wolke sie verhülle* was one of the first German composers to begin using what we now define as characteristics of German Romantic opera: opera plots which are based upon medieval history, myths, and fairy tales. Characters can be human or supernatural, with settings in fantastical locations just as likely as a setting in a humble

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<sup>29</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 645.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 617.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 617.

village. There is a consistent triumph of good over evil, with characters experiencing tragic or heroic changes in order to persevere. The music of German Romantic opera included folk tunes, more chromatic harmonies, changes in orchestral color or sound to represent changes in the story, and emphasis on inner voices of music instead of just the melody.<sup>32</sup>

Germany also introduced the world to Lieder or German art song. Notable German Lied composers of this time include Franz Schubert (1797-1828) who wrote *Gretchen am Spinnrade*; Robert Schumann (1810-1856) who wrote *Mondnacht*; Clara Schumann (1819-1896) who wrote *Liebst du um Schönheit*; and Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) who wrote *Vergebliches Ständchen*. Lieder were easily accessible to the general public as the songs were composed for a singer and a piano. Those with a piano in their home or salon could gather their friends for concerts; sometimes the composers themselves, such as Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805-1847) would perform their own compositions. The same Romantic themes of German opera are found in Lieder: myths and fairy tales, but also themes of death, the loss of love, and Nature.

## Russia

Up until the nineteenth century many of the Russian traditions in music had been imported from France, Germany, and Italy. Mikhail Glinka (1804-1875) was the first Russian composer to be recognized by both Russian and European composers as an authentic ethnic voice. In 1836 Glinka composed the highly patriotic *Zhizn za tsarya* (*A Life for the Tzar*), an opera that featured Russian folk tunes, and popular Russian morals and sayings. Alexander Dargomizhsky (1813-1869) furthered the Russian characteristics in his opera *Rusalka*, which premiered in 1856; Dargomizhsky's music sought to imitate the inflection of Russian speech. Piotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) was a Russian native but did not actively compose Russian music. Tchaikovsky did however write two operas that are quintessentially Russian: *Eugene Onegin* (1879) which tells the story of love and loss amongst the Russian gentry and contains the aria *Let me die, but first...*

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<sup>32</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, 618.

which is also called *The Letter Aria*; and *The Queen of Spades* (1890) which contains the aria *Why These Tears* and brings to life the Russian legend Catherine the Great.

In Russia, five composers came together in a group known as “moguchaya kuchka” or “The Mighty Five;” Alexander Borodin (1833-1887,) Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) who wrote the song cycle *The Nursery*, Mily Balakirev (1837-1910,) César Cui (1835-1918,) and Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908) who wrote *Noch’*. Of these five men, only Balakirev was formally trained as a composer, yet they all felt estranged from the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which was run by Germanic dogmatist Antonin Rubenstein (1829-1894.) All five incorporated Russian folksongs, folk polyphony, and modal and tonal scales into their music.<sup>33</sup>

## France

In 1871, the National Society for French Music was founded; its purpose was to expose the country to music by French composers. Consequently, the amount of symphonic and chamber music increased dramatically.<sup>34</sup> Another advance in French music was the founding of the Schola Cantorum, a school that offered extensive studies in music history. There are three facets of French music that were created during this time. The first was the cosmopolitan tradition. César Franck (1822-1890) who wrote *Nocturne*, Vincent D’Indy (1851-1931,) and Ernest Chausson (1855-1899) who wrote *Les Papillons* were all composers of note for this tradition. The second was the French tradition. Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) and Jules Massenet (1842-1912) composed music that was regarded as a sonorous form rather than an expression.<sup>35</sup> The third, which was to come later, was led by Claude Debussy (1862-1918) who wrote *Beau Soir*; this tradition branched into new areas of tonality. One of the prominent composers of the French tradition was Gabriel Fauré.

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<sup>33</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 648.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 660.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 661.

## Gabriel Fauré

Gabriel Urbain Fauré (1845-1924) was a Romantic composer who was a student of Camille Saint-Saëns while at the Ecole Niedermeyer, as well as an organ player at many churches throughout Paris. In 1897, Fauré became a teacher at the Paris Conservatoire where his students included notable composers Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) and George Enescu (1881-1955.) Fauré was one of the founders of the aforementioned National Society for French Music, along with becoming the first president of the Independent Musical Society.

