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## James Rolfe's Vocal Chamber Music: A Performance Analysis and Interpretation

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## **Abstract**

This study examines three vocal chamber works by Canadian composer James Rolfe (b. 1961). Rolfe's vocal chamber music is examined through analysis of text setting, melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic components of his compositional style in vocal writing. Specific performance requirements and vocal considerations of each selected work are then provided.

This study demonstrates Rolfe's substantial contributions to Canadian vocal chamber music and provides specific information to guide vocalists and educators through the process of learning and performing this music; highlighting his specific contributions to the genre.

The goal of this research is to increase awareness of Rolfe's vocal chamber music, both from an analytic and performance viewpoint. This exploration seeks to contribute to information of an important Canadian composer and foster performances of Canadian vocal chamber music, and spur further research and performances of this music.

## **Keywords**

James Rolfe, Canadian Composer, Canadian Vocal Chamber Music, Singing, Analysis, Twenty-first Century Music, Contemporary Classical Music, Vocalist, Performance Guide, Canada, Ontario, Toronto, Walt Whitman, Arthur Rimbaud, Simon & Garfunkel, Public Enemy

## **Summary for Lay Audience**

This study examines three vocal chamber works by Canadian composer James Rolfe (b. 1961). Vocal chamber music is a form of music composed for a small group of instrumentalists and vocalists. Rolfe's vocal chamber music is examined through an analysis of musical and textural aspects to provide performers information of musical interpretation and musical technique.

This study demonstrates Rolfe's substantial contributions to Canadian vocal chamber music and provides specific information to guide vocalists and musical educators through the process of learning and performing this music; highlighting Rolfe's specific contributions to the genre.

This exploration seeks to contribute to information of an important Canadian composer and foster performances of Canadian vocal chamber music, and spur further research and performances of this music.

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## Preface

When I first decided to pursue a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree, I knew I wanted to focus my interest on Canadian music. Originally, I had planned to research and write about Canadian opera. However, in my second year of study I discovered James Rolfe's *Six Songs for Soprano and String Quartet* and knew immediately that I needed to shift my research focus with the intention of sharing my love of his beautiful music with other singers.

For my own performance events, as part of the Doctoral program, I included James Rolfe's *Six Songs for Soprano and String Quartet*, *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage*, and *Phrases* in my repertoire. Both as a performer and a listener, I enjoy Rolfe's music. As with my listening and performing experiences, the analysis of the three selected works consistently kept offering new material of interest at each stage of the study.

Studying his music, as well as other living Canadian composers' works, has enhanced my understanding of Rolfe's music, and I hope that this study will inspire readers and other performers to explore his entire output as he has written a large body of vocal repertoire.

## Chapter One: Introduction

In Canada, vocalists begin their studies, through high school<sup>1</sup> and often through undergraduate studies, learning art song, oratorio, and operatic repertoire as their musical foundation. But beyond these genres, a vast volume of repertoire exists for vocal chamber music. However, there is a relative lack of literature on vocal chamber music, in particular, new Canadian vocal chamber works. Because of this, selecting chamber ensemble repertoire by Canadian composers can be challenging for a singer. While chamber music organizations in Canada<sup>2</sup> perform new Canadian chamber works, the genre has received little attention in terms of serious academic inquiry unless carried out by the composer.

Prominent Canadian composers John Beckwith (b.1927) and R. Murray Schafer (b.1933) have contributed to the study of Canadian vocal chamber music by publishing information about their own works (see Literature Review below). These resources provide insight into the trajectory of the genre and supply supporting information about the compositional techniques of these two composers preceding 1990. However, within the past twenty years, many professional Canadian composers have been actively composing and deserve recognition for their vocal chamber music. Aside from the

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<sup>1</sup> As a prerequisite to undergraduate voice programs in Canada, students are required to audition with art songs and opera arias selected from or equivalent to the grade 8 to 10 repertoire found in the Royal Conservatory of Music syllabus. [https://files.rcmusic.com/sites/default/files/files/S35\\_Voice%20Syllabus\\_2013%20online\\_final\\_SECURED.pdf](https://files.rcmusic.com/sites/default/files/files/S35_Voice%20Syllabus_2013%20online_final_SECURED.pdf) (accessed April 20, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Soundstreams (Toronto), Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (Montreal), New Music Concerts (Toronto), Arraymusic (Toronto), The Music Gallery (Toronto), Continuum Contemporary Music (Toronto), Land's End (Calgary), Aventa Ensemble (Victoria), Vancouver Chamber Music Society (Vancouver), The Winnipeg Chamber Music Society (Winnipeg), and Open Ears Music Festival (Kitchener).



Canadian Music Centre and composers' own websites, it can be difficult for singers to learn about this repertoire. Toronto-based Canadian composer James Rolfe (b.1961) is among these composers whose works warrant further study.

This monograph examines three vocal chamber works by James Rolfe. Demonstrating Rolfe's substantial contributions to Canadian vocal chamber music, this study provides specific information to guide musicians and educators through the process of learning and performing this music. It offers vocalists and instrumentalists insights into the texts, musical construction, and performance practice. These analyses will assist in shaping performers' understanding and interpretation of the music.

To date, no formal academic studies of James Rolfe's music have been published, despite his numerous commissions and recognition as a composer of major vocal works. Of equal value and necessity is the opportunity to advance knowledge of Canadian music through individual analysis of new works, in an effort to predict and draw attention to future pathways of compositional characteristics and vocal performance practice.

Since 2000, James Rolfe has become a leading composer in Canada, creating a large and substantial body of repertoire. Currently, his catalogue includes 10 operas or stage works including his highly acclaimed *Beatrice Chancy* (1998); 12 choral works; 13 vocal works with chamber accompaniment, of which 7 are written for soprano; 4 works for voice and piano; 27 instrumental chamber works; 12 solo instrumental works, and 6 orchestral works.

Rolfe continues to be commissioned by professional artists and ensembles across Canada, the USA, Europe, and New Zealand. Among those who have commissioned works by Rolfe in Canada are soprano Barbara Hannigan, pianist Eve Egoyan, Esprit

Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, Hemispheres, Elora Festival Singers, Elmer Iseler Singers, Continuum, CBC Radio, and Soundstreams. International commissions include the USA (Bang on a Can All-Stars, Cassatt Quartet), Europe (Ensemble Contrechamps de Genève, Ensemble Avant Garde, Ives Ensemble, Ixion Ensemble, Nash Ensemble, and Nieuw Ensemble), and in New Zealand (175 East).<sup>3</sup>

Recognized with many prestigious awards and grants, Rolfe has been awarded the following: a Guggenheim Fellowship (2000), the K. M. Hunter Music Award (2003), the Louis Applebaum Composers Award (2005), the Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music (2006), SOCAN's Jan V. Matejcek Concert Music Award (2009), a Chalmers Arts Fellowship (2013), and the Outstanding Choral Work Award from the Association of Canadian Choral Communities (2014).<sup>4</sup> Rolfe's vocal chamber work *Fêtes de la Faim* was selected for and performed at the 1997 ISCM World Music Days in Seoul, Korea.

### **1.1 Need for Study and Significance**

Published in 1997, John Beckwith's *Music Papers: Articles and Talks by a Canadian Composer* outlines one of the biggest challenges still faced by emerging and established Canadian composers.

The proliferation of new composers and new pieces has resulted in a musical community of enclaves represented by anywhere from two to a dozen new-music societies, with their faithful core followers of fifty to sixty members each, in each

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<sup>3</sup> James Rolfe, "James Rolfe Curriculum Vitae and List of Works," James Rolfe, accessed October 22, 2018, <http://www.jamesrolfe.ca>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

of our major cities. Without the enclaves, many works in the chamber music category would never reach even that first performance.<sup>5</sup>

In Canada, performance venues, local chamber music festivals, and new music societies such as Soundstreams (Toronto), Société de musique contemporaine du Québec (Montreal), New Music Concerts (Toronto), Arraymusic (Toronto), The Music Gallery (Toronto), Continuum Contemporary Music (Toronto), Land's End (Calgary), Aventa Ensemble (Victoria), Vancouver Chamber Music Society (Vancouver), The Winnipeg Chamber Music Society (Winnipeg), Scotia Festival of Music (Halifax), and Open Ears Music Festival (Kitchener) regularly commission new works and create concert programs which include vocal chamber works. These organizations, each with sustained audience support, have created and supported a rich and varied body of repertoire of Canadian chamber music for voice, suggesting a promising future for the genre. However, while this music is generally readily available, it is, as of yet, rarely performed or known outside of these organizations, and limited academic resources are available for performers wanting to study these compositions. Current literature about modern Canadian composers, outlined below in the literature review, generally offers biographical information, but often contain little insight regarding specific works.

This document serves both as an educational and professional resource for singers and educators who are in search of new Canadian chamber music works. An analysis and performance guide for selected repertoire from Rolfe's vocal chamber works is a useful resource for singers and voice teachers studying and programming Canadian repertoire,

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<sup>5</sup> John Beckwith, *Music Papers: Articles and Talks by a Canadian Composer 1961-1994*, (Ottawa: The Golden Dog Press, 1997), 100.

and provides a valuable addition to the body of research about current Canadian vocal chamber music and of living composers.

I hope this study inspires further research and interest about the performance of Canadian vocal music. This increased exposure will encourage the addition of solo and chamber vocal chamber music on repertoire lists for use in concerts, auditions and in competitions, ultimately broadening the dissemination of new Canadian repertoire.

## 1.2 Literature Review

It is important to note the in-depth study of Canadian music history and its composers began just over fifty years ago with publications of Canadian music history by authors Willy Amtmann,<sup>6</sup> Helmut Kallmann,<sup>7</sup> and Arnold Walter.<sup>8</sup> However, since then, limited research has been distributed and consequently, most available information on musical practice or musical composition within Canada focuses on music before the 1950s. The introduction to Kallman's *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914* describes the challenges of collecting and cataloguing historical details from a country as large and diverse as Canada. Kallmann's *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914*<sup>9</sup> and the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*,<sup>10</sup> co-authored by Gilles Potvin and Kenneth Winters, contributed to the rise of Canadian musical studies in the twentieth century as no one had attempted such an endeavor before. Both publications established a comprehensive record

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<sup>6</sup> Willy Amtmann, *Music in Canada, 1600-1800* (Montreal: Habitex Books, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> Helmut Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada, 1534-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960).

<sup>8</sup> Arnold Walter, *Aspects of Music in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

<sup>9</sup> Kallmann, *A History of Music in Canada 1534-1914*.

<sup>10</sup> Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, and Kenneth Winters, *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto, 1981).

of early Canadian musical history. The second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, published in 1992, is a survey of some areas of recent compositions, including chamber music from 1981 to 1991. Another source is a compilation of Kallmann's research, *Mapping Canada's Music: Selected Writings of Helmut Kallmann*.<sup>11</sup> This source includes seventeen writings of critical and research essays, reports, reflections, and memoirs. Each chapter begins with an introduction by the editors John Beckwith and Robin Elliot. Of particular interest is chapter 13 which catalogues Canadian composers and their works from the 1920s to the 1950s. This provides historical context and a glimpse into the breadth of musical styles by Canadian composers.

Published in 2006, Elaine Keillor's *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity*<sup>12</sup> is the most recent publication that offers a comprehensive summary of the origins and paths of Canadian music but does not devote particular detail to vocal chamber music. Keillor is helpful in noting major events that impacted Canada's musical history of the past thirty years, such as the International Year of Canadian Music celebrated in 1986.<sup>13</sup> This book offers a survey of various musical genres in Canada and is helpful in outlining the history of Canada's musical landscape and development of compositional style within the past twenty years.

*Hello Out There! Canada's New Music in the World*,<sup>14</sup> edited by John Beckwith and Dorith Cooper, outlines the proceedings of the 1986 International Year of Canadian

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<sup>11</sup> Helmut Kallmann, *Mapping Canada's Music: Selected Writings of Helmut Kallmann*, ed. John Beckwith and Robin Elliott, (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Elaine Keillor, *Music in Canada: Capturing Landscape and Diversity*, (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 251-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Hello Out There! Canada's New Music in the World, 1950-85*, ed. John Beckwith and Dorith Cooper, (Toronto: Institute for Canadian Music, 1988).

Music conference held in Toronto. This book centers upon the dissemination of contemporary Canadian music and the challenges composers face while attempting to distribute their repertoire to a larger audience. It is helpful in identifying and qualifying the need for greater critical and analytical attention to new Canadian music. While it was published in 1986, many of the same issues detailed in this collection, including lack of international exposure and need for greater critical and analytical attention to new Canadian music, are still present today. The conference reviewed Canadian performances and performance opportunities, nationally and internationally, and examined future needs in areas such as information on Canadian music and study. During the conference, speakers indicated that little had changed in the twenty-six years between the first conference held in 1960 in Stratford, Ontario and the conference held in 1986.<sup>15</sup> Since then, there has been an improvement in the dissemination of Canadian repertoire and resources with the establishment of the Canadian Music Centre, as well as Canadian universities that offer courses in Canadian music.

Another notable source contributing to research on contemporary Canadian music is Carl Morey's reference work, *Music in Canada: A Research and Information Guide*.<sup>16</sup> This is a valuable bibliography listing 928 entries reflecting the research activity from the 1970s to 1995. Morey presents a wide-ranging overview of Canadian music, complete with useful annotations. In 2004, *The Institute for Canadian Music Newsletter (ICM)* released a continuation of Morey's guide, edited by Robin Elliot, covering works

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Carl Morey, *Music in Canada: A Research and Information Guide*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997).

published from 1996 to 2004.<sup>17</sup>

In *Music in Canada*, Morey notes that much of the research on Canadian composers appears only in theses for graduate degrees which contain limited detailed information of specific musical genres. According to Morey, these documents contain a lack of detailed study of the music. Rather, the contributions outline biographical information and brief annotations of musical works: “There are relatively few theses at the doctoral level dealing with music in Canada [...] there are, however, a number at the master’s level, many of which contribute modestly but with originality to the study of important aspects of musical life. In some cases, they are virtually the only source of important information on limited topics.”<sup>18</sup>

Two other sources are reference volumes on contemporary composers, but neither source has been revised or updated since their original publications. George Proctor’s *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century* (1980),<sup>19</sup> offers a broad chronological landscape of Canadian music beginning in 1900 until 1980. Each chapter contains a brief survey of the decade followed by a discussion of each musical genre (piano music, choral music, orchestral music, chamber music). The final four chapters, titled “The 1950s: Neoclassicism at its Height,” “The 1960s: The New Romanticism,” “1967: Centennial Celebrations,” and “1968 to 1978: Recent Trends,” contribute sections dedicated specifically to chamber music and its development in Canada. A valuable resource for

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<sup>17</sup> Robin Elliott, “A Canadian Music Bibliography, 1996-2004,” *Institute for Canadian Music Newsletter* 2, no. 3 (September 2004): 1-28, <http://sites.utoronto.ca/icm/vol02no3.pdf>, accessed March 24, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Morey, xi.

<sup>19</sup> George A. Proctor, *Canadian Music of the Twentieth Century*, (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

performers is the bibliography and listings of scores and recordings at the end of each chapter. Another source, *Contemporary Canadian Composers* (1987),<sup>20</sup> by John Beckwith and Keith McMillian, is a dictionary of Canadian composers who composed the majority of their works between 1920 and 1970. Each entry is supported by a bibliography and a list of works with some details of scoring.

Paul Steenhuisen's recent book *Sonic Mosaics: Conversations with Composers*,<sup>21</sup> offers a view of contemporary music activity in Canada through interviews with specific composers, including James Rolfe. The thirty-one interviews included in the book were conducted by Steenhuisen between July 2001 and November 2004 and stemmed from concert activities in Toronto. As such, this book presents a strong reflection of new music characteristics and compositions performed in Toronto. Although Rolfe's interview is focused on opera, it reveals insight into his compositional style and the evolution of his vocal writing.

Furthering this research, a handful of Canadian composers have written books and articles that chronicle their own musical works and the flourishing activity of the Canadian musical scene. John Beckwith's memoir *Unheard Of: Memoirs of a Canadian Composer* recounts his musical education, compositions, and insight into the musical culture in Canada.<sup>22</sup> R. Murray Schafer has written numerous books and articles on music education, music in Canada, and about his own compositions. A collection of articles, *R. Murray Schafer On Canadian Music*, exposes many of the challenges faced by Canadian

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<sup>20</sup> John Beckwith and Keith MacMillan, *Contemporary Canadian Composers*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Paul Steenhuisen, *Sonic Mosaics: Conversations with Composers*, (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> John Beckwith, *Unheard of: Memoirs of a Canadian composer*, (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012).



composers during the 1960s to 1980s such as issues with patronage, and business involvement in the arts.<sup>23</sup> These books are valuable resources for constructing a framework for future research of other Canadian composers and offer detailed accounts of the realities and challenges of the generation of composers that preceded James Rolfe and his contemporaries.

Complementing this scholarship is the increased accessibility of Canadian music repertoire online. The Living Composers Project (LCP) is a website which contains the most comprehensive biographical guides to living composers and their music. The LCP contains, as of March 27, 2017, data about 4585 composers, representing 99 countries, including over 400 Canadian composers.<sup>24</sup> The website includes links to composers' websites, lists of select works, and brief biographies.

The most extensive Canadian classical music resource, The Canadian Music Centre (CMC), established in 1959, is a national institution that collects and catalogues classical music by Canadian composers (both online and in print), making it available for loan and purchase, both nationally and internationally.<sup>25</sup> The CMC website hosts pages for each composer including his or her biography, current holdings of the CMC, news articles on the composer and his or her works, and online recordings of some of his or her works. The CMC also offers an on-demand printing and binding service, music repertoire consultations, and five regional lending library centers across Canada in Halifax,

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<sup>23</sup> R. Murray Schafer, *R. Murray Schafer on Canadian music*, (Bancroft, ON: Arcana Editions, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Dan Albertson and Ron Hannah, "The Living Composers Project," *The Living Composers Project*, <http://www.composers21.com/>, accessed November 16, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> "Canadian Music Centre," *Canadian Music Centre | Centre De Musique Canadienne*, <https://www.musiccentre.ca/>, accessed November 18, 2016.

Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver.

Scholarship pertaining specifically to Canadian chamber music is limited to three brief articles. John Beckwith published “Chamber Music Performance”<sup>26</sup> and “Chamber Music Composition”<sup>27</sup>; and Clifford Ford published “Chamber Music”.<sup>28</sup> These articles are available on the Canadian Encyclopedia website and contain general information on the history of chamber music in Canada. Beckwith’s “Chamber Music Composition” briefly touches on common qualities of vocal chamber music. He includes specific examples of works that highlight compositional developments within the genre.

Information about James Rolfe and his music is available on the Canadian Music Centre (CMC) website, the Canadian Music Encyclopedia website, as well as on the composer’s website. The CMC and Canadian Music Encyclopedia contain limited biographical information; a brief overview of his compositional style; annotations of his vocal writing; recordings; his awards and commissions; and a detailed list of his works. On Rolfe’s personal website, he includes brief details about each vocal chamber work, as well as the poetry and sound clips. The scores for the chamber works are available through the Canadian Music Centre, and may be viewed online as non-printable PDF files, or purchased as PDF files or printed scores.

Currently, there is one recording of *Six Songs*, commissioned and released by

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<sup>26</sup> John Beckwith, “Chamber Music Performance,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, October 10, 2011, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chamber-music-performance-emc/>, accessed November 08, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> John Beckwith, “Chamber Music Composition,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, July 02, 2014. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chamber-music-composition-emc/>, accessed November 08, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Clifford Ford, “Chamber Music,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, June 02, 2006. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chamber-music/>, accessed November 08, 2016.

Soundstreams, and premiered by soprano Measha Brueggergosman<sup>29</sup> in 2001. This recording includes a brief interview with Rolfe about the commission. There is one available recording of *Phrases* from a 1995 concert broadcast on the now-defunct weekly new music program, *Two New Hours*, on CBC Radio, featuring soprano Barbara Hannigan<sup>30</sup> and Continuum Contemporary Music. *Simon & Garfunkel & the Prophets of Rage* has one available recording with soprano Carla Huhtanen<sup>31</sup> released on the Centrediscs CD *Raw* by the Continuum Contemporary Music Ensemble in 2010. All of these recordings are available on the Canadian Music Centre website and the composer's website.<sup>32</sup>

### 1.3 Monograph Methodology

The goal of this study is to increase awareness and accessibility of Rolfe's music, both from an analytic and performing viewpoint, and to guide performers in creating their interpretations of the music. The concepts, analyses, and strategies presented for each

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<sup>29</sup> "Measha Brueggergosman, Soprano," Measha Brueggergosman, <http://www.measha.com/>, (accessed August 24, 2019). Measha Brueggergosman is an internationally-renowned Canadian soprano who performs both classical and contemporary music. Born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Brueggergosman studied at the University of Toronto under the guidance of Mary Morrison, a renowned soprano and professor. Upon graduation, her career rapidly gained momentum, with her charisma, dramatic ability and powerful voice, placing her in demand both in concert and on the operatic stage.