Fauré wrote in many genre's, including stage works, orchestral works, church music, and chamber music. Fauré's vocal music has made a lasting impression upon the idea of Romantic songs; "Fauré is a composer of major importance, capturing in his settings the spirit of his time, the mood of nostalgic yearning for the unattainable."<sup>36</sup> Fauré had an amazing number of songs, creating 100 *mélodies* that had a more expansive range of emotion and more complex musical textures than earlier French melodies.<sup>37</sup>

The melodies of Fauré can be broken into three distinct periods in his life. The first period (1860-1865) was his Early Style. Parnassian poetry was used for the majority of the texts and his *mélodies* are full of the "tuneful sentimentality"<sup>38</sup> of French song of that time. The Middle Style (1880-1904) contains *Clair de lune*. Fauré continued to use Parnassian poetry but he also discovered poet Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) who wrote the poem for *Clair de lune* along with *La Bonne chanson* and *Cinq mélodies de Venise*. Fauré's second period songs included an increase in modality, increasingly delicate harmonies, motives used as bridges within the music, and much more expression. The third period of Fauré's song is called the Late Style (1906-1922.) During this period, Fauré composed his opera *Pénélope* and his songs were more harmonically complex. Fauré was slowly going deaf at this time and many of his songs are written in the middle range for voice.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> "Gabriel Fauré." *Naxos Music Database* (Accessed 2 March 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 180.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

## *Clair de lune, Op. 46, No. 2*

This was the first poem of Paul Verlaine's that Fauré set to music. Fauré used the beautiful poem to create extensive text painting: "The last vocal phrase 'parmi les marbres' captures the 'jets d'eau' with a graceful arching shape that rises, then falls."<sup>40</sup> Fauré created a duet for the piano and voice with this song by writing a distinctive melody that is heard only in the piano line while weaving in the vocal line with its own separate yet cohesive melody. Many notable composers including Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) and Emile Vuillermoz (1878-1960) claim this to be one of the most beautiful French songs ever written. For a listening example of *Clair de lune*, please listen to Track 07.

Votre âme est un paysage choisi	Your soul is a chosen landscape
Que vont charmant masques	charmed by masquers
et bergamasques	and revellers
Jouant du luth et dansant	playing the lute and dancing
et quasi Tristes	and almost sad
sous leurs déguisements fantasques.	beneath their fanciful disguises.

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur	Even while singing in a minor key
L'amour vainqueur	of victorious love
et la vie opportune,	and fortunate living,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur Bonheur	they do not believe in their happiness
Et leur chanson se mêle	and their song mingles
au clair de lune,	with the moonlight,

Au calme clair de lune	the calm moonlight
triste et beau,	sad and beautiful,
Qui fait rêver les oiseaux	which sets the birds dreaming
dans les arbres	in the trees

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<sup>40</sup> Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 187.



Et sangloter d'extase  
les jets d'eau,  
Les grands jets d'eau svelte  
parmi les marbres.

and makes the fountains sob  
with ecstasy,  
the tall and slender fountains  
among the marble statues.<sup>41</sup>

## England

England had not enjoyed an internationally recognized composer in over two decades before Edward Elgar (1857-1934.)<sup>42</sup> But Elgar, who wrote *Jesus, Meek and Lowly*, did not compose music with a nationalistic flavor or include folk songs in his music. It was not until Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), with his *Norfolk Rhapsodies* and art song *Silent Noon*, and Cecil Sharp (1859-1924) with his folksong collections, did England begin to experience the nationalism that other European countries were making a common practice. A pair of British musicians, a composer and a librettist, would bring English sensibilities, folk tunes, and the infamously dry British humor to the world stage: Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan.

## Gilbert and Sullivan

Composer Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) and librettist Sir William S. Gilbert (1836-1911) wrote operas that exhibit an exuberant sense of English Nationalism. The Royal Navy is prominent in *HMS Pinafore*; the pirates in *The Pirates of Penzance* yield in the name of Queen Victoria; *Iolanthe* makes jest, yet educates, of the British government and law.

Sullivan received encouragement from his father, bandmaster Thomas Sullivan. In 1854, he became a chorister in the Royal Chapel, where he studied music with Reverend Thomas Helmore. In 1855 he published the sacred song "O Israel" and in 1856 he received the 1<sup>st</sup> Mendelssohn Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London. Sullivan also studied at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1858-1861. In 1866, Sullivan was

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<sup>41</sup> "Clair de lune." *IPA Source website* (Accessed 22 February 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Grout and Palisca, *A History of Music, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, 659.

appointed a professor at the Royal Academy of Music. In 1875, Sullivan published his opera *Trial by Jury*, the first collaboration between him and Gilbert. Sullivan was not only a composer – he also conducted the London Philharmonic Society from 1885 to 1887; received a Doctorates of Music from Cambridge University in 1876; and was knighted by Queen Victoria in 1883.<sup>43</sup>

Gilbert was a successful playwright as well as librettist. Unfortunately his plays, including his most famous *Pygmalion and Galatea*, were overshadowed by his comic operettas written with Sullivan. Gilbert also collaborated with other composers; his most successful collaboration was with Alfred Cellier (1844-1891) on their opera *The Mountebanks*.<sup>44</sup>

### ***The Pirates of Penzance***

Also known as “The Slave of Duty” this comic operetta premiered in America in 1879 and in England in 1880, both to rave reviews. Frederic, a young pirate, sets out on his own to discover his destiny. While on his journeys, he comes across Mabel, a young Victorian lady, and her sisters. The young ladies have recently moved to the island with their father, the Major General. Frederic, upon seeing Mabel, is quite taken with her and her with him. In this small scene for my recital, the sisters of Mabel, led by Edith and Kate, are spying upon Frederic and Mabel, while singing “What ought we to do.” Immediately following their spying, the sisters begin a patter song, “How beautifully blue the sky,” in which they are commenting on the weather but still spying upon Frederic and Mabel. Frederic and Mabel believe that they are alone and begin to sing lovingly to each other, only to be cut off every few moments by the spying sisters. For a listening example of *What ought we to do/ How beautifully blue the sky*, please listen to Track 08.

Edith: What ought we to do, gentle sisters, say?

Propriety we know, says we ought to stay.

While sympathy exclaims, “Free them from your tether

Play at other games-leave them here together.”

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<sup>43</sup> Kuhn, *Baker’s Dictionary of Opera*, 787.

<sup>44</sup> Orrey, *The Encyclopedia of Opera*, 144.

Kate: Her case may any day, Be yours, my dear, or mine.  
Let her make her hay while the sun doth shine.  
Let us compromise (our hearts are not of leather):  
Let us shut our eyes and talk about the weather.

Chorus: Yes, yes, let's talk about the weather.  
How beautifully blue the sky, The glass is rising very high,  
Continue fine I hope it may, and yet it rained just yesterday.  
Tomorrow it may pour again (I hear the country wants some rain)  
Yet people say, I know not why, that we shall have a warm July.

Mabel: Did ever maiden wake from dream of homely duty  
To find her daylight break with such exceeding beauty?  
Did ever maiden close her eyes on waking sadness  
To dream of such exceeding gladness?

Frederic: Ah yes, ah yes! This is exceeding gladness!  
Did ever pirate roll his soul in guilty dreaming  
And wake to find that soul with peace and virtue beaming?<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance: or The Slave of Duty*, 57.

## Chapter 6 - The Modern Period – After World War I

World War I was a catalyst in international history. It involved all of the world's great military powers, which consisted of two sides: The Allies and the Central Powers. With this war came a broader understanding of the world and new trends in music

### Trends in Europe

In Germany, the first composer to emerge after World War I was Paul Hindemith (1895-1963.) Hindemith, a violinist and composer, broke away from tradition and became known as one of the most radical composers in Germany's contemporary musical society.<sup>46</sup> In Russia, World War I and the October Revolution of 1917, which effectively ended the Tsarist regime, was forming as a new country: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) While some Russian composers left the country, such as Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) and Sergey Rakhmaninov (1873-1943), others remained in a new environment of artistic development. Alexandr Mosolov (1900-1973) composed a short symphonic episode called *The Iron Foundry*, in which the sounds and images of the modern Russian factory were represented. Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953) considered himself a classicist who was born in an expressive age.<sup>47</sup>

In England, post-World War I music was dominated by composers such as Vaughan Williams. In the 1920's, William Walton become the new voice of English composition. Walton did not follow the nationalist path of his predecessors but followed the compositional path of Prokofiev. Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) and Michael Tippett (1905) were the leading composers in the 1930's; their compositions have retained their importance for decades as the dominated the English music scene for years after World War II.

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<sup>46</sup> Morgan, *Twentieth- Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 222.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

## Trends in the United States

After World War I, the United States saw an increase in composers who were professionally trained yet maintained a distinctly American flavor in their music. A vast majority of prolific American composers studied in Europe with Nadia Boulanger, who encouraged the growth of American music. Aaron Copland (1900-1990) and Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) are two of the composers who studied with Boulanger. These American composers were also considered “internationalists”<sup>48</sup> as their music contained an American flavor and a mastery of the European traditions, following those of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Berg.