<sup>30</sup> "Barbara Hannigan," Barbara Hannigan, <https://www.barbarahannigan.com/about/> (accessed August 24, 2019). Barbara Hannigan is an internationally-renowned Canadian soprano and conductor, known for her performances of contemporary opera. Born in Waverly, Nova Scotia, she studied at the University of Toronto under the guidance of Mary Morrison (see footnote 29). As of 2011, Hannigan has premiered approximately 75 contemporary compositions and was made a Member of the Order of Canada in 2016.

<sup>31</sup> "Carla Huhtanen," Carla Huhtanen, <https://www.carlahuhtanen.com/about/> (accessed August 24, 2019). Carla Huhtanen is an internationally-renowned Canadian soprano and leading interpreter of modern and contemporary music. Born in Sudbury, Ontario, she studied at the University of Ottawa and the University of Toronto.

<sup>32</sup> James Rolfe, <http://www.jamesrolfe.ca>, accessed October 25, 2016.

selected chamber work are extracted from score analysis, performance experience, and an interview with the composer.<sup>33</sup>

Using the composer's published version of each work, the scores are examined to compile an analysis and offer performance suggestions. These resources are studied to contribute insight into the rehearsal, interpretation, and performance of each work. In addition, lists of scores and rehearsal suggestions will be provided.

This document gives thorough attention to the requirements of a singer to perform three of Rolfe's chamber works written for soprano. These works were selected because they demonstrate his varying forms of vocal writing, and embody key characteristics of his compositional style.

1. ***Six Songs*** (2001; words by Walt Whitman; soprano and string quartet; also arranged for mezzo-soprano or soprano with piano; 15 min.)

*Six Songs* was commissioned by Soundstreams through The Ontario Arts Council. Soundstreams has commissioned eight new works by Rolfe including *Six Songs*. Of these commissioned works, five use settings of Walt Whitman's poetry. The texts of *Six Songs* are from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. *Six Songs* was premiered at Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto in April 2001 by Measha Brueggergosman, soprano; Carol Fujino and Fujiko Imajishi, violins; Katherine Kajioka, viola; David Hetherington, cello.

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<sup>33</sup> James Rolfe, interviewed by Laura Duffy in Toronto, Ontario, October 21, 2017, with approval by Western Board of Ethics.

2. ***Phrases*** (1991; words by Arthur Rimbaud; soprano, clarinet, piano; 14 min.)

The text of *Phrases* is a section of the same name from Arthur Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations*. *Phrases* was written in 1991, and was premiered in Toronto on April 25, 1991 at The Music Gallery by Barbara Hannigan, soprano; Don Hutton, clarinet; and Barbara Pritchard, piano for *Continuum Contemporary Music*.

3. ***Simon & Garfunkel and The Prophets of Rage*** (1993; words by James Rolfe; soprano, percussion, piano; 13 min.)

*Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage* was commissioned by Continuum Contemporary Music, with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council. The text is taken from Simon and Garfunkel's song *America* and rapper Public Enemy's *Prophets of Rage*. *Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage* was premiered in Toronto on 18 May 1993 by Continuum Contemporary Music, with Barbara Hannigan, soprano, Barbara Pritchard, piano, and Trevor Tureski, percussion.

Chapter Two outlines Rolfe's life and influences, and offers an overview of his musical style as revealed in his vocal chamber music. This chapter opens with an outline of his early years, education, and musical career, followed by a discussion of his musical style and methodology of the three subsequent performance guides.

Chapter Three (*Six Songs*), Chapter Four (*Phrases*), and Chapter Five (*Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage*) form the core of the monograph by providing a detailed analysis of the selected music. Each performance guide chapter begins with the background, commission, inception, premiere, and poetry of each work, as well as a table

that provides a brief profile of the work. Following this is background information on the poet or lyricist and a poetry analysis and interpretation. Considering the significance of textual interpretation when communicating through song, understanding Rolfe's choice of poetry and his approach to text setting is an important element of this study. It serves to give the performer a deeper understanding of the song text and the musical implications in each piece while providing suggestions pertinent to performance practice. Subsequently, the musical analysis and interpretation examines the music and texts, and how the texts are set by Rolfe. The discussion includes a deeper investigation into Rolfe's compositional traits, outlined in the second chapter, as used in these works. Each chapter also examines the performance requirements of the indicated chamber work by examining specific technical and performance related difficulties singers may encounter, and provides vocal considerations.

Chapter Six offers concluding remarks and summarizes Rolfe's compositional characteristics as found in the analyses of the selected works. This chapter also includes suggestions for further research and study of Canadian contemporary vocal chamber music.

## **Chapter Two: Biography and Musical Style**

This chapter begins with biographical information including Rolfe's musical education, and career as a composer. This is followed by an overview of his musical style, and ends with the methodology used to examine the three vocal chamber works analyzed in chapter three. Because Rolfe is a living composer and still actively working, much of the information provided in this chapter was gathered through an interview with the composer in Toronto, October 2017.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.1 Biography**

#### **Early Years**

Born in Ottawa, Ontario in 1961, Rolfe grew up in a family of non-musicians. His parents were both physicists and his two brothers pursued careers in chemistry and engineering. Despite a lack of music-making in the home, there was an avid appreciation of music. Rolfe was exposed to a variety of musical styles throughout his childhood. His parents' large record collection offered a wealth of inspiration, exposing Rolfe to a multitude of composers ranging from Bach to Stravinsky. He also spent his early years listening to 1960s and 1970s popular music on the radio, and claims to know, even now, most songs of that era from memory.

During elementary school he sang in the school choir from first to third grade. As the general arts curriculum included vocal music, he also learned singing in his regular classroom education throughout elementary school. In sixth grade, when the core

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<sup>34</sup> James Rolfe, interviewed by Laura Duffy in Toronto, Ontario, October 21, 2017, with approval by Western Board of Ethics.

curriculum introduced instrumental music, he began studying the trumpet. His trumpet studies continued throughout high school with private lessons under the tutelage of Eric Rupp.<sup>35</sup> Rolfe also played trumpet in the high school band and orchestra, and in stage bands. His time spent playing in stage bands exposed him to the genres of funk and disco, and he was keenly drawn to the dance beats and syncopation of those genres.

Despite having no formal training, he began dabbling in composition at the age of seventeen, and became interested in writing trumpet pieces for himself. It was not until he was at university that he considered composing as a profession. When it came time to apply for university, Rolfe's grandfather strongly encouraged him to study medicine, as he had achieved high marks in math and science. However, Rolfe's trumpet teacher, Eric Rupp, opened his eyes to the possibility of pursuing a musical career and inspired him to pursue music at the university level.

### **Musical Education**

Rolfe auditioned on a whim for entrance to the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music as a classical trumpet player and was accepted into the Bachelor of Music program in 1979, but it was composition that ultimately intrigued him. Being a trumpet player in the university orchestra meant playing time was limited as the selected repertoire did not contain much music for the instrument. The majority of his time was spent counting rests

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<sup>35</sup> "Eric Rupp," School of Music, University of Ottawa, <https://arts.uottawa.ca/music/people/rupp-eric> (accessed October 23, 2018). Eric Rupp graduated from the University of Michigan, with both a Bachelor and Master of Music, where he studied with the renowned teacher Clifford P. Lillya. In 1971, Eric joined the Toledo Symphony Orchestra. In 1975 he joined the National Arts Centre Orchestra. After a career of thirty-three years with the Orchestra, he retired in 2008. Since then he has been the Orchestra Manager of the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra and adjunct professor of trumpet at the University of Ottawa.



and listening to other instruments in the orchestra. Rather than continuing to play music written by other composers, Rolfe was inspired to compose his own works. Near the end of his first year of undergraduate studies he quickly put together a small portfolio of his compositions and was accepted into the composition program at the beginning of his second year in 1980. He says “I had scarcely written a note when I arrived at university, but because I was exposed to music I hadn’t known existed, my creativity found an outlet and I found a profession.”<sup>36</sup> After attending concerts from visiting composers such as John Cage and Philip Glass, he was inspired to pursue contemporary music composition.

He earned his Bachelor of Music in Composition in 1983 and entered the Masters of Music in Composition program at the University of Toronto in 1983, graduating in 1984. While there, he studied composition with Canadian composer John Beckwith,<sup>37</sup> a composer well-known for his vocal writing. Rolfe states “[The University of Toronto], for me, was more of a technical training... after that I had to find my own way artistically, which was much more difficult. There was no roadmap. It’s difficult for everyone coming out of school, but for composers I think it’s a special challenge. It’s like – what do you really want to do?”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> James Rolfe, interviewed by Laura Duffy in Toronto, Ontario, October 21, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> “John Beckwith,” University of Toronto - Faculty of Music - Programs, <https://music.utoronto.ca/our-people.php?fid=207> (accessed November 15, 2018). John Beckwith is a Canadian composer, music educator, and writer. He born in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1927. He received his musical education in Toronto (1945-50) and Paris (1950-52). He was associated with the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto, from 1952, serving as dean 1970-77 and as first director of its Institute for Canadian Music from 1985 until his early retirement in 1990.)

<sup>38</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

### **Continuing Education and Compositional Career**

After graduation, Rolfe worked as a music copyist from 1985 until 1992 while building his career as a composer. However, these early years as a composer consisted of disappointing musical efforts and grant application rejections. He worked full-time as a music copyist through the late 1980s and then part-time, while composing and applying for grants and awards. During his long hours spent copying music, he would listen to local radio stations such as CIUT-FM (University of Toronto campus radio) and CKLN-FM (Ryerson University campus radio) which exposed him to a wide variety of contemporary music, especially world music, jazz, and alternative music. In his spare time, he would go to new music concerts put on by Arraymusic or concerts hosted at the University of Toronto. Hearing live music and meeting like-minded musicians in the community helped him develop his own style.

While struggling to find his identity as a composer, Rolfe made contact with a group of young composers, recent graduates of the composition program at the University of Victoria, who had moved to Toronto. “[These composers] had a more open and artistically challenging environment with like-minded people, [such as] composer Rudolf Komorous, who, at that time, taught composition at the University of Victoria. He was tuned into the avant-garde. I learned a lot from [these composers] peer to peer. I listened much more widely, I found more of my own identity.”<sup>39</sup>

When Rolfe first started composing he never considered writing for voice. Instead, he began his career as an instrumental composer. However, during the 1980s, demand for Canadian vocal music increased and several competitions and grants were

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<sup>39</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

available. This was largely due to the fact that the Canadian Music Centre had proposed that the year 1986 be designated the *International Year of Canadian Music* to promote Canadian music both in Canada and abroad. Wanting to secure a living as a composer, Rolfe saw these opportunities as a chance to build his career and branched out into composing for voice. “I guess I got into [vocal composition] pretty slowly, sort of as a practical thing: it’s good as a composer not to put all your eggs in one basket, and I was thinking ‘I’m writing 10 to 15-minute chamber pieces for various instrumental combinations – that’s a pretty narrow path.’ So, being a very cautious kind of person, I thought I should start to learn how to write for voice.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1988, while a member of the Toronto-based new music group Continuum, he began writing a set of songs entitled “Four Songs” for bass with poems by Walt Whitman. Winning second prize in the 1990 CBC Young Composers’ Competition for this song set convinced him that he could write for voice. “I found it enjoyable working with the texts and working with the singer. There’s something that’s a little bit beyond your control when you’re dealing with the words and the music and the singer.”<sup>41</sup> His prizewinning work was broadcast in live performance across Canada on both CBC Radio Two and La Chaîne culturelle de Radio-Canada. The following year he met the poet George Elliott Clarke (b. 1960), whom he would eventually collaborate with on the opera *Beatrice Chancy*.

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<sup>40</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

By 1992, Rolfe was receiving commissions and grants which allowed him to compose full-time. Despite these new-found sources of funding, Rolfe found that music became more difficult to write and that cutbacks to arts funding made the idea of a compositional career difficult:

I learned a hard lesson about a composer's reality: not every piece will be a great experience and not every grant will come your way, no matter how high your hopes. In a wealthy and secure society like ours, this is very difficult to accept and for non-artists to understand. Nonetheless, it has sweetened the successes I have been fortunate to enjoy, and it has taught me to treat my colleagues—the composers, performers, producers, and teachers who know the struggles involved in achieving success—with the respect and admiration they have earned by their perseverance.<sup>42</sup>

In 1995, wanting to develop his compositional skills further, Rolfe entered Princeton University on a Naumburg Fellowship, a prestigious scholarship awarded to one graduate student entering the Ph.D. composition program. Within four years, Rolfe completed all the necessary requirements other than his dissertation. This was due to a busy composing schedule, and the financial strain of tuition, as the university did not fund students past the initial four years of the program. Deciding to leave the program before completing his Ph.D. he instead earned a Master of Fine Arts in composition.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Jason Van Eyk, "The Tipping Point: A Composer's Defining Moment of Success," *Ontario Notations*, Winter 2008, 13.

<sup>43</sup> <https://gradschool.princeton.edu/academics/degree-requirements/phd-advising-and-requirements/general-examination/master-arts-degree>. <https://gradschool.princeton.edu/academics/degree-requirements/phd-advising-and-requirements/general-examination/master-arts-degree>. Ph.D. candidates in the music composition program at Princeton may earn a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) as an incidental degree if they have earned Ph.D. candidacy.

At Princeton he studied composition with Steven Mackey<sup>44</sup> (b.1956) and Paul Lansky<sup>45</sup> (b.1944) as well as visiting artists such as Louis Andriessen<sup>46</sup> (b.1939) and Brian Ferneyhough<sup>47</sup> (b. 1943), both whom Rolfe credits with being highly influential, not necessarily for directly influencing his style, but because they challenged his compositional ideas and helped him define his own voice as a composer. Opera became his next obvious challenge.

Long a fan of the poetry of East Coast writer and University of Toronto English professor George Elliott Clarke,<sup>48</sup> Rolfe contacted Clarke about a collaboration. They created the opera *Beatrice Chancy*, inspired by the true story of a young woman who was beheaded in 1599 for killing her father. The opera also involved other University of Toronto alumni, including co-artistic producer John Hess (BMus 1976); violinist Mark Fewer (BMus 1995); and singers Measha Brueggergosman, Lori Klassen (BMus 1990),

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<sup>44</sup> "About," Steven Mackey, <https://stevenmackey.com/about/> (accessed November 15, 2018). Steven Mackey is an American composer and electric guitarist. He has served as a professor of music at Princeton University since 1985, where he teaches composition, theory, twentieth century music, improvisation, and a variety of special topics.

<sup>45</sup> "Paul Lansky," Paullansky.com, <http://paullansky.com/> (accessed November 15, 2018). Paul Lansky is an American composer and French horn player. He was one of the first composers to experiment with the computer for sound synthesis. He served on the faculty at Princeton University from 1969 until he retired in 2014.

<sup>46</sup> "Louis Andriessen," Boosey & Hawkes, [http://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer\\_main?composerid=2690&ttype=Biography](http://www.boosey.com/pages/cr/composer/composer_main?composerid=2690&ttype=Biography) (accessed November 15, 2018). Louis Andriessen is widely regarded as the leading composer working in the Netherlands today and a central figure in the international new music scene with a background of jazz and avant-garde composition.

<sup>47</sup> "Brian Ferneyhough." Brian Ferneyhough Department of Music, <https://music.stanford.edu/people/brian-ferneyhough> (accessed March 19, 2019). Brian Ferneyhough is a British composer who is considered one of the leading figures in New Complexity composition, a type of composition characterized by its complex musical notation. He has served on the faculty at Stanford University since 2000.

<sup>48</sup> "George Elliott Clarke," Canadian Writers, Athabasca University, <http://canadian-writers.athabascau.ca/english/writers/geclarke/geclarke.php> (accessed November 14, 2018). George Elliott Clarke is a Canadian poet, playwright and academic. His work largely explores and chronicles the experience and history of the Black Canadian communities of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, creating a cultural geography that Clarke refers to as "Africadia".

Gregory Dahl (Dip Op Perf 1998) and Lisa Lindo (BMus 1992). On June 18, 1998 *Beatrice Chancy* was produced and premiered in Toronto, Ontario by The Queen of Puddings Music Theatre Company<sup>49</sup> at The Music Gallery, with soprano Measha Brueggergosman in the title role. The opera was very successful with several performances across Canada (Queen of Puddings: June 1999, DuMaurier Dance Theatre, Toronto, Ontario; August 1999, Alderney Landing Theatre, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia; February 2001, Winspear Theatre, Edmonton, Alberta). It played to sold-out houses and received rave reviews in all locations, solidifying Rolfe's compositional career.

Since then, Rolfe has composed several operas, chamber works, choral works, and instrumental works. His music has been performed throughout Canada, the United States and overseas, including performances in Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. Although he has composed for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and solo piano, Rolfe has become a celebrated composer for the voice. In a 2016 interview with Soundstreams, (a contemporary music company based in Toronto, Ontario) he explains his decision to compose for voice: "each medium has its beauties, but none can communicate feelings and emotions so directly and intimately as the voice."<sup>50</sup> His operas have been performed by opera companies across Canada: the Canadian Opera Company, Toronto Masque Theatre, Tapestry Opera, Vancouver Opera, Edmonton Opera and Pacific Opera Victoria.

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<sup>49</sup> "Queen of Puddings Music Theatre," The Canadian Encyclopedia, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/queen-of-puddings-music-theatre-enc> (accessed April 20, 2019). Queen of Puddings Music Theatre was an award-winning Toronto based opera company that commissioned and produced original Canadian chamber opera with a performer-based, physical theatre aesthetic. It was founded in 1995 by co-artistic directors Dáirine Ní Mheadhra and John Hess, and closed in August 2013.

<sup>50</sup> "Q&A with composer James Rolfe," Soundstreams, February 29, 2016, <https://www.soundstreams.ca/2016/02/composer-qa-james-rolfe/> (accessed November 15, 2017).

He has also worked with award-winning librettists: André Alexis,<sup>51</sup> George Elliott Clarke,<sup>52</sup> Anna Chatterton,<sup>53</sup> Paul Bentley,<sup>54</sup> Morris Panych,<sup>55</sup> and Steven Heighon.<sup>56</sup>

Rolfe has created and continues to create an array of chamber music. To date, he has composed thirteen vocal chamber works.<sup>57</sup> Rolfe's vocal chamber repertoire requires an advanced vocal technique as his works teeter on atonality and often include large interval leaps, quick articulation, extended vocal techniques, rapid changes in dynamics, unprepared modulations, long texts, mature subjects, and complex rhythms.

Currently, Rolfe lives in Toronto's Junction neighbourhood with his partner, composer Juliet Palmer, and their daughter. He teaches composition as a sessional instructor at the University of Toronto, but works mainly as a composer. In a 2016 interview with *Opera Canada* Rolfe shared his views about how teaching helps the evolution of his compositional style. "I like to stay in touch. The best thing about

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<sup>51</sup> "André Alexis," Alexis, André, [http://www.english.utoronto.ca/facultystaff/lecturersandinstructors/Alexis\\_\\_Andr\\_.htm](http://www.english.utoronto.ca/facultystaff/lecturersandinstructors/Alexis__Andr_.htm), (accessed August 24, 2019). André Alexis is a Canadian writer, librettist, and poet. In 2017, he was awarded the Windham-Campbell Literature Prize for fiction. His novel, *Fifteen Dogs*, won the 2015 Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize. His debut novel, *Childhood*, won the Books in Canada First Novel Award, the Trillium Book Award, and was shortlisted for the Giller Prize and the Writers' Trust Fiction Prize.

<sup>52</sup> See footnote 48.

<sup>53</sup> "Anna Chatterton," Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia - Chatterton, Anna, <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Chatterton,Anna>, (accessed August 24, 2019).

Anna Chatterton is a Canadian playwright, librettist, and performer, who was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for English-language drama at the 2017 Governor General's Awards for her play *Within the Glass*.

<sup>54</sup> "Paul Bentley," Revolvvy, <https://www.revolvvy.com/page/Paul-Bentley>, (accessed August 24, 2019). Paul Bentley is a British stage, film and television actor, novelist, and librettist.

<sup>55</sup> "Morris Panych," Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia - Panych, Morris, <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Panych,Morris>, (accessed August 24, 2019). Morris Panych is a Canadian playwright, director and actor.

<sup>56</sup> "Steve Heighon," Steven Heighon - Author's website, <http://www.stevenheighon.com/index.html>, (accessed August 24, 2019). Steven Heighon is a Canadian novelist, short story writer and poet. He is the author of fourteen books, including three short story collections, four novels and six poetry collections.

<sup>57</sup> See Appendix Two for a listing of his vocal chamber works.

teaching is that I get to listen to new [compositions] by younger people, and I listen to [the music] they're listening to as well."<sup>58</sup>

Most of Rolfe's career is built on vocal music: solo songs, choral music, vocal chamber music, and opera. Although his compositional style varies based on the texts and the demands necessitated by them, it is marked by recurring characteristics. His use of rhythm and groove,<sup>59</sup> lack of a tonal center, stepwise motion, and his choice of familiar poets and popular music are defining characteristics of his style.

## 2.2 Musical Style

### Influences

Rolfe has an exceptional gift for intermingling qualities of early music with contemporary techniques. He is as much influenced by Renaissance and Baroque composers (such as Thomas Tallis, John Dowland, William Byrd, and Henry Purcell), shown in his use of textures, control of the musical meter, and canonic-like writing, as he is by popular music composers (such as Frank Zappa, and Simon & Garfunkel), shown in his use of rhythm and choice of texts.

Although many contemporary composers intentionally isolate themselves from popular and commercial influences, Rolfe has made conscious attempts to bridge the gap between traditional classical music and popular styles. He is influenced by popular music

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<sup>58</sup> Lydia Perovic, "James Rolfe," *Opera Canada*, Winter 2016.

<sup>59</sup> Jeffery Whittall, "Groove," <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002284508> (accessed October 17, 2018). Groove is the sense of propulsive rhythmic feel or sense of swing often played in a repeated pattern. It is an unspecifiable but ordered sense of something that is sustained in a distinctive, regular and attractive way, working to draw the listener in.



because he loves the simplicity of the melodies and the way they fit together with the words:

I'm working in a more tonal area and that's actually kind of hard because there's a lot of tonality which has already been covered. It's hard to sound fresh. It's like writing a pop song, which is usually a love song. How many ways can you say 'I love you?' Not that many. It's a real act of genius if someone comes up with a fresh way, even though the message is the same as it has been for thousands of years. But, to come up with a fresh concept is hard. I always try to write in a way for people to comprehend. It's not just people who have Ph.D.'s in music, but for regular people. That's what makes it difficult – the simplicity – it takes effort.<sup>60</sup>

Rolfe's compositions fundamentally stay in the spectrum of art music; however, they show influences of his strong interest in pop, dance, and rap music. These influences can be seen not only in his selection of modern song lyrics, but also in his employment of rhythms, syncopations, and narrow vocal ranges often used in these genres.

### **Text Setting**

The diversity of his vocal music shows not only his aptitude for writing for the voice, but also his connection to the specific texts he chooses, in particular, his affinity for texts by prominent poets such as Walt Whitman and Arthur Rimbaud. "Poetry is already half way music anyway. There's certain poetry I go back to again and again; Whitman, Rimbaud, and Archibald Lampman.... If something speaks to you, that's the most important thing. You have to have strong feelings about a piece of writing to want to put music to it."<sup>61</sup>

Rolfe selects texts that are rich with human emotion, allegories, and ambiguity. He often chooses poetry written in free verse, and utilizes both classical and

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<sup>60</sup>James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> Lydia Perovic, "James Rolfe," *Opera Canada*, Winter 2016.

contemporary texts. Rolfe uses those texts to dictate the rhythmic pulse, and the harmonic and melodic shape of his music. He structures his music so the literary climax matches the musical one. Usually, he chooses English texts because of his perception of the percussive-like qualities of the language.

The text is the primary inspiration for Rolfe's compositional process: "If it's vocal music, it pretty much comes from the words. The text is what leads me and I try to honor the words, certainly to make them audible and [I try] to get the emotional content out of the words to give them emotional flesh."<sup>62</sup> He demonstrates acute attention to detail, compelling every part of the music to aid in the enhancement of the text. He experiments with the prosody to convey a specific emotion or musical style such as in *Simon & Garfunkel & the Prophets of Rage* where he employs rhythms to displace the syllable stress indicative of rap music or in *Phrases* where he uses rests to form fragmented words to convey the poet's fragmentation of ideas. Sometimes using material from two sources, he blends them together to create a singular text such as in *Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage*.

While studying with John Beckwith at the University of Toronto, Rolfe learned the importance of reading texts aloud. Beckwith had Rolfe repeat texts in different patterns without pitches in order to show him the complexities of rhythm. Rolfe found this to be a valuable lesson he has carried over to his compositional process.

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<sup>62</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

## **Rhythm**

Rolfe is specific about tempo indications and expects them to remain accurate. It is essential to use a metronome as a tool during rehearsal preparation. Rhythm is usually the element that guides other aspects of his style. At the beginning of his compositional process, Rolfe is first inspired by rhythms. He has a clear idea of the rhythm he wants for a text setting before the melody takes form.

His compositions revolve around rhythmic cells that set a framework for the development of his music, and they often exhibit tight control of the structure of the meter. More variable than the pulse often associated with the style of minimalism, there is a focus on the meter and motion of the music. The use of meter changes and rhythmic vitality – often complex, with syncopations – is a common thread throughout the majority of his works. These changes are used to enhance the imagery of the text. He frequently shifts meter to accommodate varying phrase lengths, and uses rhythm for text-painting purposes, often displacing normal word stresses to create special effects.

The rhythms sometimes purposefully contribute to the disjointedness of the melody or text setting to convey a certain mood or atmosphere. By employing irregular rhythmic patterns, the natural rhythm of the text may become distorted, making it a challenge for the vocalist to convey the text to the audience. Rolfe has a tendency to blur the perception of a steady pulse through rhythmic displacement of repeating patterns and syncopation.

## Melody

Rolfe intertwines supple melodic lines with disjointed intervals and chromaticism which creates a sense of tonal ambiguity or absence of tonality in his chamber music writing. Frequently, he alternates between lyrical writing and recitative, speech-like writing, and often uses a rapid succession of repeated notes as an idiomatic mechanism to convey the rhythmic pattern of the texts. He also uses compound melodies – which is the implication of more than one melody or line by a single voice through skipping back and forth between the notes of the two melodies as seen in *Phrases*. Rolfe often builds melodies on descending scales built on stepwise lines such as in *Six Songs*.<sup>63</sup>

The vocal tessitura of his chamber music for soprano remains fairly consistent, lying in the upper middle of the treble staff, and only occasionally dipping down below C4 and above the staff to A5 and B♭5. In the few moments where the vocal line dips below a middle C, the accompaniment is thinner, allowing the singer to use a free tone without feeling she must use a louder tone to be heard over the other instruments. The biggest challenges include the rhythms and intervals in the vocal line. Rolfe rarely requires large leaps, preferring repeated notes; however, the singer is required to demonstrate extreme register changes with sudden dynamic changes in such as in *Phrases*. Generally speaking, his vocal lines are stepwise in nature, making leaps distinctive because they occur outside an otherwise speech-like texture that falls within a limited vocal range. His melodies are often disjunct and percussive. Rolfe's music requires precise durations of notes, particularly in pointillistic or fragmented techniques. A singer must be able to sing the exact value of a note which may be an unusual fraction

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<sup>63</sup> See Chapter Three for more information.

of a beat, and also must be able to sing such a note with the required timbre and dynamics.

### **Harmony and Texture**

Rolfe's chamber music textures often include imitation between instruments, and descending melodic motion. He writes drastic changes in texture from chromatic, to sparse, linear, and predominantly contrapuntal texture. His music hinges on ambiguous tonal or modal language or is atonal with a textural approach featuring blocks of sounds and cluster chords. Often, the lack of harmonic resolution gives his music an ethereal quality that continues uninterrupted by harmonic cadences or obvious phrase endings. The singer must often sing against dissonant harmonies, with little harmonic support to navigate vocal register changes. A constant shifting of harmonic ideas seems to be a characteristic of many of Rolfe's pieces and coincides with shifting rhythmic motives and texture. In order to express poetic content, the harmonic language prominently displays dissonance or juxtaposes extremes of register.

### **2.3 Performance Guide Methodology**

Chapters Three, Four, and Five are in-depth studies of three of Rolfe's vocal chamber works for soprano: *Six Songs* (2001), *Phrases* (1991), and *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* (1993). Through examining the context of these works and musical analysis, the aim of these performance guides is to provide insights that are helpful in musical interpretation and performance.

These guides are intended to introduce and promote James Rolfe's vocal chamber music to performers with the goal of expanding their knowledge and appreciation of

Canadian chamber music for voice. By exploring the context of these selected works and offering performance suggestions, the aim of the chapter is to provide insights that are helpful in musical interpretation.

An effective performance requires musical, textual, and historical study of the music being prepared for performance. In order to achieve this, it is essential to examine the background of the composer, the work, the poet, and the poetry to fully convey the value and beauty of the music to the audience. *Six Songs* (2001), *Phrases* (1991), and *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* (1993) are examined using the following criteria:

#### I. Poetry

- i. The poet
- ii. The literary theme and source

#### III. Music

- i. Text setting, and prosodic treatment
- ii. Vocal range, tessitura, and articulation
- iii. Dynamic range, text painting, and dramatic devices
- iv. Tempo, meter, and rhythm
- v. Harmonic texture (i.e. tonality/atonality, key centers)
- vi. Vocal considerations

## Chapter Three: *Six Songs* Performance Guide

This chapter will provide a comprehensive performance guide for James Rolfe's vocal chamber work *Six Songs* (2001). Performers can use this as a reference for effectively communicating the meaning of the poetry and musical ideas. The chapter begins with a brief background of *Six Songs*, a general profile of the work as shown in Table 3.1, and information on the poet and literary source. Following this, the performance guide contains general vocal considerations, as well as an outline of the musical structure. Subsequently, a poetry analysis and interpretation, a musical analysis and interpretation, and vocal considerations are provided for each song.

### 3.1 Background

*Six Songs* was written in 2001 and premiered at Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto in April 2001 by soprano Measha Brueggergosman and the Accordes String Quartet (violinists Carol Fujino and Fujiko Imajishi, violist Katherine Kajioka, and cellist David Hetherington). Globe and Mail guest music critic Elissa Poole praised the premiere: Written for Measha Brueggergosman, *Six Songs* is a customized vehicle for its performer. Much [of the music reminded me] of the opera — Rolfe's savvy with a tune, the way he (almost) buried his compositional intricacies in the accompaniment, the staging of his emotional climaxes and the hymn-like slower songs with their shy continuo bass-lines and slow-changing triadic harmonies. And he gave Brueggergosman's gorgeous sound, timbral palette and formidable emotional range (she can push ecstasy almost to hysteria

without crossing the line) full sway.<sup>64</sup>

*Six Songs* is a setting of six poems from Walt Whitman's famous collection of poetry *Leaves of Grass* (1855), from which Rolfe selected the poems "I heard you, solemn-sweet pipes of the organ," "Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only," "O you whom I often and silently come," "Trickle drops," "One hour to madness and joy," and "A clear midnight" (see Table 3.1). Previously, he used four of the poems to write *Four Songs on Poems by Walt Whitman* (1990) for baritone.<sup>65</sup> In these earlier settings, Rolfe explored the texts for the sound of the words more than for the meaning of the words. This was achieved through a restricted vocal range and a piano part full of silences, and complex random-number-generating procedures were used to ensure pitches and durations remained consistent and distinct. However, in *Six Songs for Soprano and String Quartet*, Rolfe took a traditional art song approach with the string quartet acting as an accompaniment to the voice by supporting and reflecting the thoughts and sentiments conveyed in the text. This chamber work is by far Rolfe's most lyrical and tonal.

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<sup>64</sup> Elissa Poole, "James Rolfe," James Rolfe Reviews, April 20, 2001, <http://www.jamesrolfe.ca/review/> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>65</sup> The four poems set in *Four Songs on Poems by Walt Whitman* are "O you whom I often and silently come," "I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ," "Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only," and "A clear midnight." This set can also be sung by a mezzo-soprano.



**Table 3.1 Profile of *Six Songs***

<p><b>Poet:</b> Walt Whitman (1819-1892)</p> <p><b>Poetry:</b> Six poems from the collection of poetry <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1852-1892)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. “I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ” from the “Children of Adam” cluster<sup>66</sup> (1867)</li> <li>ii. “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” from the “Calamus” cluster (1860)</li> <li>iii. “O you whom I often and silently come” from the “Calamus” cluster (1860)</li> <li>iv. “Trickle drops” from the “Calamus” cluster (1860)</li> <li>v. “One hour to madness and joy” from the “Children of Adam” cluster (1860)</li> <li>vi. “A clear midnight” from the “From Noon to Starry Night” cluster (1881)</li> </ul> <p><b>Composition Date:</b> 2001</p> <p><b>Publisher:</b> Canadian Music Centre</p> <p><b>Voice Type(s):</b> Soprano (Rolfe transposed this set for mezzo-soprano [piano version only])</p> <p><b>Instruments:</b> String quartet (two violins, viola, cello), piano versions are also available for soprano or mezzo-soprano</p> <p><b>Language:</b> English</p> <p><b>Length:</b> 16 minutes</p> <p><b>Commission:</b> Soundstreams Canada</p> <p><b>Premiere:</b> April 17, 2001 at Glenn Gould Studio, broadcast on Two New Hours on CBC Radio Two on May 6, 2001 with Measha Brueggergosman, soprano; Carol Fujino and Fujiko Imajishi, violins; Katherine Kajioka, viola; David Hetherington, violoncello</p>
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<sup>66</sup> As more poems were added to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman divided the poems into thematic sections which he referred to as clusters.

### 3.2. Poet and Poetry: Walt Whitman and *Leaves of Grass*

American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is regarded as one of the country's most significant nineteenth-century poets and is a favourite source of inspiration for Rolfe's music. Born on Long Island, New York, Whitman grew up in Brooklyn and received limited formal education. His occupations during his lifetime included printer, school teacher, reporter, and editor.

Whitman's self-published *Leaves of Grass* was inspired by his travels through the American frontier and by his admiration for Ralph Waldo Emerson.<sup>67</sup> First published in 1855, *Leaves of Grass* underwent eight subsequent editions during Whitman's lifetime as he expanded and revised the poetry from the original collection of twelve poems to include 383. Emerson declared the first edition was "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed."<sup>68</sup> However, critics and readers found Whitman's style and subject matter unsettling because of his openness regarding sex, his recognition and appreciation of the working class, and his bold use of language.<sup>69</sup> Upon the release of the first edition in 1855, a writer for London *Critic* claimed "Walt Whitman is as unacquainted with art, as a hog is with mathematics,"<sup>70</sup> while a critic in the Boston *Intelligencer* described the collection of poems as a "...a mass of stupid filth."<sup>71</sup> While his poetry failed to garner popular readership during his lifetime, after his death his

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<sup>67</sup> Charles M. Oliver, *Critical companion to Walt Whitman: a literary reference to his life and work* (New York, NY: Facts on File, 2006), 13.

<sup>68</sup> Walt Whitman, and Justin Kaplan, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, (New York, N.Y.: Random House Publisher Services), 1982, *eBook Collection*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 14, 2018), 1352.

<sup>69</sup> J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings. *Walt Whitman: an encyclopedia*. (New York: Garland Publishing), 1998, 155.

<sup>70</sup> LeMaster, 72.

<sup>71</sup> Kenneth M. Price, *Walt Whitman: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xii.

legacy grew.

Whitman employed meter in innovative ways, often to mimic natural speech and the prosody of the Bible. Syntactic parallelism,<sup>72</sup> cataloguing,<sup>73</sup> and anaphora<sup>74</sup> are literary devices often featured in his poetry. Similarly, Whitman broadened the possibilities of subject matter by writing about everyday life and people as well as the concept of “self.” He uses “self” as a way to cultivate a universal identity by unifying humankind into one “self” through the use of personal pronouns.<sup>75</sup> Most of his poems are written in first person, often using the pronoun “I” or “myself.”

By 1860, as Whitman continuously revised and expanded his collection of poems he began grouping them into thematic sections that he referred to as clusters. As the end of 1891 approached, Whitman prepared his last edition of *Leaves of Grass*, nicknamed the “Deathbed Edition” (1892). In it there are fourteen clusters:

1. “Inscriptions”
2. “Children of Adam”
3. “Calamus”
4. “Birds of Passage”
5. “Sea-Drift”

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<sup>72</sup> A. Cuddon et al., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 511. Syntactic parallelism is a rhetorical device that consists of repetition among adjacent sentences. They can be grammatically similar or identical in structure, sound, meaning, or meter. Examples of this technique are found in “I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ” (see p.40) and “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” (see p.47).

<sup>73</sup> Cuddon, 107. Cataloguing is a poetic device consisting of a long rhetorical list. Examples of this are found in “I heard you, solemn-sweet pipes of the organ” (see p.40), “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” (see p.47), and “One hour to madness and joy” (see p.67).

<sup>74</sup> Cuddon, 35. Anaphora is a poetic device in which a single word is repeated at the beginning of successive lines. Examples of this technique are found in “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” (see p.47) and “On hour to madness and joy” (see p.67).

<sup>75</sup> The concept of ‘self’ appears in all six poems used in this set.

6. "By the Roadside"
7. "Drum Taps"
8. "Memories of President Lincoln"
9. "Autumn Rivulets"
10. "Whispers of Heavenly Death"
11. "From Noon to Starry Night"
12. "Songs of Parting"
13. "First Annex: Sands at Seventy"
14. "Second Annex: Good-bye My Fancy"

Rolfe chose from three clusters: "Children of Adam," "Calamus," and "From Noon to Starry Night." "Children of Adam" predominantly explores themes of heterosexual love, while the succeeding section, "Calamus" examines homosexual love. "From Noon to Starry Night" encompasses themes of spirituality and mortality. Rolfe did not, however, select the poems with the cluster themes in mind. He states, "These texts were chosen somewhat at large.... They appealed to me because they were full of energy and life."<sup>76</sup>

Rolfe appreciated Whitman's acute sense of rhythm found in long lines of text and stated that Whitman's poetry was favorable to set to music because:

Despite its high romantic tone, Whitman's verse remains palatable to our ears; the beauty of his language, his loving attention to its rhythm and sound, and his direct, unpretentious tone make him one of the most approachable poets.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> James Rolfe, interview by Larry Lake, April 17, 2001, Glenn Gould Studio, broadcast on Two New Hours, CBC Radio Two, May 6, 2001.

<sup>77</sup> "James Rolfe Six Songs," James Rolfe, <http://www.jamesrolfe.ca/music/chamber-voice/six-songs/> (accessed February 13, 2018).

This is no surprise as Whitman was influenced by opera and song. He claimed they were essential in conceiving and writing *Leaves of Grass*, which contains hundreds of musical terms in the text, as well as the names of composers and performers. The word “song” appears more than 150 times.<sup>78</sup>

The poems selected for *Six Songs* are written in free-verse and center around dense subject matter. The meanings may not be evident upon first reading and require further analysis, therefore constituting a great interpretative challenge for the singer. Rolfe’s choice of poetry showcases his ability to write for the voice with elegance juxtaposed by declamatory and passionate vocal lines. His luxuriant, lyric approach, and supple and continuous melodic phrases coordinate with Whitman’s poetic phrases.

### **3.3 Performance Guide**

#### **General Vocal Considerations**

*Six Songs* is not recommended for young voices or light sopranos due to challenges of tessitura, the diction requirements, and mature emotional expression. This set demands a high level of rhythmic precision as the singer and string quartet often have identical rhythms in unison, or imitating rhythms. The singer must possess an assured low register, an ease within the medium-low tessitura, and an ability to negotiate both sustained phrasing as well as quick melismatic passages.

Advanced diction skills are required for these songs in order to successfully express the prosodic patterns of weak and strong emphasis at regular intervals involving

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<sup>78</sup> Oliver, 13.

primary and secondary stress. As Rolfe sometimes purposely distorts the stress patterns of the text, the use of inappropriate stress in pronouncing a particular word creates a communication challenge for the singer. Furthermore, the number of glottal stops, and voiced and plosive consonants in the English language require more air pressure, which may obstruct the production of a legato line.

### **Outline of *Six Songs* Structure**

The subject matter and themes of the poems contain no intended link on Whitman's part, as they were conceived of separately within various collections of *Leaves of Grass*. Rolfe indicates that these may be performed as a complete set of six, or separately in any number or order, as the performer sees fit. However, if performed in Rolfe's published order, the songs are linked through transitions of tonal centers:

- Eb minor "I heard you"
- D major "Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only"
- Eb major "O you, whom I often and silently come"
- D minor "Trickle drops"
- D major "One hour to madness and joy"
- D major "A clear midnight"

Rolfe establishes a tonal center, but then creates forward motion to a new tonal center. There is no feeling of repose and resolution that comes from a tonic resolution. Instead, he colours the ending of the final phrase of each song with harmonies of a new key center, often by using the leading tone of the new tonal center as the singer's final note or by ending the final measure in the new tonal center of the subsequent song.

### Song One: “I heard you”

A profile of “I heard you” is outlined in Table 3.2 which includes style components, and an overview of musical elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm, accompaniment, and the text.