A distinctly American tradition was explored in the 1920's: jazz. Many composers did not intentionally use folk music in their jazz compositions. As Aaron Copland once said, “the focus was upon more ‘universal things.’”<sup>49</sup> The 1930's brought the Great Depression and the focus was placed upon a strong, unified American sound within music. Composers sought to create music that could be easily accessible to the large American public. The 1940's and World War II increased the need for American music, such as Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* and Marc Blitzstein's (1905-1964) *The Cradle Will Rock*.

Americans also began to experiment with music and the forerunner of these experiments was Charles Ives (1874-1954.) Ives, who is seen by some historians as the first distinct American composer, was considered too advanced for his times and did not receive recognition for his work until at least twenty years after his retirement from composing. Ives is credited with helping to bring polytonality and cluster chords to the American public.

Other prestigious American composers include Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) who was a composers of musical theater, opera, operetta, and songs. Ned Rorem (1923)

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<sup>48</sup> Morgan, *Twentieth- Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 284.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

is considered to be America's most prolific song composer.<sup>50</sup> Both Bernstein and Rorem paved the way for another great American composer: Dominick Argento.

### **Dominick Argento**

Dominick Argento was born in 1927 and is considered one of America's premier composers. He has received several awards for his lyric operas, including two Guggenheim grants, three National Endowment for the Arts grants, and a Pulitzer Prize for his opera *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*.<sup>51</sup> Argento has continued to use conventional operatic fashion for his operas even though modern trends in music are leaning towards the detached and parodistic style of the time.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Spring***

This song is part of the popular song cycle *Six Elizabethan Songs*, which contains poetry by different Elizabethan poets. Argento himself modeled the accompaniment for this cycle after English composer John Dowland (1563-1626.)<sup>53</sup> The poetry for *Spring* comes from English poet Thomas Nash (1567-1601.) For a listening example of *Spring*, please listen to Track 09.

Spring, the sweet Spring,  
is the year's pleasant king:  
Then blooms each thing,  
then maids dance in a ring,

Cold doth not sting,

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<sup>50</sup> Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 298.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>52</sup> Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*, 450.

<sup>53</sup> Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song and Literature*, 315.

the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, puwe,  
towitta woo!

The palm and may  
make country houses gay,  
Lambs frisk and play,  
the shepherd pipes all day

And we hear ay birds  
tune this merry lay,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, puwe,  
towitta woo!

The fields breathe sweet,  
the daises kiss our feet,  
Young lovers meet,  
old wives a-sunning sit,

In every street,  
these tunes our ears do greet,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug , puwe,  
toowitta woo!

Spring!  
The sweet Spring!<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Argento, *Six Elizabethan Songs*, 2.

## **Kirke Mechem**

Kirke Mechem (b. 1925) is an American composer, conductor, and lecturer in music.<sup>55</sup> Mechem attended Stanford University where he studied with Harold Schmidt, Leonard Ratner, and Sandor Salgo. He received his Masters from Harvard University where he studied with Walter Piston, Randall Thompson, and A. Tillman Merritt. Mechem was director of music at Menlo College in California from 1953 to 1956 and a teacher and conductor at Stanford University at the same time. Mechem worked in Vienna, Austria from 1956 to 1957 and 1961 to 1963. From 1964 to 1972, Mechem was composer-in-residence at the University of San Francisco's Lone Mountain College. Mechem is internationally known as a composer that "adopts a candidly euphonious method of composition, not shirking resolvable dissonances and circumtonal patterns, but faithfully observing basic tonality."<sup>56</sup> Mechem has written two operas: *Tartuffe* and *John Brown*.

### ***Fair Robin I love***

In this opera, based on Moliere's play *Tartuffe* (1664) Tartuffe, a fraud, has ingratiated himself with the pious Orgon family. Mariane, Orgon's somewhat naïve daughter, is concerned about her love life. Dorine, Mariane's maid, uses this aria to tell her mistress how to love a man: out of sight, out of mind! For a listening example of *Fair Robin I love*, please listen to Track 10.

Listen, Mariane,  
Here's an old song  
About that kind of man,  
And what to do when he's away,  
It's your lesson for today.

Fair Robin I love and hourly I die,

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<sup>55</sup> Kuhn, *Baker's Dictionary of Opera*, 508.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.



But not for a lip, nor a languishing eye;  
He's fickle and false, and there we agree,  
For I am as false and as fickle as he.

We neither believe what either can say;  
And neither believing, we neither betray.  
'Tis civil to swear and say things, of course;  
We mean not the taking for better or worse.  
When present we love, when absent agree:  
I think not of Robin, nor Robin of me.  
The legend of love no couple can find,  
So easy to part or so easily joined.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Larsen, *Arias for Soprano*, 199.

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