**Table 3.2 Profile of “I heard you”**

<p><b>Range:</b> C#4 to F#5</p> <p><b>Tessitura:</b> A4 to E5</p> <p><b>Tempo:</b> Andante ♩ = 60-63</p> <p><b>Phrase Length:</b> Irregular phrase length</p> <p><b>Melody:</b> Lyrical, arching vocal line</p> <p><b>Accompaniment:</b> Canon-like pattern through weaving melodic units</p> <p><b>Language:</b> English</p> <p><b>Technical/Expressive Considerations:</b> Sustained singing in the middle range. Long phrases requiring advanced breath management.</p> <p><b>Song Form:</b> Through-composed</p> <p><b>Poetry Style:</b> Free-verse</p> <p><b>Poetry:</b> “I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ,” from the cluster “Children of Adam” in <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1867)</p> <p><b>Text:</b> I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ</p> <p>I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday morn I pass’d the church,  Winds of Autumn, as I walk’d the woods at dusk  I heard your long stretch’d sighs up above so mournful,  I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera,  I heard the soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;  Heart of my love! You too I heard murmuring low  through one of the wrists around my head,  Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells last night under my ear.</p>
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### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

Whitman's verse encompasses four categories of sound: instrumental music ("I heard you, solemn sweet pipes"); the music of nature ("winds of Autumn"); singing ("perfect Italian tenor" and "soprano in the midst of the quartet"); and the audible human pulse ("You too I heard murmuring low through one of the wrists around my head"). The beauty of these sounds is implied through words such as "sweet" (see Table 3.2 under 'Text' line one of the poem) and "perfect" (see Table 3.2 under 'Text' line four of the poem). The sounds appear in order of importance with the most important being the audible sound of love.<sup>79</sup> The continued use of the pronoun "I" implies the poet is alone until the revelation that the poet's lover is present. The text of the final two lines begin with the words "Heart" and "Heard" as the "I" disappears in the final line into the act of hearing the heart of the poet's lover. The last line of the poem, "Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells last night under my ear," implies a connection of the physical world with the spiritual world as the little bells recall the mention of the church.

### Musical Analysis and Interpretation

Rolfe's setting of "I heard you" begins in the key center of Eb minor. The opening measures sound romantic, yet mournful. As shown in Figure 3.1, the use of "I," the *andante* tempo indication, the expression marking "*with longing*," and the minor tonality suggest the poet is alone. Rolfe highlights Whitman's repeated use of "I heard" (echoing five times in the first four lines) by setting the text in a syncopated rhythm so that "heard" is almost always the longest note value of the given measure. Creating an imitative effect

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<sup>79</sup> LeMaster, 295.



between all the instruments (voice included), the syncopated entrances heighten the sense of longing and illustrate the sounds the poet hears (“sweet pipes of the organ,” “winds of autumn,” “perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera,” “the soprano in the midst of the quartet singing”).

The melodic lines of the string quartet frequently mimic the melodies and motions of the voice part, and vice-versa. With several moments of imitation, the string quartet sounds canon-like, but each part differs melodically through contrasting descending lines of major and minor seconds with octave displacement to extend the downward motion. The first violin has the longest descending line, beginning on  $A\flat_4$  and descending through a combination of major and minor seconds to  $C_4$ . This descending line is extended through octave displacement at m.5 by moving up the octave to  $B\flat_4$  as shown in Figure 3.1. Contrasting the strings’ descending lines, the voice sings repeated pitches with small intervallic changes, and gradually builds a long ascending line. The rapid turns of sixteenth notes in m.9 and mm.11-12 in the vocal line suggest a musical gesture of a Baroque organ, which enhances the religious descriptions (“sweet pipes of the organ” and “I passed the church”) in the poetry.

The musical score shows the following details:

- Tempo and Meter:** Andante, 3/4 time,  $\text{♩} = 60 - 63$ .
- Dynamic and Performance Instructions:** *p* with longing, *mp*, *pp* legato con sord.
- Lyrics:** I heard you, I heard you, sol-emn sweet
- Red Circles:** One in the Violin I part (measure 1) and one in the Violin II part (measure 14), both highlighting notes that are an octave lower than the written notation.

Figure 3.1 “I heard you,” mm.1-14, octave displacement in the strings as shown by the notes circled in red

Although the first violin plays descending lines, the starting pitch of each of those lines, through the octave displacement, forms a long ascending motion in unison with the voice. This occurs from the beginning of the piece until m.37 when the consistent texture and mood of the music changes. At m.37 the steady increase in intensity is interrupted on the words “Heart of my love,” (see Figure 3.2) which reveals the poet is in love, though it is not yet clear if that love is reciprocated.

The voice begins a long descending line beginning at m.38 to the end of the piece. The effect of the tremolos played by the first violin creates a sense of anticipation and

uncertainty (see Figure 3.2). In contrast, the repeated alternating *pizzicato* notes played in the other instruments (second violin, viola, and cello) create a pointillistic effect, and implies the sound of a beating heart.

37 *with utmost tenderness, sempre p*

Sopr. Heart of my love! you too I heard mur-mur ing, mur - mur - ing low through one of the

Vln. I

Vln. II pizz.

Vla. pizz.

Vc. pizz.

42

Sopr. wrists a - round my head, Heard the pulse of you when all was

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Figure 3.2 “I heard you,” mm.37-45, tremolos in the first violin annotated in red

The first violin tremolo abruptly ceases at m.48 capturing the exciting moment of realization that this little “murmuring” in the ear is in fact the beating heart of the poet’s lover, as he listens to the lover’s radial pulse (see Figure 3.3). The singer’s final line

“under my ear,” at mm.48-49, establishes the new key center of D for the next song. The singer’s final note, C#4, suggests the leading note in to the singer’s opening pitch, D5, in “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only”.

The image displays a musical score for the song "I heard you," spanning measures 42 to 49. The score is arranged in a system with five staves: Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The vocal line (Sopr.) is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "wrists a - round my head, Heard the pulse of you when all was still ring - ing lit - tle bells last night un - der my ear." The final note of the vocal line, a C#4, is circled in red. The instrumental parts include Violin I and II in treble clef, Viola in alto clef, and Violoncello in bass clef. The score features various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Figure 3.3 "I heard you," mm.42-49; singer’s final note, C#4, suggests the leading note transition to new tonal center D annotated in red

## Vocal Considerations

While the range, from C#4 to F#5, is comfortable for a soprano, the challenge in “I heard you” lies in the long phrases of repeated notes, which sit in the *secondo passaggio*.<sup>80</sup> The singer should avoid the temptation to accent the repeated notes as the phrases require a pure legato. The long vocal lines, sung with soft dynamics, demand full sustained singing and advanced breath management. Within the requirements of soft dynamics, the intensity of the tone must be strong.

The syncopated rhythms and the wash of sound created in the string quartet obscure the rhythmic pulse and create a static quality (see Figure 3.1). Because the string quartet creates a rhythmic flow, unhampered by any pulsation, the singer must maintain forward motion and avoid any tendency to slow the rhythmic pulse.

Because the dynamics broaden from mm.1-36 until the climax of the piece, the singer may be tempted to continue this intensity into m.37. However, while the text conveys excitement, (“Heart of my love!”) on repeated E5 pitches, the dynamic level must be *piano* to convey the sensual intimacy of the poem’s conclusion (see Figure 3.2).

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<sup>80</sup> The *passaggio* is the transition between different vocal registers. For sopranos, there are two points of transition. The *primo passaggio* is the transition between chest and middle voice (around C4-E4). The *secondo passaggio* is the transition between middle and head voice (around C5 and F5).

### Song Two: “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only”

Found below in Table 3.3, is a profile of “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” which contains general musical characteristics, and the text of the poem.

**Table 3.3. Profile of “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only”**

<p><b>Range:</b> Db4 to A5</p> <p><b>Tessitura:</b> A4 to D5</p> <p><b>Tempo:</b> Presto, ♩ = 88</p> <p><b>Phrase Length:</b> Mostly four-bar phrases with some variation of three-bar and five-bar phrases</p> <p><b>Melody:</b> Active melodic line reflecting the rhythm of the language; short melismas with frequently syncopated rhythms</p> <p><b>Accompaniment:</b> Driving repeated eighth-note rhythmic motives</p> <p><b>Language:</b> English</p> <p><b>Technical/Expressive Considerations:</b> Rhythmic precision between all ensemble players</p> <p><b>Song Form:</b> Strophic variation</p> <p><b>Poetry Style:</b> Free verse</p> <p><b>Poetry:</b> From the section “Calamus” in <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1860)</p> <p><b>Text:</b> Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only</p> <p>Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,  Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,  Not in those long-drawn, ill-supprest sighs,  Not in many an oath and promise broken,  Not in my wilful and savage soul’s volition,  Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,  Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,  Not in the curious systole and diastole within me which will one day cease,  Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,  Not in cries, laughter, defiances, thrown from me when alone far in the wilds,</p>
--

Not in husky pantings through clench'd teeth,  
 Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words, echoes, dead words,  
 Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,  
 Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every day,  
 Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and dismiss you continually—not  
 there,  
 Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! O pulse of my life!  
 Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in these songs.

### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

With the exception of the final line, each line of “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” begins with the word “not” or “nor,” utilizing the literary technique of anaphora to create an unyielding negative tone (see Table 3.3 under ‘Text’). The poem is a long periodic sentence filled from beginning to end with heaving, sighing, panting, crying, and chattering. It paints a portrait of an angry and despairing man (“in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself”). Regardless of his physical, emotional, and mental symptoms of anger, he cannot obtain the love he yearns for. The source of the rage is finally disclosed in the last two lines: “Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! O pulse of my life! Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in these songs.” These two lines reveal that the poet has lived a largely lonely life suppressing his adhesiveness,<sup>81</sup> his only compensation the creation of his poems.<sup>82</sup>

To grasp the text of this poem, James E. Miller Jr. asserts the importance of “manly love” and “sexual love,” as predominate themes in *Leaves of Grass*. Whitman

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<sup>81</sup> Geraldine G. Thompson, “Why Walt Whitman explores amativeness and adhesiveness in some of this poetry” (Master of Arts thesis, Atlanta University, 1972), 82-84. In the “Calamus” section, Whitman repeatedly refers to adhesiveness. This was Whitman’s term, borrowed from phrenology to describe male same-sex attraction. While it refers to homosexuality, it also infers comradery among men and close platonic male friendships.

<sup>82</sup> J. R. LeMaster, Donald D. Kummings, and Polly Dodson, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Walt Whitman* (Routledge, 1998), 96.

adapted phrenological<sup>83</sup> terms to differentiate between the two types of love:

“amativeness” for heterosexual love and “adhesiveness” for homosexual love.<sup>84</sup>

However, regardless of Whitman’s intention, the poem may be interpreted as a reaction to unrequited love or lack of finding romantic love.

### **Musical Analysis and Interpretation**

Rolfe’s musical setting, like the poem, has a relentless quality without resolution. The beginning of the song establishes a key center of D major. In the vocal line, the repeated rhythmic figures often oscillate between two pitches, which intensifies the rage and repetition in the poetry. Syncopated rhythms in the voice and driving, dry rhythms in the string quartet suggest Rolfe’s influence of popular music.<sup>85</sup> The syncopated rhythms of the vocal line, with notes frequently tied across bar lines, obscure the rhythmic pulse and create a sense of suspension (see Figure 3.4).

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<sup>83</sup> LeMaster, 520. Phrenology, a pseudo-science which measures bumps on the skull to predict mental traits, portrayed the brain as divided into different faculties that controlled the various aspects of personality. “Adhesiveness” was its name for friendship and camaraderie, “Amativeness” its name for romantic, sexual love. Whitman adapted these terms to differentiate between hetero- and homosexual love.

<sup>84</sup> LeMaster, 629.

<sup>85</sup> The influence of popular music on Rolfe’s style will be further explored in Chapter Five.



The image displays a musical score for a vocal and string quartet. The top system (measures 1-6) features a Soprano line and string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.). The tempo is marked 'Presto' with a quarter note equal to 88 (♩ = 88). The dynamics are 'f marcato'. The vocal line includes the lyrics: 'Not leav- ing from my ribb'd breast on - ly, Not in sighs at night in rage dis -'. The string parts are marked 'senza sord.' and 'f marcato senza sord. arco'. The bottom system (measures 7-12) continues the vocal line with lyrics: 'sat-is -fied with my-self, Not in those long - drawn, ill - sup - preat sighs, mockingly'. The tempo and dynamics remain the same. Annotations include blue circles around specific notes in the vocal line and red ovals around the string parts, highlighting syncopations and obscured pulse.

Figure 3.4 “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” mm.1-12, syncopations in the vocal line (shown in blue) and between the vocal line and string quartet obscure the sense of pulse (shown in red)

The piece prominently displays a D pedal. The string quartet remains static on a D pedal until m.43 with the sudden introduction of movement towards E $\flat$ , which establishes the new key center of E $\flat$  (See Figure 3.5).

39

Sopr. cries, laugh-ter, de-fi-an-ces, thrown from me when a-lone far in the wilds, Not in hus-ky pant

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

44

Sopr. - ings through clenched teeth, Not in sound-ed and re-sound-ed words,

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Figure 3.5 “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” mm.39-48, introduction of the new tonal center  $E_b$  annotated in red

The string quartet plays in rhythmic unison in minor seconds or minor thirds by octave displacement similar to the interval usage in “I heard you.” There is a sequence of ascending motion beginning at m.55, which corresponds with the expression marking “with building intensity” (shown in Figure 3.6).

54 *mp with building intensity*  
 Sopr. sleep, Nor the o-ther mur - murs of these in - cre-di-ble dreams of ev - ery day,  
 Vln. I *mp*  
 Vln. II *mp*  
 Vla. *mp*  
 Vc. *mp*

59 *mf*  
 Sopr. Nor... in the limbs and sen - ses of my bo - dy that take you and dis-miss you cou - r - um - u - al - ly,  
 Vln. I *mf*  
 Vln. II *mf*  
 Vla. *mf*  
 Vc. *mf*

Figure 3.6 “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” mm.54-63, showing stepwise ascending motion through repeated patterns annotated in red

The climax of the song coincides with the climax of the poem (“Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! O pulse of my life!”) with the rising motion in the vocal line from mm.55-73 to a powerful ending with repeated A5s, sung fortissimo (Figure 3.7). The abrupt silence created by the half rest at m.74 (see Figure 3.7) suggests a possible release of anger or a suppression of the outburst. The voice, with an expressive indication “*cooly*,” re-enters, with the string quartet, on a four-bar descending chromatic line leading to an Eb tonality, which establishes the new tonal center for the next song, “O you who I often and silently come” (see Figure 3.7).

The image displays a musical score for the song "Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only." It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 69-73) features a soprano vocal line and four string staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello). The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Not in a-ny or all of them O ad-he-sive-ness! O pulse of my life!". The string parts are marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. A red box highlights the final measure of the vocal line (measure 73), which ends with a fermata. The second system (measures 74-78) begins with a red box around measure 74, which is marked *mf* *coolly*. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "Need I that you ex-ist and show your-self a-ny-more than in these songs.". The string parts are marked with a piano (*p*) *leggiero* dynamic. A blue oval highlights the final measure of the vocal line (measure 78), which ends with a fermata. The key signature changes to E-flat major in measure 74.

Figure 3.7 “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” mm.69-78, climax of song and abrupt silence annotated in red; introduction of new tonal center  $E\flat$  annotated in blue

### Vocal Considerations

The absence of an instrumental prelude in “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only” may be a challenge since the singer needs to determine the beginning pitch of the vocal line without pitches from the string quartet, and must establish the accurate tempo upon starting. However, if the singer is performing the set in Rolfe’s suggested order, the key center of D major is established in the preceding song “I heard you,” which requires very sensitive, lyrical singing. The transition to “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only”

requires a more dramatic expression and intense, vibrant singing from the onset. The singer must set the new energy and atmosphere from her initial inhalation by breathing in the tempo, which will also cue the string quartet's downbeat in m.1 (see Figure 3.4).

Repeated D5 pitches sung with forte dynamics create a strong, vibrant opening line, which requires vocal ease through the secondo passaggio,<sup>86</sup> as well as flexibility and command of the middle and upper register (see Figure 3.4). The overriding vocal quality is one of coolness and detachment, but in a cheeky and sarcastic tone. Rolfe frequently uses repeated notes, which renders the vocal line more declamatory than lyrical. Over-articulation can make the words obtrusive and difficult to understand, which may distort the meaning of the text. To avoid this, the singer must maintain a legato line with rapid articulation of consonants.

Further, an overemphasis of the repeated word "Not" may impede the flow of the line. The singer's entrances tend to fall on off-beats, and every line begins with the word "Not." This may create a tendency to accent this repeated word, however, this disrupts the forward motion of the line. Rather, the singer should continue forward motion and place word stress on beat two of three, which also provides proper prosody of the phrase (see Figure 3.8).

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<sup>86</sup> See footnote 70 on p.46.

Presto  $\text{♩} = 88$   
*f marcato*

Sopr. *1*  
 Not heav-ing from my ribb'd breast on - ly, Not in sighs at night in rage dis -

senza sord.

Vln. I  
*f marcato*  
 senza sord.  
 arco

Vln. II  
*f marcato*  
 senza sord.  
 arco

Vla.  
*f marcato*  
 senza sord.  
 arco

Vc.  
*f marcato*

Figure 3.8 “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” mm. 1-6; suggested word stress underlined in red

Throughout the song, the repeating rhythmic figures in the vocal line and string quartet may contribute to ensemble difficulties as the string quartet plays staccato eighth-note figures in unison, sometimes lining up with the singer, while other times playing in syncopation against the vocal line (see Figure 3.4). The singer should always count in 2; never in 4 to maintain the rhythmic pulse. It is helpful to outline the major beats in the score to see where the string quartet and voice line up and where they are playing in syncopation.

### Song Three: “O you whom I often and silently come”

A profile displaying the style components, musical characteristics, and the text of “O you whom I often and silently come” can be found below in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4. Profile of “O you whom I often and silently come”**

<p><b>Range:</b> D4 to D5</p> <p><b>Tessitura:</b> F4 to C4</p> <p><b>Tempo:</b> Moderato ♩= 60</p> <p><b>Phrase Length:</b> Irregular</p> <p><b>Melody:</b> Lyrical, arching vocal line; sustained singing in middle range</p> <p><b>Accompaniment:</b> Driving repeated eighth-note rhythmic motives</p> <p><b>Language:</b> English</p> <p><b>Technical/Expressive Considerations:</b> Long phrases requiring advanced breath management</p> <p><b>Song Form:</b> Binary form</p> <p><b>Poetry Style:</b> Free verse</p> <p><b>Poetry:</b> From the section “Calamus” in <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1860)</p> <p><b>Text:</b> O you whom I often and silently come</p> <p>O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be with you, As I walk by your side, or sit near, or remain in the same room with you, Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is playing within me.</p>
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### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

To fully understand the text of “O you whom I often and silently come,” Charles Oliver suggests the importance of the immediately preceding poem in *Leaves of Grass*, “Among the Multitude,” which describes how easy it is through “secret and divine signs,”

to spot men in a crowd who think about love relationships the same way as the poet. In “O you whom I often and silently come,” Whitman describes a contrasting scene as he conveys how easy it is to be with someone who does not know about the secret signs.<sup>87</sup> Despite Oliver’s analysis, the poem may be interpreted simply as a quiet romantic longing for an unsuspecting friend, or an unrequited love (“Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is burning within me”).

### **Musical Analysis and Interpretation**

Rolfe’s musical setting of “O you whom I often and silently come” moves harmonically within a tonal area of Eb. The voice sings long lyrical legato lines within a narrow vocal range supported by a soft, repetitive pattern in the strings (see Figure 3.8). The sustained melodic line in the voice sits over top of the repeated harmonic figures in the string quartet with one of the strings almost always doubling the vocal line. When the melody moves, it does so in diatonic steps, striving towards a tonic resolution, only to fall back as it fails to reach its goal.

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<sup>87</sup> Oliver, 157.



The image displays a musical score for the vocal line and string accompaniment. The vocal part (Soprano) is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of 8/8. The lyrics are: "O you whom I of - ten and si - lent - ly come where you are that I \_ may be with you, As I". The string parts include Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The Violin parts feature repeated eighth-note figures, while the Viola and Cello play long sustained notes. Performance markings include *p legato*, *con sord.*, *mp poch. espr.*, and *pizz.*.

Figure 3.9 “O you whom I often and silently come,” mm.1-13; repeated harmonic figures in the first and second violin

The repeated, simple eighth-note figures in the first and second violins rarely play in unison; instead they echo one another (see Figure 3.9). This creates a polyphonic texture while the viola and cello play long sustained notes. Rolfe creates an extended arc shape in the vocal line through a stepwise melody that slowly builds tension through rise and fall motions (see Figure 3.10 and Figure 3.11). The chain of harmonic motion never fully resolves; rather, the song ends with a suspended G minor chord. The voice ends on a D4, which sets up the tonality of D minor for the next song, “Trickle Drops,” as shown in Figure 3.11.

The image displays a musical score for the vocal piece "O you whom I often and silently come," spanning measures 27 to 38. The score is arranged in five staves: Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).

**Measures 27-32:** The Soprano part begins with the lyrics "know the sub-tle e - lec - tric fire". A red arrow points to the first measure (m. 27), and another red arrow points to the first note of the word "e" in measure 28. The dynamic marking *poco a poco cresc.* is present above the vocal line and below the instrumental lines. The instrumental parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) feature a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

**Measures 33-38:** The Soprano part continues with the lyrics "that for your sake is play - ing with - in me,". A red arrow points to the first measure (m. 33). The dynamic marking *poco a poco decresc.* is present above the vocal line and below the instrumental lines. The instrumental parts continue with their rhythmic accompaniment.

Figure 3.10 "O you whom I often and silently come," mm.27-38, red arrows show suggested breath marks

The image shows a musical score for the vocal piece "O you whom I often and silently come," measures 39-49. The score is arranged in five staves: Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).

- Measure 39:** The Soprano part begins with the lyrics "that for your sake". The instrumental parts provide accompaniment.
- Measure 44:** The key signature changes from B-flat major to D major. This change is annotated in red in the original image. The Soprano part has the lyrics "is play - ing with - in me." and is marked *pp*. The instrumental parts are marked *decresc.* and *pp*. The Viola part includes the instruction *arco*.

Figure 3.11 "O you whom I often and silently come," mm.39-49, introduction of the new key center D annotated in red

### Vocal Considerations

"O you whom I often and silently come" is a short song containing many repeated pitches which are frequently doubled in the accompaniment. The extended vocal phrases require a singer to maintain a lyric line through the repeated notes with effective breath management. Rolfe offers little reprieve in the extended phrases, as there is only one dotted quarter rest at m.25. The singer should practice timing her onsets correctly and breathing expansively to build the breath she needs into the overall flow of musical expression so that it feels organic. An example to consider is the prolonged phrase at

mm.28-33 (see Figure 3.10). A breath may be taken before the pickup to m.28 on the words “the subtle,” or the phrase can be carried through with a breath before the pickup into m.29 on the word “electric.” On this same phrase, the singer may be tempted to crescendo too fast and loud, but this line is best conveyed through a subtle crescendo to convey the quiet longing and restraint of the text.

Because of the extended phrases in the vocal line, the singer may feel a tendency to drag the tempo, however, keeping aural awareness of the continuous eighth note motives in the strings helps maintain forward motion and rhythmic energy through the dotted and tied notes of the vocal line.

#### **Song Four: “Trickle drops”**

A profile of general style, musical characteristics, and the text of “Trickle drops” is found below in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5. Profile of “Trickle drops”**

<p><b>Range:</b> D4 to F5</p> <p><b>Tessitura:</b> A4 to E5</p> <p><b>Tempo:</b> m.1 ♩= 60, m.18 accelerando, m.28 ♩= 72, m.32 ritardando, m.36 ♩= 60</p> <p><b>Phrase Length:</b> Irregular phrase length</p> <p><b>Melody:</b> Sustained singing in middle range; word painting</p> <p><b>Accompaniment:</b> Dry, plucked accompaniment which exposes the vocal line and offers little support until m.21 when the string quartet switches to a full, sustained texture</p> <p><b>Language:</b> English</p> <p><b>Technical/Expressive Considerations:</b> Sustained singing in the middle voice,</p>
---

passaggio and clarity of diction.

**Song Form:** Modified ternary

**Poetry Style:** Free verse

**Poetry:** From the section “Calamus” in *Leaves of Grass* (1860)

**Text:** Trickle drops

Trickle drops! my blue veins leaving!  
 O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,  
 Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,  
 From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,  
 From my face, from my forehead and lips,  
 From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd,  
 press forth red drops, confession drops,  
 Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I say, bloody drops,  
 Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,  
 Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,  
 Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding drops,  
 Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

The text of “Trickle Drops” depicts images of the poet wounding himself in the face and chest so that his blood drips onto the pages of his book, staining his poems (see Table 3.5 under ‘Text’). The poem is a confession of secrets kept (“From wounds made to free you whence you were prison’d”). By wounding himself, the poet is letting the confessions bleed out of him so they can no longer be concealed (“From my breast, from within where I was conceal’d”). Although he is ashamed, he cannot hide his secrets as they are now out in the open for everyone to see. (“Stain every page, stain every song I sing... Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet, Glow upon all I have written or shall write”). In the context of the “Calamus” cluster in which “Trickle drops” resides,

scholars correlate the freeing of drops of blood with liberating homosexual desires.<sup>88</sup> Regardless of this, it may be interpreted as openly professing love for someone after years of secretly pining.

### Musical Analysis and Interpretation

The dry articulation of the strings first heard in the first song, “I heard you,” returns in “Trickle drops” in a descending motion to imitate droplets of blood (see Figure 3.12).

The image displays a musical score for the song "Trickle Drops," measures 1 through 10. The score includes a vocal line (Soprano) and four instrumental lines (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello). The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Trick-le drops! my blue veins leav-ing! O drops of me!" and continues with "Trick-le, slow... drops, Can-did from me fall-ing, drip, bleed-ing drops,". The instrumental parts feature various articulations such as "pizz. senza sord.", "p leggiero", and "pizz., senza sord.". A red arrow points from the vocal line down to the string parts, indicating a descending motion. Two blue circles highlight specific phrases in the vocal line: "Trick-le, slow... drops," and "fall-ing, drip, bleed-ing drops,".

Figure 3.12 “Trickle Drops,” mm.1-10 with examples of word painting annotated in blue and descending motions which imply the sound of droplets of blood annotated in red

<sup>88</sup> LeMaster, 745.

At m.18 there is a change in texture when the first and second violins switch from *pizzicato* to *arco*, coinciding with the *accelerando*. The upper three voices in the string quartet are built on two- or three-note motives, creating a strong imitative effect. The combination of these motives continues the downward melodic motion from the beginning of the piece, now played in a sustained and extended pattern. The *accelerando*, beginning at m.18, may be a challenge for the ensemble as all players (singer included) need to accelerate and then decelerate back to the original tempo at m.36 (see Figure 3.13).

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Trickle Drops," spanning measures 16 to 25. The score is arranged in five staves: Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.).

At measure 16, the Soprano part begins with the lyrics: "From my breast, from with - in where I was con - ceal'd, press forth red drops, con - fes - sion drops,". The string quartet (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) is playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. A red box highlights the change in texture starting at measure 18, where the first and second violins switch from *pizzicato* to *arco* playing. The dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is present in the string parts. Above the string parts, the instruction "poco a poco accelerando e crescendo" is written.

At measure 21, the Soprano part continues with the lyrics: "Stain ev - ery page, stain ev - ery song I sing, ev - ery word I say, blood - y drops,". The string quartet continues with the same rhythmic pattern, now marked with *f* (forte). The instruction "(accel.)" is written above the Soprano part. The dynamic marking *f* is also present in the string parts.

Figure 3.13 "Trickle Drops," mm.16-25; m.18 marks the change in texture from dry and sparse to sustained playing in the string quartet annotated in red

The harmonic texture continues to thicken as the viola switches to *arco* at m.24, and the cello switches to *arco* at m.28 at the climax of the song on the words “Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet, Glow upon all I have written or shall write.” The saturation of sound, created through the sustained harmonies in the string quartet and the legato line in the voice, intensifies the poem’s image of blood saturating the pages of the poetry (see Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.14 shows the musical score for measures 26-30. The score is for Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The tempo is marked as *accel.* with a metronome marking of  $\text{♩} = 72$  (*non più accel.*). The Soprano part has lyrics: "Let them know your scar-let heat, let them glist-en, Sa-tu-rate them with your self all a-shamed and wet,". The string quartet (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) provides sustained harmonies. The Viola part is marked *f* and *arco*. The Cello part is marked *f* and *arco*. The score includes triplets and slurs.

Figure 3.14 continues with measures 31-35. The score is for Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The tempo is marked as *poco a poco ritardando e decrescendo*. The Soprano part has lyrics: "Glow up-on all I have writ-ten or shall write, bleed-ing drops, Let it all be seen in your light,". The string quartet (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) provides sustained harmonies. The Viola part is marked *mf*. The Cello part is marked *mf*. The score includes triplets and slurs.

Figure 3.14 “Trickle Drops,” mm.26-35; sustained harmonies in the string quartet and the legato line in the voice, intensifies the poem’s image of blood saturating the pages of the poetry



The song stays in the key center of D minor until there is an abrupt shift in colour in the final measure with the inclusion of the E $\sharp$  and F $\sharp$  in the vocal line. Marked *peacefully*, this shift suggests that through the act of his confession, the poet is absolved of his guilt (see Figure 3.15).

The image shows a musical score for the song "Trickle Drops" from measures 26 to 40. The score includes staves for Soprano (Sopr.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The tempo is marked as *Tempo primo* with a quarter note equal to 60 (♩ = 60). The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano). The string accompaniment is marked *pizz.* (pizzicato). The vocal line is marked *molto rit.* (molto ritardando) and *p peacefully* (piano peacefully). A red circle highlights the final measure of the vocal line, where the key signature changes from D minor to D major, indicated by the presence of E $\sharp$  and F $\sharp$  in the vocal line. The lyrics are: "blush-ing drops, Let it all be seen in your light".

Figure 3.15 “Trickle Drops,” mm.26-40, shift in colour with the inclusion of the E $\sharp$  and F $\sharp$  in the vocal line

### Vocal Considerations

The sparse string accompaniment in “Trickle Drops” exposes the vocal line and provides little support for the voice until m.18. The singer should be mindful to maintain a legato line and not succumb to imitating the plucked sound of the strings. The tessitura may be especially challenging for a soprano, as the melody sits in the lower middle voice for the majority of the song.

Contradicting rhythmic word painting in the vocal line occurs at m.6 on the words “trickle slow” with the quick sixteenth on “trickle” and then the drawn-out rhythm on “slow” through a syncopated rhythm across two measures as shown in Figure 3.11. In preparation, the singer should practice with a metronome set to eighth notes to feel the

rhythmic pulse and maintain forward movement through the vocal line. Another example occurs at m.9 on the words “falling drip” with “falling” written in a descending chromatic motion followed by “drip” on an unaccented eighth note (Figure 3.12). Practicing chromatic scales, especially descending chromatic scales on the [a] vowel with a bright, forward placement, will be beneficial to navigate the vocal line.

The long *accelerando*, from mm.21-31, requires attention from the singer and string quartet with regards to ensemble and interpretation (Figure 3.13 and Figure 3.14). The singer should lead this *accelerando* by communicating tempo changes with her breath and by quick and clear articulation of their consonants to the new tempo.

### **Song Five: “One hour to madness and joy”**

Found in Table 3.6 is a profile of “One hour to madness and joy,” which shows general musical and style components, and the text.

**Table 3.6. Profile of “One hour to madness and joy”**

<b>Range:</b> B3 to A5
<b>Tessitura:</b> D5 to F5
<b>Tempo:</b> Furioso, ♩ = 92-96
<b>Phrase Length:</b> Irregular phrase
<b>Melody:</b> Active melodic line reflecting the rhythm of the language; short melisma with frequently syncopated rhythm.
<b>Accompaniment:</b> Unrelenting repeated eighth-note figures
<b>Language:</b> English
<b>Technical/Expressive Considerations:</b> Rhythmic precision between ensemble players

**Song Form:** Ritornello form

**Poetry Style:** Free verse

**Poetry:** From the section “Children of Adam” in *Leaves of Grass*

**Text:** One hour to madness and joy!

One hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!  
 O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!  
 O savage and tender achings!  
 O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be yielded to me in defiance of the world!  
 O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine!  
 O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the lips of a determin'd woman.  
 O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at last!  
 To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!  
 To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!  
 To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and dangerous!  
 To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!  
 To rise thither with my inebriate soul!  
 To be lost if it must be so!  
 To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fullness and freedom!  
 With one brief hour of madness and joy.

### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

“One hour to madness and joy” is from the section “Children of Adam” from *Leaves of Grass*. According to Margaret H. Duggar, ““One hour of madness and joy” conveys the erotic charge impelling cosmic forces (“to drink the mystic deliria) that combine in inevitable acts of creation in Whitman’s universe: body and soul to create the self, earth and sun to create the natural world, reader and poet to regenerate culture. The transports of sexual ecstasy celebrated in the poem are a powerful metaphor for the moments of transcendent self-awareness.”<sup>89</sup> As this set is written for soprano, Rolfe has

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<sup>89</sup> LeMaster, 482.

changed the masculine pronouns in the poetry to feminine ones in the musical setting.

Whitman employs the literary technique of anaphora for the purpose of generating excitement in the repeated opening words “O” and “To”. The beginning of each line sets up an expectation of repetition. The last line of the poem breaks this mould by beginning the sentence “with” (“with one brief hour of madness and joy”), which emphasizes the fleeting moment of ecstasy in the poetry.

### **Musical Analysis and Interpretation**

This song is a lyrical declamation similar in style, rhythm, and texture to “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only.” “One hour of madness and joy” immediately establishes a D pedal. The melody is doubled by the accompaniment with a sparse texture and moments of silence used to heighten textual intensity. The vocal line alternates between rhythmic punctuation and a long, descending legato line as shown in Figure 3.16.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. It is divided into three systems of staves.

**System 1 (Measures 1-4):** The vocal line (Soprano) is marked *J staccato* and features rhythmic punctuation. The lyrics are: "One hour to mad-ness and joy! O fu-ri-ous! O con-fine me not!". The instrumental parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello) are marked *arco* and *f marcato*. The strings play a rhythmic accompaniment.

**System 2 (Measures 5-6):** The vocal line begins with a long, descending legato line marked *mp yearning*. The lyrics are: "O \_\_\_\_\_ to drink the my-stic de-li-ri-a, de-". The instrumental parts continue with the same rhythmic accompaniment, marked *p staccato* and *poco sul pont.*

**System 3 (Measures 7-11):** The vocal line continues with the long, descending legato line, marked *mf*. The lyrics are: "li-ri-a, de-li-ri-a deep-er, deep-". The instrumental parts continue with the same rhythmic accompaniment, marked *p staccato* and *poco cresc.*

Figure 3.16 "One hour to madness and joy," mm.1-16; vocal line alternating between rhythmic punctuation, in mm.1-4 and a long, descending legato line in mm.7-15

Similar to “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” there is a sequence of ascending stepwise motion from D5 to A5. This ascending motion is extended over eighty-one measures (mm.1-81) with the arrival of the climax at m.81 on the word “lost” on the A5. This is followed by an immediate descending stepwise motion from mm.81-87 from the A5 back to D5 (see Figure 3.17).

77

Sopr. with my in-e - bri - ate soul! To be lost,

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

81

Sopr. lost,

Vln. I *b*

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

87

Sopr. if it must be so!

Vln. I *poco sul pont.*  
*p*

Vln. II *poco sul pont.*  
*p*

Vla. *poco sul pont.*  
*p*

Vc. *poco sul pont.*  
*p*

Figure 3.17 “One hour to madness and joy,” mm.77-92, descending stepwise motion in the vocal line annotated in blue, abrupt change in string quartet to low register in unison on a sparse repeating rhythmic figure

Dramatic tension is sustained in the three-note figures in the string quartet until m.88 when the string quartet abruptly changes to a low register with all instruments playing *sul ponticello*<sup>90</sup> in unison on a sparse repeating rhythmic figure (see Figure 3.17). Rolfe lets the passionate moment subside with melodic repetitions in the lower vocal register, which are imitated in the string quartet. This rhythmic figure is juxtaposed with silences before expanding to the final climax at m.105, as the string quartet and singer suddenly move up the octave and end in unison on the text “One hour to madness and joy” (see Figure 3.18). The final two measures are reminiscent of the opening two measures and re-establish the D key center, which transitions to the key center of the final piece “A clear midnight.”

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<sup>90</sup> *Sul ponticello* means to bow close to (or even on) the bridge of the instrument.



93 *p* with suppressed fury

Sopr. To feed the re-main-der of life with one

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

93

Sopr. hour of ful-ness and free-dom! With one brief

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

102

Sopr. hour of mad-ness and joy, *f* one hour of mad-ness and joy. *f*

Vln. I *f subito* norm. *f*

Vln. II *f subito* norm. *f*

Vla. *f subito* norm. *f*

Vc. *f subito* norm. *f*

The image shows three systems of a musical score. The first system (measures 93-96) features a soprano line with lyrics 'To feed the re-main-der of life with one' and a piano (*p*) dynamic with the instruction 'with suppressed fury'. The instrumental parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) provide accompaniment. The second system (measures 97-100) continues the soprano line with lyrics 'hour of ful-ness and free-dom! With one brief'. The third system (measures 101-106) shows the soprano line with lyrics 'hour of mad-ness and joy,' followed by a repeat of 'one hour of mad-ness and joy.' at a forte (*f*) dynamic. The instrumental parts also show a dynamic shift from *f subito* to *norm.* and back to *f*. A red box highlights the final two measures of the third system, where the *f* dynamic is maintained.

Figure 3.18 “One hour to madness and joy,” mm.93-106 re-establishment of the D key center, which transitions to the key center of the next song “A clear midnight”

## Vocal Considerations

Similar to “Not heaving from my ribb’d breast only,” the absence of an instrumental prelude can create a challenge for the ensemble as the singer needs to lead with the tempo with her initial inhalation. The singer should maintain a strong feeling of energy and forward motion throughout this song. With the vocal line full of lyric passion, the challenge for the singer lies in creating a long legato line as the string quartet plays short articulated rhythms underneath.

Marked as “Furioso,” the tempo for the piece should not move so quickly that the text is lost – a slower tempo with precise diction is preferred over a faster tempo for the sake of clarity of the text. The voice must sing long phrases in the upper middle soprano range while articulating a lot of text. The wordiness of the text combined with the forward motion in the string quartet may create a tendency to rush when performed. From beginning to end, constant negotiation between the middle and upper register occurs with most of the notes hovering around the *secondo passaggio*.<sup>91</sup> It is helpful to practice the entire song on the vowels of the text as many of the phrases occur on the same note or only move a whole step oscillating on two notes.

Negotiating the long descending lines through the *secondo passaggio*<sup>92</sup> into the lower register of the soprano voice is a challenging aspect of “One hour to madness and joy” (see Figure 3.16). The singer must maintain timbre consistency through the descending lines by managing breath flow and adjusting vowel shape accordingly. Another challenge in the vocal line is the drastic register changes that occur. Most notable

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<sup>91</sup> See footnote 70 on p.46.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

is the register change from the upper to lower register between the two phrases of mm.80-88 and mm.93-104 (see vocal line of Figure 3.17 and Figure 3.18). At m.93 Rolfe has indicated a marking of “*with suppressed fury.*” Upon this sudden switch to the lower register, Rolfe has indicated a marking of “*with suppressed fury.*” The temptation to sing loudly with force on the low notes should be avoided, rather, the singer should maintain a resonant space and steady air flow. This will also aid in the transition back up the octave on the final phrase, “One hour to madness and joy!” in m.105 (see Figure 3.18). The soprano must remember that trying to sing heavy chest tones in the low range is a danger for the transition to and freedom needed in the upper register. The sounds of the low range must be started near the front of the mouth and maintain some of the upper resonances from the preceding phrases, so that there is consistency between the registers. It is not necessary to aim for a darker colour in the lower register; instead, the soprano should aim for a bright and frontal placement to be able to sing the final phrase with tremendous vitality.

### **Song Six: “A clear midnight”**

A profile displaying the style components, musical characteristics, and the text of “A clear midnight” is shown below in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7. Profile of “A clear midnight”**

<b>Range:</b> E4 to F5
<b>Tessitura:</b> F#4 to C5
<b>Tempo:</b> Serenely, ♩ = 40-48
<b>Phrase Length:</b> Irregular phrase length

**Melody:** Long, legato vocal line

**Accompaniment:** Static solid harmonies built between the violins and viola with arpeggiated chords in the cello

**Language:** English

**Technical/Expressive Considerations:** Legato singing in the middle and lower voice

**Song Form:** Through-composed

**Poetry Style:** Free-verse, however, has a quasi-traditional rhythm that is almost in iambic meter

**Poetry:** From the section “From Noon to Starry Night” in *Leaves of Grass* (1881)

**Text:** A clear midnight

This is thy hour O soul, a free flight into the wordless,  
 Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done,  
 Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the themes thou lovest best,  
 Night, sleep, death, and the stars.

### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

The short text for “A Clear Midnight” is from the section “From Noon to Starry Night” in *Leaves of Grass*. The poems in this section focus on the progression from material (life) to spiritual (after-life) concerns. “A Clear Midnight” refers to the moment of transition that takes place from one day to the next. The moment is used as a metaphor from changing from corporeal existence to the spiritual existence – a transition period – the final moments between life and death. The line, “Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done,” uses the literary technique of anaphora to place emphasis on the effect of a peaceful night, to depict how the midnight he describes removes everything from his mind, similar to a meditative state. The peaceful midnight

Whitman describes is a moment of serene and fearless transition into death.

### Musical Analysis and Interpretation

In the musical setting, a serene atmosphere is depicted through the sustained supporting chords of the string quartet as the vocalist sings a long lyrical line within a minimal vocal range. In the opening measures, the string quartet begins with arpeggiated chords in the cello and sustained chords in the violins and viola, which emulate the stillness of night and form a homophonic texture as shown in Figure 3.19. This creates both a static tension and a forward motion. The vocal line floats unhurriedly above the string quartet. At m.22 the texture changes with an ascending line in the voice and first violin up to a F5 marked *molto ritardando* on the words “Thee fully forth, emerging,” which is followed by a quarter rest before the voice part enters back in on the word “silent” at m.24, without the string quartet, to highlight the meaning of the poetry (see Figure 3.20).

1 Serenely  $\text{♩} = 40 - 48$  *p* legato e tranquillo

Sopr. This is thy hour, O soul,

Vln. I con sord. *pp* legato e tranquillo

Vln. II con sord. *pp* legato e tranquillo

Vla. con sord. *pp* legato e tranquillo

Vc. pizz. *pp* tranquillo

Figure 3.19 “A clear midnight,” mm.1-8; the string quartet begins with arpeggiated chords in the cello and sustained chords in the violins and viola creating a static texture

17 **molto rit.** ♩ = 56 - 58

Sopr. The daye-rased, the les-son done, Thee\_ full-y forth, e-merg-ing, si - lent,

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

24

25 **A tempo** ♩ = 44 - 48

Sopr. gaz - ing, pon - der-ing the themes thou lov-est best,

Vln. I *poco espr.*

Vln. II

Vla. *arco*

Vc. *bizz.*

Figure 3.20 “A clear midnight,” mm.17-24; the line, annotated in red, is best conveyed maintaining a piano dynamic to convey the meaning of the text and emphasize the word “silent” at m.24

### Vocal Considerations

Similar to “O you whom I often and silently come,” the vocal line of “a clear midnight” is lyrical and should be sung with a flawless legato and a feeling of quiet reflection and peacefulness to convey the meaning of the poetry. The vocal line spins out in a long, elegant, endless line that almost disguises the phrase structure of the melody

resulting in a melody that hovers above the accompaniment.

The slow tempo and long phrases require even and sustained breath flow. The temptation is to crescendo through the *molto rit.* at mm.24-28 (See Figure 3.19), but this line is best conveyed maintaining a *piano* dynamic to convey the meaning of the text and emphasize the word “silent,” at m.24. Also, the urge to add a *fermata* on “silent” should be avoided as the *molto rit.* and rests at mm.24-25 and again at mm.28-29 already produce this effect.

### ***Six Songs Summary***

The vocal range of these songs is relatively narrow, reflecting most accurately the pitch and rhythms of speech. This is characteristic of Rolfe’s vocal writing as he often uses repetition of a single note for dramatic emphasis. Since *Six Songs* mainly sits in the middle voice, the singer’s mixed register must be highly developed. An understanding of healthy transitions between the chest voice and middle voice is essential in the performance of this work. Moreover, the singer must be able to transition between the rhythmically driven movements (“Not heavin’ from my ribb’d breast only,” “Trickle Drops” and “One hour to madness and joy”) which require more vocal power, range and stamina, and the slower movements (“I heard you, solemn sweet pipes of the organ,” “O you whom I often and silently come,” and “A clear midnight”) which require a lighter, yet still clear, penetrating, and agile sound.

Singers may experiment with vocal colours throughout this cycle, for the differing effects of the poems suggest a variety of emotions that can be reflected in the voice. Rolfe’s control of melodic contour, phrasing, dynamics, and rhythmic articulation

consistently serve to illustrate Whitman's beautiful poetic atmosphere and textual details. The text is further illuminated through the accompaniment, whether by quiet static chords, or driving rhythmic motives.

The lack of harmonic resolution in *Six Songs* gives the music a floating quality that continues uninterrupted by harmonic cadences or lack of obvious phrase endings as each piece transitions to the next through a change to a new tonal center.<sup>93</sup> This ethereal quality is further emphasized by instances where the vocal line and string quartet appear static, either because they are vacillating between pitches or because the rhythm does not imply forward motion (see Figure 3.9 and 3.19). Rolfe establishes unity between the songs through the recurrence of rhythmic patterns and long descending lines (see Figure 3.1) or ascending lines (see Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.17).

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<sup>93</sup> See p.39 for the outline of the tonal center transitions.



## Chapter Four: *Phrases* Performance Guide

This chapter will provide a comprehensive performance guide for James Rolfe's vocal chamber work *Phrases* (1991). Performers can use this as a reference to shape their interpretation, and to effectively communicate the meaning of the poetry and musical ideas. The chapter begins with a brief background for *Phrases* and a general profile of its characteristics (see Table 4.1). This is followed by background on the poet, a poetry analysis and interpretation, a musical analysis and interpretation, and concludes with vocal considerations.

### 4.1 Background

*Phrases* was written in 1991, and premiered in Toronto on April 25, 1991 at the Music Gallery, as part of a Continuum Contemporary Music concert; it was also broadcast by CBC radio on *Two New Hours*. Soprano Barbara Hannigan, clarinetist Don Hutton, and pianist Barbara Pritchard premiered the work. Shown in Table 4.2, the text of *Phrases* is from *Les Illuminations*, a collection of prose poetry<sup>94</sup> by nineteenth-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891). Composed on the hundredth anniversary of the poet's death, Rolfe was drawn to Rimbaud's poetry structure and style:

I knew I wanted to do something from *Les Illuminations*. I chose *Phrases* which is a section of eight sentences that really have nothing to do with each other, yet they're grouped as a whole. That in itself is intriguing as they have a structure of totally unrelated fragments. The [fragmentation] already gives [a composer] a lot

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<sup>94</sup> J.A. Cuddon et al., *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 564. Prose poetry is a composition printed as prose, but distinguished by elements common in poetry such as elaborately contrived rhythms, figures of speech, rhyme, assonance, consonance, and startling images.

of ideas of what to do [with the music].<sup>95</sup>

Echoing the fragmentation of the poem, Rolfe's musical setting consists of two unrelated, concurring strands of music: the lyrical line of the clarinet against the sparse and often percussive nature of the piano and vocal lines. These concurring strands of music blur the distinction between the background and foreground. Sparse harmonies, disjointed phrase structure, and rhythmic tools such as syncopation and frequent tempo changes conceal the pulsation of the text's natural rhythm and highlight the fragmented sentence structure of the poetry. A profile of *Phrases* is outlined in Table 4.1 which includes background information, style components, and an overview of musical elements such as melody, harmony, rhythm, accompaniment.

**Table 4.1. Profile of Phrases**

<b>Poet:</b> Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891)
<b>Composition Date:</b> 1991
<b>Publisher:</b> Canadian Music Centre
<b>Voice Type(s):</b> Soprano
<b>Instruments:</b> Piano and clarinet
<b>Language:</b> French
<b>Length:</b> 14 minutes
<b>Commission:</b> Continuum Contemporary Music
<b>Premiere:</b> April 25, 1991 at the Music Gallery, Toronto Ontario broadcast on Two New Hours on CBC Radio Two with Barbara Hannigan, soprano; Don Hutton, clarinet; and Barbara Pritchard, piano

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<sup>95</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

**Range:** B3 to Bb5

**Tessitura:** G4 to C5; tessitura varies throughout the work. The singer must possess the ability to sing comfortably in the lower and upper registers of the soprano range for extended periods of time.

**Tempo:** m.1 ♩ = 38-42 (Bb clarinet solo) | mm.2-47 ♩ = 112-126 | mm.48-66 ♩ = 46-50 | mm.67-137 ♩ = 72-80 | mm.138-143 ♩ = 100-108 | mm.144-203 ♩ = 50-54 | mm.204-205 ♩ = 40

**Phrase Length:** Irregular phrase length

**Melody:** Disjunct melodic line with repeated notes followed by large dissonant leaps, a cappella section, and extreme changes in the vocal register

**Accompaniment:** Oscillates between thick chordal textures with pounded chords and chromatic figures blurred with the pedal in the piano and a continuous long lyrical clarinet line that becomes increasingly fragmented and sparse as the piece progresses. Both the piano and clarinet are often in dissonance with the vocal line.

**Language:** French

**Technical/Expressive Considerations:** Disjunct phrases and continuous register shifts with complex, syncopated rhythms.

**Song Form:** Through-composed

**Poetry Style:** Free verse

**Poetry:** *Phrases* from the collection of prose poetry *Les Illuminations*

#### 4.2 Poet and Poetry: Arthur Rimbaud and *Les Illuminations*

Born in France on October 20, 1854, Arthur Rimbaud began writing poetry at the age of sixteen, and wrote all his poetry in a span of approximately five years, concluding around the year 1875. In 1873, after a love affair with the French poet Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) turned sour, Verlaine shot Rimbaud in the wrist with a revolver in a Belgian hotel room. Shortly after this incident, Rimbaud, tired of his bourgeois life, decided to quit writing poetry and embarked on travels to Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

There is no evidence that Rimbaud wrote poetry again after his twenty-first birthday. Scholars disagree on the compositional timeline of *Les Illuminations*. Suggested from the state of the manuscripts, Rimbaud's handwriting and internal evidence gathered through his letters, it is estimated that he wrote these poems between 1872 and 1875.<sup>96</sup>

As a leader of the Symbolist Movement, Rimbaud rejected his predecessors' tendency toward naturalism and realism. Instead, he preferred the idea of transcendence, and used the unconscious mind as a source of literary inspiration by writing about dreams, visions, and hallucinations.<sup>97</sup> He is credited as one of the first poets to adopt *vers libre* (free verse), and of transcending traditional syntax and narrative elements in favour of symbols (such as children to represent innocence, an old man surrounded by luxury to represent materialism, witches to represent social pariahs, or the sun to represent enlightenment or the spiritual realm).<sup>98</sup> In a letter to his publisher, Rimbaud wrote that he was looking to destroy language through "derangement of the senses." The sincerity and sarcasm in his poems are not contradictions; they overlap.<sup>99</sup> Considered a visionary poet, Rimbaud was determined to grasp the unknown, purposefully destroying himself through self-mutilation, drugs, alcohol, starvation and sleep deprivation in the hopes of experiencing creative genius.<sup>100</sup>

Rolfe was drawn to Rimbaud's poetry because of the imagery and the rhythmic nature of the sentences. "Rimbaud has an incredible originality and vividness of

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<sup>96</sup> Cecil Arthur Hackett, *Rimbaud: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1981), 21.

<sup>97</sup> Hackett, 129-130.

<sup>98</sup> Wallace Fowlie, *Poem and Symbol: A Brief History of French Symbolism* (University Park U: Pennsylvania State Univ. Pr., 1990), 112.

<sup>99</sup> Hackett, 14.

<sup>100</sup> Jeffrey Meyers. "The Savage Experiment: Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine." *The Kenyon Review* 33, no. 3 (2011), 167-80. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41304666>.

language. He has a very disturbing and destructive attitude in his poetry, which seems strange for someone who was only eighteen or nineteen years old when he wrote *Les Illuminations*.”<sup>101</sup>

### 4.3. Performance Guide

#### Poetry Analysis and Interpretation

The poetry of *Phrases* is constructed as eight distinct sections that, if separated, could each be a stand-alone poem (see Table 4.2). The ideas are fragmented, and the text overall is nonsensical and hallucinogenic (“When the world is reduced to a single black forest...to a beach for two faithful children—to a musical house for our clear sympathy” mm.2-14). The descriptions in *Phrases* of witches (m.127), stars (m.112), mists (m.87), and pink fire in the clouds (m.138) evoke hazy, dreamlike imagery.

*Phrases* centers on strange images of dualities: guilt and innocence,<sup>102</sup> strength and weakness,<sup>103</sup> and feminine and masculine power.<sup>104</sup> The poetry encompasses both the calm and chaotic elements of life through ambivalence, fragmentation of ideas, and the rapid juxtaposition of images.<sup>105</sup> Rimbaud’s use of free verse induces a hypnotic effect, which works in succession with his use of syntax and ambiguity.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> See “monstrous child” in m.54 vs “faithful children” in m.9 in Table 4.2.

<sup>103</sup> See “When we are very strong—who recoils? very gay—who crumbles with ridicule?” in mm.36-39 in Table 4.2.

<sup>104</sup> See “my daughters! my queens!” in mm.196-202 vs “festivals of brotherhood” in m.136 in Table 4.2.

<sup>105</sup> See “...calm and beautiful surrounded by unheard-of luxury –and I’ll be at your feet. Let me make all your memories real–let me be she who knows how to bind you–I’ll suffocate you,” mm.22-35 in Table 4.2.

<sup>106</sup> See “J’ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher, des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre, des chaînes d’or d’étoile à étoile, et je danse,” in Table 4.2. Shown in French to illustrate Rimbaud’s use of rhythm and repeated words to create a hypnotic aural effect.

The fragmented sentences read like meditations or reflections. As Rimbaud's purpose was to cause a "derangement of the senses,"<sup>107</sup> the contradictions and fragmentary disjunctions seem to be about the human psyche oscillating between reality and a transcendental state. This is shown in moments of lucidity through the vivid descriptions of nature<sup>108</sup> and aberrance through the descriptions of surreal images.<sup>109</sup> The poem may be interpreted as a rejection of conventional ideologies in favour of a quest for transcendence, yet the search is guided by opposing principles: the poet craving and condemning transcendent beliefs by vacillating between reality and visions.

### Musical Analysis and Interpretation

*Phrases* is a through-composed piece; however, Rolfe compares it to a fractured song cycle that transitions from one section to the next through changes in texture in relation to the divisions in the poetry.<sup>110</sup> Despite a lack of distinct divisions in the music, these sections can be divided into eight sections (see Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2 Divisions of Poetry and Musical Sections in *Phrases* with English Translation by James Rolfe**

Sections	Original French Text	English Translation
<b>Section One mm.1-35</b>	Quand le monde sera réduit en un seul bois noir pour nos quatre yeux étonnées,—en une seule plage pour deux enfants fidèles,—en une maison musicale pour notre claire sympathie,—je vous trouverai.	When the world has been reduced to a single black forest for our four astonished eyes—to a beach for two faithful children—to a musical house for our clear sympathy—I'll find

<sup>107</sup> Hackett, 14.

<sup>108</sup> "Une matinée couverte en juillet. Un goût de cendres vole dans l'air;—une odeur de bois suant dans l'être, les fleurs rouies,—le saccage des promenades,—la bruine des canaux par les champs" mm.69-89 see Table 4.2 for translation.

<sup>109</sup> "Quelle sorcière va se dresser sur la couchant blanc?" m.127, and "il sonne une cloche de feu rose dans les nuages" m.138 see Table 4.2 for translation.

<sup>110</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

	Qu'il n'y ait ici-bas qu'un vieillard seul,—calme et beau, entouré d'un "luxe inouï",—et je suis à vos genoux. Que j'aie réalisé tous vos souvenirs, que je sois celle qui sait vous garrotter, je vous étoufferai.	you. Let there be here below only a single old man, calm and beautiful, surrounded by "unheard-of luxury"—and I'll be at your feet. Let me make all your memories real—let me be she who knows how to bind you—I'll suffocate you.
<b>Section Two mm.36-47</b>	Quand nous sommes très forts,—qui recule? très gaies, qui tombe de ridicule? Quand nous sommes très méchants,—que ferait-on de nous? Parez-vous, dansez, riez. — Je ne pourrai jamias envoyer l'Amour par la fenêtre.	When we are very strong—who recoils? very gay—who crumbles with ridicule? When we're very bad, what would they do with us? Dress up, dance, laugh—I will never be able to throw Love out the window.
<b>Section Three mm.48-68</b>	Ma camarade, mendiante, enfant monstre! Comme ça t'est égal, ces malheureuses et ces manoeuvres [sic.], et mes embarras. Attache-toi à nous avec ta voix impossible, ta voix! Unique flatteur de ce vil dèsespoir [sic.].	My comrade, beggar woman, monstrous child! little you care about these unfortunates, these manoeuvres, my troubles. Fix yourself to us with your impossible voice, your voice! only hope of this vile despair.
<b>Section Four mm. 69-94</b>	Une matinée couverte en juillet. Un goût de cendres vole dans l'air;—une odeur de bois suant dans l'être, les fleurs rouies,—le saccage des promenades,—la bruine des canaux par les champs,—pourquoi pas déjà les joujoux et l'encens?	A grey morning, in July. The taste of ashes floats in the air—the odour of wood sweating in the hearth—drenched flowers—rubble in the streets—mist from canals in the fields—why not indeed toys and incense?
<b>Section Five mm.94-117</b>	J'ai tendu des cordes de clocher à clocher, des guirlandes de fenêtre à fenêtre, des chaînes d'or d'étoile à étoile, et je danse.	I have hung ropes from belfry to belfry; garlands from window to window; chains of gold from star to star; and I dance.
<b>Section Six mm.117-134</b>	Le haut étang fume continuellement. Quelle sorcière va se dresser sur la couchant blanc? Quelles violettes frondaisons vont descendre!	The high pond steams continuously. What witch will arise against the pale sunset? What violet foliage will descend!

<b>Section Seven mm.135-140</b>	Pendant que les fonds publics s'écoulent en fêtes de fraternité, il sonne une cloche de feu rose dans les nuages.	While public funds are poured into festivals of brotherhood, a bell of pink fire tolls in the clouds.
<b>Section Eight mm.140-203</b>	Avivant un agréable goût d'encre de Chine, une poudre noir pleut doucement sur ma veillée.–Je baisse les feux du lustre, je me jette sur la lit, et, tourné du côté de l'ombre, je vous vois, mes filles, mes reines!	Releasing a pleasant flavour of Indian ink, a black powder rains softly on my vigil.– I lower the gas jets, throw myself on the bed, and, turning towards the shadows, I see you, my daughters! my queens!

### Section One mm.1 – 35

*Phrases* opens with a lyrical clarinet solo, marked *rubato* and *poco espressivo*, *lontano* with a tempo marking of  $J=38-42$  (see Figure 4.1). The clarinet plays only three pitches in the opening solo (G#, D#, E concert pitch) in a long, lyrical line. At m.2 the voice and piano enter in a homophonic texture, with the highest note of each chord in the piano playing in unison with the vocal line from mm.2-35. This homophonic texture against the clarinet's long line immediately establishes two unrelated strands of music. The clarinet line (G#, D#, E) forms a perfect fifth with a minor second above, with the perfect fifth suggesting a tonal context while the minor second functions as an appoggiatura or coloration. Juxtaposed against the vocal line and atonal piano chords, the clarinet has a sense of tonality, yet little sense of rhythm. In contrast, the voice and piano have no sense of tonality, and a strong sense of rhythm.

The shifting meters and rapid dynamic changes build forward motion. Tension is generated by harmonic and rhythmic conflict through the continuous repeated notes in the vocal line; the dry, percussive, repeating cluster chords in the piano; and the lyrical three-note melodic unit in the clarinet. Initially, the vocal line begins with a long legato line on



repeated quarter notes juxtaposed against sixteenth notes in the piano. The rhythm of the vocal line creates a *parlando* effect in which every syllable is equally weighted, while the rhythm of the piano creates a detached and percussive-like quality in tandem. At m.8, the legato vocal line is interrupted as the rhythmic structure becomes increasingly complex and disjointed with rests fragmenting the words, even splitting words into single syllables, which skews the prosody of the line (see Figure 4.1).

Throughout this section, the mood abruptly shifts between calm and chaotic using extreme changes in dynamics to emphasize the poetry, which begins *pp* as the poetry describes images of night, calm, and beauty, (mm.2-23) to *mf* on the words “et je suis à vos genoux” (*I am at your feet*, m.24) and climaxes on *ff* on the words “je vous étoufferai” (*I will suffocate you*, m.34). The fragmented text in the voice is intensified through increasingly complex harmonies and shifting meters, with further tension created by a long ascending vocal line, and sharp interjecting attacks in the piano (see Figure 4.1).

Clarinet (in Bb)  $\text{♩} = 38 - 42$  Rubato  $\text{♩} = 112 - 126$  T<sup>o</sup> giusto

Soprano *p* doucement

Piano  $\frac{5}{4}$  *p* secco

ra ré - duit en un seul bois noir pour nos qua - tre yeux é - ton - nés, -- en u -

ne pla - ge pour deux en - fants fi - dè - les, -- en u - ne mai - son mu - si - ca - le

Figure 4.1 Phrases, mm.1-12; opening clarinet solo annotated in red, voice and piano entrance annotated in blue, and fragmentation in the vocal line annotated in green

## Section Two mm.36 – 47

There is strong thematic unity between section one and section two because of the continuation of the repeated notes in the vocal line and the dry, percussive, repeating cluster chords in the piano (see Figure 4.2). The vocal line switches back to a legato line similar to mm.1-8, marked *mordrant* (biting). Rolfe’s use of the *mordrant* marking affirms a mocking tone, reiterating the irony in the poetry. The text in this section is an example of Rimbaud’s sarcasm mixed with sincerity, as he suggests a frivolity towards love, yet an inability to avoid it (“When we are very strong—who recoils? very gay—who crumbles with ridicule? When we’re very bad, what would they do with us? Dress up, dance, laugh—I will never be able to throw Love out the window”)

(♩ = ♩ = 112 - 126)

*mp* *p* *ff* *pp*

gar - rot - ter, -- je vous é - touf - fe - rai.

*f* *mordrant*

Quand nous som-mes très forts,--

*f* *marc. secco*

m.36

qui re-cu-le? très-gaies, qui tom-be de ri-di-cu-le? Quand nous som-mes très - mé-chants,--

Figure 4.2 Phrases, mm.32-40; introduction of section two annotated in red

Section Three mm.48 – 68

At m.48 there is an abrupt reduction in texture as the music shifts, without resolution, back to a lyrical clarinet solo with a sudden change in tempo to  $\text{♩} = 46-50$  (see Figure 4.3). The reintroduction of the clarinet solo emphasizes the surreal atmosphere and images of the text as the sudden reduction in texture and change in tempo skew the rhythmic pulse. This shift implies a feeling of volatility, which coincides with the paradoxes in the subsequent poetry beginning at m.53. This passage describes someone with a lack of compassion who champions despair (“Comrade of mine, beggar girl, monstrous child! How little you care about the wretched women, and the machinations and my embarrassment. Join us with your impossible voice, oh your voice! the one flatterer of this base despair”).

♩ = 46 - 50

mour par la fe-ne-tre.

♩ = 46 - 50

4/4

m.53

*mf* *mp* *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

*f* marc. ma legg.

Ma ca-ma-ra-de, men-di-an-te, en-fant mon-stre! Com-me ça t'est é-

Figure 4.3 Phrases, mm.47-56; clarinet solo annotated in red, pitches to assist with singer's entrance at m.53 annotated in blue (see vocal considerations p.104)

The fragmentation of the vocal line accentuates the jarring and confusing text, distorting the prosody through rhythmic gestures that break up words, and places stress on undue syllables or group two words together on one pitch (see Figure 4.4).

Clar.

Sopr.

gal, ces mal-heur - eus-es et ces man - oeuv-res, et mes em-bar - ras. At -

ta - che - toi à nous a-vec ta voix im - pos-si - ble, ta voix! U-ni-que

flat - teur de ce vil dès - es - poir. U - ne ma - ti - né - e

[sic.]

Figure 4.4 Phrases, mm.57-71; examples of skewed prosody underlined in red

In the vocal line, Rolfe uses twelve distinct pitches, (mm.53-94) and divides them into two complementary six-note units. The first unit, (B $\flat$ , F $\sharp$ , A, D, F $\natural$ , C $\sharp$ ) appears from mm.53-68 (see Figure 4.5). He does not restrict the set to a sequential pattern; rather, he puts the pitches in random order. However, these pitches function around two familiar constructions: a D major chord with a minor second above (D, F $\sharp$ , A, B $\flat$ ), and a D minor chord with a minor second below (D, F $\natural$ , A, C $\sharp$ ).

Figure 4.5 Phrases, six-note unit in vocal line from mm.53-68

Section Four mm.69 – 94

At m.69, the *a cappella* section introduces the second six-note unit built using two augmented triads on C (C, E, G $\sharp$ ) and G (D $\sharp$ , B, G) (see Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Phrases, six-note unit in a cappella section from mm.69-94

The *a cappella* section continues the fragmented text of the previous section with difficult intervallic lines and rhythmic challenges (see Figure 4.7). The poetry conjures sensory images of a dark and solitary summer morning (the taste of ashes in the air, the smell of wood sweating, the sight of steeped flowers, the sound of drizzle over the canals), while the musical setting distorts the text and uses extremes of dynamics. The combination of the serene language, and the anxious musical setting lead to a performative restlessness.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal ensemble and piano. The score is in French and includes the following lyrics: "flat - teur de ce vil dès - es - cou-ver- poir. U - ne ma - ti - né - te en juil - let. Un goût de cen - dres vo - le dans l'air; - u - ne o - deur de bois su - ant dans l'à - tre, les fleurs rou - ies, - le sac - ca - ge des pro - me - na - des, - la bru - i - ne des ca - naux par les champs, - pour - quoi pas dé - jà les jou - joux et l'en - cens?". The score is annotated with dynamics such as *p*, *pp*, *poco mf*, *p secco, legg., senza vibrato*, *ff*, and *p tranquillo*. A red box highlights a six-note unit in the piano part at m. 69, and blue circles highlight specific notes in the vocal lines.

Figure 4.7 Phrases mm. 65-94; introduction of a cappella section annotated in red; six-note unit built using two augmented triads on C (C, E, G $\sharp$ ) and G (D $\sharp$ , B, G) annotated in blue

### Section Five mm. 94 – 117

At m. 94 the piano enters introducing a new texture, played two octaves above the notated pitches and becomes increasingly disconnected with moments of improvisation. Rhythmically removed from the ensemble, the piano functions similarly to the clarinet in the opening solo at the beginning of *Phrases*. The piano oscillates in the highest register playing G7 and G $\sharp$ 7 below, and A $\sharp$ 7 and B7 above A7 until m. 98 when it introduces A7 into the line. However, this piano figure acts more as a percussive element, as the high register and dense rhythm make it impossible for the singer to use the piano as a pitch



reference (see Figure 4.8).

At m.99, the voice, clarinet, and left-hand piano enter together in what becomes a heterophonic texture as they play in near unison from mm.99-117 (see Figure 4.8). The clarinet and left-hand piano both have three-note motives, with the piano motive (G#, A, B) a semitone higher than the clarinet motive (G, A, Bb), while the voice is on an A pedal. The patterns are stated, interrupted, then restated, and revolve exclusively around relatively long durations of quarter notes and half notes, evoking a static, dreamlike quality that coincides with the mood expressed in the poetry. The connected right-hand piano figure emphasises the meaning of the poetry, which speaks of ropes, garland and chains being tied together. While the vocal line appears simple because of the repeated pitch A4 for nineteen measures, it becomes increasingly difficult as the clarinet shifts from playing unison to minor or major seconds in conjunction with the voice. The right-hand piano oscillates around an A7 pitch in the top octave of the piano, in syncopation with the voice and clarinet, producing a disorienting effect as it creates a wash of sound by blurring the rhythmic pulse.

The image shows a musical score for measures 95-102. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 95-98) shows the vocal line (treble clef) on a constant A4 note, the clarinet (treble clef) with a melodic line, and the piano accompaniment (grand staff) with a complex rhythmic figure in the left hand. A blue circle highlights a specific passage in the piano left hand. The second system (measures 99-102) shows the vocal line with lyrics: "J'ai ten - du des cor - des de clo - cher à". The vocal line is annotated in blue. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic figure, marked "(Loco)".

Figure 4.8 Phrases, mm.95-102; voice is on an A pedal while the clarinet and left hand of the piano revolve around the voice on three-note motives which both feature A as the middle note; the vocal line appears simple because of the repeated A4; however, the clarinet shifts from playing unison to minor or major seconds in conjunction with the voice annotated in blue

#### Section Six mm. 117 – 134

The texture shifts at m.117, with the removal of the clarinet and the continuation of the erratic rhythmic figure in the top octave of the piano. At m.122 the voice returns; its entrance marked *pesante, senza expres.* (heavy and ponderous, without expression) and is written as a three-note motive E, C#, C. Rolfe expands the motive at m.126 with the addition of three new pitches, D, D#, B, so the vocal line becomes a six-note motive (see Figure 4.9).

The sudden shift to E4 on the words “le haut,” combined with the *pesante* marking, produces a heavy dragging effect, which parallels the text’s hallucinatory image of a witch rising from the pond (m.122-129). The piano repeats the same figure until m.131 with the introduction of a short improvisatory passage indicated in the piano at m.132.

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the following lyrics: "Le haut", "lang fu - me con - ti - nu - el - le - ment", and "Quel - le sor - ci - è - re va se cres - ser". The piano accompaniment features a repeating six-note motive in the right hand, which is circled in red in the first system. The piano part includes markings such as "ff sub." and "[rit. sempre]".

Figure 4.9 Phrases, mm.120-128, six-note motive E, C#,C, D, D#, B in the voice

Section Seven mm.135 – 140

At m.135, the voice sings a repeated eighth-note pattern on C4, which is reminiscent of the opening vocal line in m.2 (see Figure 4.1); however, this time it is sung at almost twice the speed (see Figure 4.10) and marked *monotone et mécanique* (monotone and mechanical). The quick monotone singing in the lower soprano register produces a timbrally volatile effect, made more prominent by its juxtaposition against the twinkling wash of colour created by the piano's connected line in its top octave. The vocal line is precise and syllabic, while the text is suggestive and cryptic (While public funds are poured into festivals of brotherhood, a bell of pink fire tolls in the clouds). Since Rimbaud wanted to destroy religious, moral, and political ideologies, the “pink fire bell” in the sky may represent transcendence beyond these traditional institutions, while the “festivals of brotherhood” suggest the bourgeois lifestyle that Rimbaud was seeking to escape.

The musical score for Figure 4.10 consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line starting with a tempo marking of ♩ = 100 - 108. The vocal line is marked *p* *tranq.* and features a series of half notes. The piano accompaniment is marked *mf* *simple, presque monotone et mécanique* and features a rapid eighth-note pattern. The second system shows the vocal line continuing with the same eighth-note pattern, marked *poco sf*. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern. The third system shows the vocal line ending with a fermata, marked *Loco*. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern, marked [*Ed. sempre*].

Figure 4.10 *Phrases*, mm.135-138; return of repeated eighth-note pattern

### Section Eight mm.141 – 203

The end of Section Seven gives way to a very sparse chorale section made from six pitches, (B, B $\flat$ , G, C, A $\flat$ , A $\natural$ ) as outlined in Figure 4.11 (see Figure 4.12 for score excerpt). All three parts are marked *doucement, legato, pochiss. espr.* (sweetly, smooth, as little expression as possible).



Figure 4.11 Phrases, mm.142-203; six pitches used to construct the chorale

The chorale section consists of frequent semitones in all three instruments, a lack of rhythmic pulse, single chords, and short phrases flanked by silence (see Figure 4.12). As the music unfolds, the vocal line becomes progressively disjointed and interrupted with moments of silence. In this section, Rolfe stretches a short section of poetry, only two sentences long, over sixty-two measures (Releasing a pleasant flavour of Indian ink, a black powder rains softly on my vigil – I lower the gas jets, throw myself on the bed, and, turning towards the shadows, I see you, my daughters! my queens!). This passage accentuates the hallucinatory scene of floating, unanchored objects and conflict between fantasy and reality in the poetry.

The musical score consists of three systems. The first system (mm. 139-142) features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. A red box highlights the beginning of the chorale section, marked with *pp* and *p* dynamics, and includes a tempo marking  $\text{♩} = \text{♩} = 50 - 54$ . The second system (mm. 143-146) continues the vocal line with lyrics "gré - a - ble goût d'en - cre" and piano accompaniment. A blue box highlights a short phrase in the vocal line, flanked by silence. The third system (mm. 147-150) continues the vocal line with lyrics "de Chi - ne, u -" and piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*mp*, *p*, *pp*, *mf*, *sub.*), articulation (*long*, *pochiss. espr.*, *legato*), and performance instructions (*senza ped.*, [*♩*] *sempre*).

Figure 4.12 Phrases, mm.139-157; beginning of chorale section annotated in red; the chorale consists of frequent semitones, a lack of rhythmic pulse, and short phrases flanked by silence see vocal line annotated in blue for an example

## Vocal Considerations

Throughout this chamber work, the singer must possess a wide vocal range, from B3 to B $\flat$ 5, and be comfortable singing sudden dynamic changes in both the upper and lower registers of the voice. In the opening measures, there may be a tendency for the singer to match the piano's percussive quality because they are playing in unison (see Figure 4.1). However, the singer must maintain a legato line independent of the attack of the piano, especially as Rolfe uses the marking *doucement* for the vocal line and *secco* for the piano. Establishing this legato line at the onset is helpful for the singer to maintain a legato vocal technique, despite the many punctuating rests that interrupt the flow and contour of the phrases as the piece becomes more disjointed.

Finding pitches is particularly difficult in this work because the responsibility is almost completely that of the vocalist who must sing pitches without harmonic support and find pitches through intervallic relationships<sup>111</sup> between the other instruments or within the vocal line. One challenging entrance is m.53. The singer may prepare this entrance from her last pitch F $\sharp$ 5 in m.47 and sing up a major third to the B $\flat$ 5 entrance at m.53 (Figure 4.2). The singer may also obtain the entrance pitch from the clarinet's final note (G4 concert pitch) and sing a minor third plus an octave above (B $\flat$ 5). Regardless, this entrance proves challenging as intervals within a harmonic structure and implied harmonic direction are simpler to sing and tune than the same interval with only intervallic relationships.

Two consecutive sections, Section Three mm.48-68 and Section Four mm.69-94,

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<sup>111</sup> The ability to identify a musical note by comparing it to a reference note and identifying the interval between those two notes.

are most challenging as they comprise a wide vocal range and a jagged intervallic line with equally difficult rhythmic challenges. From mm.53-68, the singer is required to sing in dissonance with the clarinet. Subsequently, from mm.69-94 the singer must sing an equally difficult section with no harmonic support to navigate the atonal vocal line. For these two sections, the singer would find it helpful in her personal preparation to compress the intervals into one octave to make it easier to learn the intervallic relationships. Once the singer has repeatedly sung the line in one octave to become comfortable with the line, she should practice it again with the original interval leaps.

In order for the soprano to retain a sense of the tune and simplify the complex nature of the phrase it is helpful to find the core tones in these sections<sup>112</sup> and create connective intervallic relationships between these core tones and the other tones in the line to guide the ear. Further, outlining the direction of the rhythmic movements which correspond to intervallic movement will guide the flow of the voice. Once the soprano is comfortable with the intervallic line, she should slowly incorporate the original phrasing and rhythmic indications until the passage can be sung as the composer intended. The singer may find it helpful to navigate these two challenging sections by practicing with a pitch pipe or tuning fork between phrases to assist with pitch accuracy.

Analyzing the construction of these two sections may be helpful in the soprano's tonal preparation. Rolfe uses small pitch motives and expands them into larger forms, generally based on three-note or six-note units. As outlined in the musical analysis, the vocal line of Section Three mm.48-68, is constructed around D major and D minor triads

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<sup>112</sup> Section Three mm.48-68, is constructed around D major and D minor triads as shown in Figure 4.5 and Section Four is constructed of two augmented triads as shown in Figure 4.6.



in random order (see Figure 4.5). The singer can use these triads as points of reference, most notably, the root position D major chord in m.53 and the root position D minor chord in m.54 (see Figure 4.3). Equally helpful is to use B $\flat$  as a pitch reference, as the singer's rhythmic gestures continually lead to B $\flat$ 5 or B $\flat$ 4 in this section. Setting a metronome on B $\flat$  as a pedal point while singing this section is a valuable technique to practice pitch and rhythm accuracy.

Following this, the passage from mm.69-94 is constructed through two augmented triads (see Figure 4.6). It is useful to note that beginning at m.69, the vocalist sings a root position augmented C triad. Rolfe continues these pitches, and adds D $\sharp$ 4 at m.71 and B4 at m.73, before outlining a second inversion augmented G triad at m.73-74 to include all six notes (see Figure 4.7). Additionally, the C5 is the highest note of this section and returns like a pedal throughout, providing another pitch reference to facilitate the learning of these measures. Again, setting a metronome on C as a foundational pitch and singing the melodic material against it is a useful tool to maintain pitch accuracy and rhythmic pulse.

Also challenging is singing the disjunct melody and wide leaps while articulating fragmented text. The highest note in the vocal line does not necessarily indicate the peak of a phrase or the most dramatic expression of the text. Rolfe accents the fragmentation of the text through surprising leaps upwards to seemingly unimportant words or weak syllables set on high notes, usually preceded by an unprepared disjunct leap separated by a rest as seen in Figure 4.13. It seems likely that Rolfe's approach to text setting was guided and inspired by Rimbaud's fragmented ideas. These sections could perhaps be seen as a musical description of the disorienting visions depicted in the text. The

disjointed text, broken up into syllables and individual phonemes, further disorients the listener.

As the music can be disorienting, it is beneficial to omit one of the instruments (piano, clarinet, and voice) in ensemble rehearsals, as the performers see fit, to practice working through sections to allow each performer the opportunity to hear the other musical lines and how their own line fits into each section. The performers should alternate between instrument combinations (voice/piano, voice/clarinet, piano/clarinet) until comfortable, before practicing the sections as written.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The lyrics are written below the vocal line. In the first system, the lyrics are "ne pou - dre noir pleut dou - ce - ment sur ma". A red circle highlights the note for the word "ment". In the second system, the lyrics are "m.165 veil - lée. -- Je bais - se les". A red circle highlights the note for the word "les".

*Figure 4.13 Phrases, mm.158-72; examples of fragmentation of the text through surprising leaps upwards to unimportant words or weak syllables annotated in red*

### ***Phrases Summary***

*Phrases* is constructed of segmented fragments that either remain static, dominated by one sonority for long periods, or oscillate between tonal centers without settling on a particular one. Rolfe says, “Like Rimbaud’s poetry, there is a lot of fragmentation in the music. There is a common thread between [the music and the words] in that there is a sense of regularity or structure at the beginning to a complete lack of structure at the end.”<sup>113</sup> The vocal line moves from long legato singing to fragmented phonetic material, which leads to distorted text over a dissonant melody. Rolfe set the text this way to further exaggerate the fragmentary text, both in syntax and opaque in meaning, thus adding to the textual jumble and disorientation of the listener.

In all three instruments the melodic lines are fragmented, disjointed, and incomplete, often repeating and reordering the same pitches. Harmonically unstable passages are followed by equally unstable passages that are contrasting in texture, dynamics, and tonal center. For the singer, reference pitches may be in an octave higher or lower than she is used to hearing, requiring more expansive hearing of the intervallic relationships.

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<sup>113</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

## **Chapter Five:** ***Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* Performance Guide**

This chapter will provide a comprehensive performance guide for James Rolfe’s vocal chamber work *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* (1993). Performers can use this as a reference to shape their interpretation and effectively communicate the meaning of the lyrics and musical ideas. The chapter begins with a brief background for *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* and a general profile of its characteristics (see Table 5.1). This is followed by background on the two original music groups (Public Enemy and Simon & Garfunkel) and the original lyrics. Subsequently provided is an analysis and interpretation of Rolfe’s hybrid lyrics, an outline of the musical structure, and a musical analysis and interpretation, concluding with vocal considerations.

### **5.1 Background**

This work is the result of Rolfe’s merger of lyrics from two popular songs: the sweet ballad “America,” by American folk duo Simon & Garfunkel and the rap song “Burn Hollywood Burn,” by American hip-hop group Public Enemy.<sup>114</sup>

The lyrical content of the two tunes is interwoven against a sparse and rhythmically disjointed instrumental accompaniment that evokes the fragmentation and splicing of hip-hop sampling.<sup>115</sup> This piece was composed in 1993 while Rolfe was a

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<sup>114</sup> See Appendix One for the original song lyrics of “Burn Hollywood Burn” and “America.”

<sup>115</sup> Kyle Adams, “Aspects of the Music/Text Relationship in Rap,” *Music Theory Online*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.08.14.2/mto.08.14.2.adams.html> (accessed May 31, 2019). Sampling is the reuse of a portion or sample of a sound recording in another recording. Samples may comprise rhythm, melody, speech, or other sounds.

member of Continuum Contemporary Music, a Toronto contemporary music ensemble formed in 1985. It premiered in Toronto on May 18 of the same year by Continuum Contemporary Music, with performers soprano Barbara Hannigan, pianist Barbara Pritchard, and percussionist Trevor Tureski.

Rolfe describes this piece as a chemistry experiment.<sup>116</sup> The anger of the song “Burn Hollywood Burn” was used to illuminate an individual’s fear, isolation and powerlessness inherent in our competitive, capitalist society, while the sweet, corporately-produced-and-distributed “America” tries to obscure through the promise of the American dream.<sup>117</sup> He was inspired to write this piece while listening to an interview with one of the producers for Public Enemy. The producer said that the group felt they had written a good song when they produced music that other musicians hated. At the time, Rolfe was also experimenting with techniques of chance music.<sup>118</sup> This piece is a product of his experimentation with this compositional technique.

**Table 5.1. Profile of *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage***

<p><b>Lyricists:</b> Simon &amp; Garfunkel and Public Enemy</p> <p><b>Composition Date:</b> 1993</p> <p><b>Publisher:</b> Canadian Music Centre</p> <p><b>Voice Type(s):</b> Any voice type</p> <p><b>Instruments:</b> Piano, percussion (three cowbells, three brake drums, tenor drum, bass drum, and a sampler)</p>
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<sup>116</sup> James Rolfe, interviewed by Laura Duffy in Toronto, Ontario, October 21, 2017.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas B. Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music: Pioneers in Technology and Composition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 107.

**Language:** English

**Length:** 10 minutes

**Commission:** Continuum Contemporary Music with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council

**Premiere:** Toronto, Ontario on May 18, 1993 at Glenn Gould Studio, CBC Studios, by Continuum Contemporary Music, with Barbara Hannigan, soprano; Barbara Pritchard, piano; and Trevor Tureski, percussion

**Range:** Pitches are chosen relative to the singer's range and should avoid extreme upper and lower registers of the voice.

**Tessitura:** Middle voice

**Tempo:** mm. 1-5 ♩= 40 | mm. 6-324 ♩=160 | mm. 324-386 ♩= 108-120

**Phrase Length:** Irregular phrase length

**Melody:** Speech-like singing reminiscent of rap music, and repeated single pitches

**Harmony:** Dissonant chord clusters in the piano, and sparse and rhythmically disjunctive accompaniment that evokes the fragmentation and splicing of hip-hop sampling

**Technical/Expressive Considerations:** The prevalence of silence at several points throughout the piece may make it challenging for the singer to maintain a steady rhythmic pulse. These silences sometimes occur in the middle of words.

**Song Form:** Through-composed

**Poetry Style:** Free verse

**Original Song Lyric Sources:** *Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage* merges song lyrics from folk-duo Simon & Garfunkel's song "America," and hip-hop group Public Enemy's song "Burn Hollywood Burn."

## 5.2 Public Enemy and the Background of the song “Burn Hollywood Burn”

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Rolfe discovered Public Enemy’s music. An American hip-hop group formed on Long Island, New York in 1986, Public Enemy consisted of Chuck D, Flavor Flav, Professor Griff, Khari Wynn, DJ Lord, Sammy Sam, and the S1W group. The musical group was known for its politically charged music and criticism of the American media, along with its active interest in voicing the frustrations and concerns of the African American community.<sup>119</sup>

The title “Prophets of Rage” derives from the group’s song “Prophets of Rage” on its 1988 album titled *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*.<sup>120</sup> Chuck D, one of the members of Public Enemy, read the caption “What ever happened to the prophets of rage?” in a *Life* magazine article about Malcolm X. This caption inspired the group to refer to themselves as such and later inspired the 1988 song of the same name.<sup>121</sup> Rolfe however, did not use the lyrics from the song “Prophets of Rage.” He chose another song from their 1990 album *Fear of Black Planet* called “Burn Hollywood Burn” as part of the lyrics of “Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage.”<sup>122</sup> Rolfe chose to use “Prophets of Rage” in the title because Public Enemy nicknamed themselves the Prophets of Rage. Rolfe explained, “[The title of my song conjures] the image of the two musical groups meeting each other. It plays on the dissonance between Simon & Garfunkel, known for

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<sup>119</sup> Tricia, Rose. “Fear of a Black Planet”: Rap Music and Black Cultural Politics in the 1990s,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 60, no. 3 (1991): 276.

<sup>120</sup>This is not to be confused with the American rap-rock supergroup Prophets of Rage, which was formed in 2016 by two of Public Enemy’s members (DJ Lord and rapper Chuck D), three members from Rage Against the Machine (bassist and backing vocalist Tim Commerford, guitarist Tom Morello, and drummer Brad Wilk), and rapper B-Real of Cypress Hill.

<sup>121</sup> Brian Coleman, *Check the Technique: Liner Notes for Hip-hop Junkies* (New York: Villard, 2007), 360.

<sup>122</sup> Tim Grierson, *Public Enemy: Inside the Terrordome* (London: Omnibus Press, 2015).

their sweet sounds, and Public Enemy, aka The Prophets of Rage, who are their sonic polar opposites.”<sup>123</sup>

Public Enemy’s tracks were built on samples,<sup>124</sup> and “Burn Hollywood Burn” was based on the bass groove<sup>125</sup> of the 1973 song “Hot Wheels” by Badder Than Evil.<sup>126</sup> “Burn Hollywood Burn” was a collaboration between Public Enemy and two of the other biggest hip-hop acts at the time, Big Daddy Kane and Ice Cube. The song features rapping, a style of long-form narrative poetry recitation with a strong and regular rhythmic beat which is spoken rather than sung with a continuous flow, fast lyric delivery, and a percussive-like vocal quality. Rapping is associated as part of the hip-hop genre, which also includes sampling, vinyl scratching, and a deconstructionist aesthetic.<sup>127</sup> The song was Public Enemy’s admonishment of the entertainment industry’s portrayal of African Americans in the media.<sup>128</sup> The song’s message remains powerful to this day, where American pop culture is still often criticized for not recognizing the achievements of blacks in the entertainment industry.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> James Rolfe, October 21, 2017.

<sup>124</sup> See footnote 105 on p. 109.

<sup>125</sup> See footnote 49 in Chapter Two p. 24.

<sup>126</sup> “Public Enemy Feat. Ice Cube and Big Daddy Kane’s ‘Burn Hollywood Burn’ - Discover the Sample Source,” WhoSampled, January 01, 1990, [https://www.whosampled.com/sample/24106/Public-Enemy-Ice-Cube-Big-Daddy-Kane-Burn-Hollywood-Burn-James-Brown-Give-It-Up-or-Turnit-a-Loose-\(Remix\)/](https://www.whosampled.com/sample/24106/Public-Enemy-Ice-Cube-Big-Daddy-Kane-Burn-Hollywood-Burn-James-Brown-Give-It-Up-or-Turnit-a-Loose-(Remix)/) (accessed May 09, 2019). “Burn Hollywood Burn” also sampled bits of the 1978 track “Dance to the Drummer’s Beat” by Herman Kelly & Life and a 1986 James Brown remix of “Give It Up or Turnit a Loose.”

<sup>127</sup> Adams, “Aspects of the Music/Text Relationship in Rap.”

<sup>128</sup> “Make us all look bad like I know they had / But some things I’ll never forget / So step and fetch this shit / For all the years we looked like clowns / The joke is over smell the smoke from all around / Burn Hollywood burn.” See Appendix One for full lyrics.

<sup>129</sup> Grierson, 2015.



### 5.3 Folk Duo Simon & Garfunkel and the Background of the Song “America”

The other song used in Rolfe’s vocal chamber work is Simon & Garfunkel’s song “America.” Simon & Garfunkel were a world famous American folk-rock music duo of singer-songwriter and guitarist Paul Simon and poet-singer Art Garfunkel. They were one of the best-selling music groups of the 1960s and became counterculture icons of the decade’s social revolution.<sup>130</sup>

This song was inspired by a five-day road excursion Simon undertook in September 1964 with his then girlfriend Kathy Chitty. Simon’s producer had called him back to the United States from England to finalize mixes and artwork for their debut studio album. Simon, who was living in London at the time, was reluctant to leave Kathy, and invited her to come with him. They spent five days travelling around America together.<sup>131</sup>

In the lyrics, the narrator spends four days hitchhiking from Saginaw to join Kathy in Pittsburgh, where together they board a Greyhound bus to continue the journey. The narrator begins with a lighthearted and optimistic outlook, (“Let us be lovers, we’ll marry our fortunes together”) but this outlook fades over the course of the song. Kathy reads a magazine before falling asleep, leaving the narrator to reflect on the meaning of the journey.

In the final verse, the narrator captures the longing and angst of the 1960s in nine simple words, “I’m empty and aching and I don’t know why.” The narrator stares out the window “counting the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike” as he watches the people on the

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<sup>130</sup> Victoria Kingston, *Simon & Garfunkel: The Biography* (New York: Fromm International, 1999).

<sup>131</sup> Kingston, 79.

highway, each on their own journey, and proclaims: “They’ve all come to look for America.”

#### **5.4 Performance Guide**

Rolfe wanted to incorporate stylistic elements of popular music into his writing. He states that this piece was a hostile merger between two songs: the sweet Simon & Garfunkel ballad “America”, and the angry Public Enemy hip-hop number “Burn Hollywood Burn.” In Rolfe’s musical setting, the vocalist, pianist, and percussionist share the strong, choked, bitten-off notes reminiscent of the samples<sup>132</sup> used in rap. At the same time, the piano plays a simple, wistful tune derived from the bass line of Simon & Garfunkel’s ballad “America.”

#### **Lyric Analysis and Interpretation**

Rolfe combined the lyrics of “America” and “Burn Hollywood Burn” by taking approximately every second word from each song to form new hybrid sentences (see Table 5.2).<sup>133</sup> The original lyrics of “Burn Hollywood Burn” are about eliminating racial stereotypes in Hollywood, whereas “America” is about the quest of every American to achieve the American dream. While the new combination of lyrics may appear nonsensical, they still suggest a quest for power and success, (“All come to look for the power”) while also hinting at the destruction of American ideals (“I’ll never forget America, I’ll never forget laughing and stepping and playing ... All the games and the

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<sup>132</sup> See footnote 105 on p.109.

<sup>133</sup> See Appendix One for the original song lyrics of “Burn Hollywood Burn” and “America.”

faces like clowns, the joke, said the man, is over”).

### **Outline of *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* Structure**

*Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* is a through-composed piece; however, for analysis it has been divided into nine sections corresponding to the divisions of lyrics and musical interludes (see Table 5.2). There are four long instrumental interludes in the piece: mm.108-128, mm. 163-183, mm.251-280, and mm.292-354. There is also a long glissando in the vocal line that spans fifty measures from m.195-247.<sup>134</sup>

**Table 5.2 Musical Structure and James Rolfe’s lyrics for *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage***

<b>Sections</b>	<b>Musical Interludes and Division of Lyrics</b>
<b>Section One mm. 1-107</b>	Burn us burn lovers. We’ll smell our riot together. I’ve got real gone, check out my bag. We bought a black pack to get Mrs. Wagner the hell away from these T.V. pies beneath me.  Walked off shots ringing out to look for gangs, so I’d rather kick Kathy out, I said, and hang out in Pittsburgh or Michigan, Hollywood or would not seem a dream to me now. Make us all look bad like Saginaw had to look.
<b>Section Two mm. 108-128</b>	First Instrumental Interlude
<b>Section Three mm. 129-162</b>	I’ll never forget America. I’ll never forget laughing and stepping and playing this shit on the bus. All the games and the faces like clowns. The joke, said the man, is over, smell the gabardine smoke suit.
<b>Section Four mm. 163-183</b>	Second Instrumental Interlude
<b>Section Five mm. 184-250 feat. long glissando from m.195-247</b>	A spy! Burn! Be careful! Burn his bowtie! Burn his camera! Toss me a burning cigarette, I think there’s one in my Ice Cube. We smoked every last bitch an hour ago so Big Daddy looked at his mother’s scenery, checked out her magazine. The colored moon rose through the open field late at night.

<sup>134</sup> See Vocal Considerations on p. 110 for more information.

<b>Section Six mm. 251-280</b>	Third Instrumental Interlude
<b>Section Seven mm. 281-291</b>	Red Kathy, blue aching lights, and I don't know why. Counting the cars pulled to the curb, getting suckers on the New Jersey Turnpike. They've all come to look for the power to look for the....
<b>Section Eight mm. 292-354</b>	Fourth Instrumental Interlude
<b>Section Nine mm. 355-386</b>	All come to look for the power.

### Performance Instructions

#### Voice

Rolfe does not indicate precise vocal pitches in the vocal part. In his performance instructions he states that pitches can be chosen relative to the singer's range as long as the singer avoids extremes of her own vocal register by approximately a fifth. He provides a suggested vocal range for soprano at the beginning of the score shown in Figure 5.1. A narrow range is characteristic of both folk and rap music, as these genres typically have limited vocal register changes and often remain within a speech-like range. Once a pitch is selected it is maintained throughout the duration of the denoted phrase, except for a gradual descending glissando that occurs from mm.195-247.<sup>135</sup> This glissando should not exceed more than a range of a fifth.



*Figure 5.1 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage; suggested vocal range for a soprano indicated by measure numbers from the original score*

<sup>135</sup> See Vocal Considerations p.127 for more information about the glissando.

Upon first glance singers may not notice the absence of a clef in the vocal part of the score and assume it is written for soprano, especially as the suggested vocal range in the performance instructions is notated in the treble clef for a soprano voice, and the only recording of this piece is sung by soprano Barbara Hannigan. While Rolfe has indicated the vocal range flexibility in his performance instructions, the score notation may cause confusion for the singer as the score appears to be notated with specific sung pitches rather than an alternative notation, such as using an ‘x’ in place of conventional note heads to indicate flexibility in the vocal range.

### Piano

The piano is the only part that samples tunes from Simon & Garfunkel’s “America”. The simple tune of the ballad is filtered randomly from 159 slightly different nine-note chords in the piano derived from the bass line of the original ballad “America.” Separate dynamics are given for both hands. Pedaling is ad libitum, but should never be too heavy. The piano should be treated as a percussion instrument in this piece, and the pianist can bring out this element by playing the cluster chord eighth notes with a firmness of touch that creates a more percussive, drum-like tone. However, the long, sustained notes in the left-hand gestures, which are often held for several measures, exploit the lyrical qualities of the piano. To bring out this contrast requires listening through to the end of the sustained note and awareness of the decay of the sound.

## Percussion

The percussion part requires three cowbells, three brake drums, tenor drum, bass drum, and a sampler.<sup>136</sup> The drums are muffled to produce a dull, non-resonant sound. Although the percussion dynamics are mostly marked *forte* or *mezzo-forte*, the percussionist must be mindful of the singer's dynamic abilities in her lower register and adjust accordingly, most notably in mm. 6-105 where the singer is vocalizing in the lowest part of their range. For the sampler, Rolfe suggests using industrial sounds that imitate short, percussive industrial sounds such as drills, saws, crunching metal, breaking glass, or skidding tires.

## **Musical Analysis and Interpretation**

The piece starts with a slow five bar piano prelude ♩= 40 indicated *legato* and *con pedale*. It opens with a solid chord (B, F#, A, D#, E, G#, A#), which creates an atonal effect followed by a single line in the piano, which consists of two wide intervals erratic rhythm, grace notes, and sudden dynamic changes (see Figure 5.2).

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<sup>136</sup> A sampler is an electronic or digital musical instrument similar in some respects to a synthesizer, but instead of generating new sounds, it uses sound recordings (or “samples”) of real instrument sounds, (e.g. a piano, violin or trumpet), excerpts from recorded songs, (e.g., a five-second bass guitar riff from a funk song), or other sounds (e.g. sirens and ocean waves).

Approximate pitch relative to vocal range:  $\text{♩} = 40$

Upper Voice

Lower-middle 3 Cowbells

3 Brake Drums

Ten. Dr. Perc.

Bass Dr.

muffle all instruments with soft cloths (placed on inside of bass drum, and draped over other instruments)

Octapads: 1 - 8 from top to bottom (only 1 to 4 are used)

Piano

*f* legato

*p*

*f*

*p*

*f p*

con *rit.*

Figure 5.2 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.1-5; piano prelude with large intervallic leaps annotated in red

The vocal line entrance at m. 6 is marked “*crisp, marcato, staccato, non vibrato and with American pronunciation,*” and the tempo changes from  $\text{♩} = 40$  to  $\text{♩} = 160$ . As this sudden tempo change takes place simultaneously with the entrance of all ensemble players, it is important for the singer to lead this tempo change with their breath, and set the new tempo within the first measure of the vocal line. The combination of the rapid tempo and precise articulation of voice, piano, and percussion creates a highly charged energetic mood. The piano and percussion maintain rhythmic pulse with downbeats on each measure from mm.6-22. The repeated solid cluster chords in the right hand in the top octave of the piano serves as a percussive effect. The percussion provides an anchor with a downbeat heard in the bass drum and brake drum (see Figure 5.3).

♩ = 160 (♩ = 80)

*p* *crisp, marcato, staccato, non vibrato; use "American" pronunciation; keep to "pitch" once chosen*

Burn us burn lovers We'll smell our riot to - - gether

*poco*  
*f marcato*

15  
*f marcato [RH only]*

m.6 [only the dynamics below staff apply to LH] *f*

Figure 5.3 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.6-11; voice and percussion entrance with percussion annotated in blue and the repeated cluster chord in the piano annotated in red

Rolfe uses the juxtaposition of sparse, linear, rhythmically disjointed vocal writing combined with pounding, dissonant chords in the piano, and sharp strokes in the percussion to emulate the rhythmic and percussive-like vocal characteristics of rap music. In the vocal line, Rolfe frequently writes repeated notes with an expression marking of “*crisp, marcato, staccato, non vibrato*” which renders it declamatory and speech-like. The vocal line is also violent and full of jagged phrase shapes which are emphasized by syncopated rhythms. These syncopations sometimes give undue emphasis to weak-stress syllables purposefully skewing the prosody of the language, which is highly characteristic of rap music (see Figure 5.4).



69

look for gangs so I'd ra - ther kick Ka - - thy out,

75

I said, and hang out in Pitts - - burgh or

Loco

Figure 5.4 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.69-.84; examples of skewed prosody annotated in red

While the syncopated rhythms and displacement of words throughout this work are characteristic of rap music, the most obvious audible rapping takes place from m.184 on the words “A spy” to m.194 on the words “Ice Cube” (see Figure 5.5) and again at m.281 on the words “Red Kathy, blue aching lights” to m.291 on the words “to look for the” (see Figure 5.6). These passages sound more rap-like than other sections because they display rapid fire succession of text delivered in a chant-like, declamatory way that is more reminiscent of the style of rapping with a rhythmic repetition, on-beat accents, and regular on-beat pauses compared to the other sections which exhibit longer pauses

creating a slower delivery of the text.<sup>137</sup> This is further emphasized with the percussion supporting and affirming the rhythm of the vocal line.

184 *poco f* *Somewhat deadpan*

A spy! Burn! Be care - ful! Burn! Burn! Burn his bow - tie! Burn his cam - era!

[Rim shots *sempre*]

15

189

Toss me a burn - ing cig - a - rette, I think there's one in my

15

194 *Poco a poco decrescendo to pp, and gradual glissando downwards by about a fifth, to bar 247*

Ice Cube We smoked every last

[chromatic cluster]

15

Figure 5.5 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.184-188; declamatory vocal line reminiscent of rapping with syncopated rhythms and repeated pitches in the vocal line

<sup>137</sup> Adams, “Aspects of the Music/Text Relationship in Rap.”

279 *p* *ma marcato e staccato*  
 Red Ka - thy, blue aching lights, and I don't know why, Count-ing the cars pulled

*p* *leggiere* *P* *P* *mp*

15 *mp*

285  
 to the curb, get - ting suck - ers on the New Jer - sey Turn - pike, They've all come to look for the pow -

*p* *p* *p*

15 *p* *p*

290  
 - er, to look for the

*mp* *p* *p*

15 *mp* *p* *Lo* *8* *p* *p*

Figure 5.6 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.281-291; declamatory vocal line reminiscent of rapping with vocal and percussion entrances annotated in red

There is a long glissando sung with a steady decrescendo in the vocal line which spans fifty measures from mm.195-247 (Figure 5.6).<sup>138</sup> In the performance instructions the glissando is notated on an E5 (see Figure 5.1). However, it is up to the singer to determine what her starting pitch will be, and when to descend in order to end the glissando a fifth below her starting pitch. This glissando separates the two rap-like sections shown in Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6.

194 *Poco a poco decrescendo to **pp**, and gradual glissando downwards by about a fifth, to bar 247*

Ice Cube We smoked every last

*[chromatic cluster]*

15

199 *[decresc. and gradually falling pitch]*

bitch an hour a - go

Figure 5.7 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.195-204; this sample section of the long glissando shows the beginning of the glissando annotated in red; the entire section is notated on the same pitch; however, it is up to the vocalist to decide when to descend pitches

<sup>138</sup> See Vocal Considerations p.127 for more information about the glissando

The instrumental interlude, shown as Section Eight, mm.292-354 in Table 5.2, is marked by a sudden change in texture. Starting at m. 325, the piano's sudden dynamic change from *piano* to *double forte*, and expression marking *martellato*<sup>139</sup> *senza pedale*<sup>140</sup> corresponds with the transition from the previously sparse piano and percussion texture (mm.291-324) to a full-bodied texture of solid chords (see Figure 5.8).

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, starting at measure 305, features a piano part with a dynamic marking of *p* and a sparse texture of chords. The second system, starting at measure 314, continues with a similar texture. The third system, starting at measure 323, is highlighted with a red box and shows a change in meter from 4/4 to 3/4, a dynamic marking of *ff martellato*, and the instruction *tre corde, senza pedale*. A tempo marking of  $\text{♩} = 108 - 120$  is also present in the red box.

Figure 5.8 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.305-331; piano's change in texture to solid chords annotated in red

The change in meter from 4/4 to 3/4 also creates a forward motion toward the final climax of the piece. The growing rhythmic vitality in the percussion at m.343 heightens the intensity for the dramatic concluding measures as the vocalist enters *mezzo forte* on m.361 with the words “All come to look for” (see Figure 5.11). The piano and percussion match the singer's loud dynamic level while, simultaneously, all players increase speed (marked by Rolfe's accelerando marking of *urgent* and *mezzo forte* on

<sup>139</sup> *Martellato* means hammered out or strongly accented.

<sup>140</sup> *Senza pedale* means without pedal.

m.361, *more urgent* and *forte* on m.371, and *more urgent* and *double forte* starting at m.378).

### Vocal Considerations

The vocal range for *Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage* is relatively narrow, most accurately reflecting rap, which falls under a spectrum of unpitched to pitched delivery with a flexible intonation on one approximate pitch or set of pitches. As discussed by music theorist Kyle Adams, “rapping by its nature is not sung, the pitch content of rap is limited to the ways in which rappers might modulate their voices to match certain contours in the underlying track.<sup>141</sup> To portray this aesthetic the singer must be able to skillfully handle complex, syncopated rhythms and sing with straight tone (without vibrato). While intonation may be flexible in rap, Rolfe has indicated that once a pitch has been selected it should be maintained for the duration of the phrase as outlined in the performance instructions (see Figure 5.1). Because of this, accurate intonation is crucial as the singer is required to sing a single repeated note for long sections often against dissonant piano harmonies, with minimal harmonic support to navigate the vocal register changes. It requires a singer who possesses an assured low register, an ease within the medium-low tessitura of their vocal range, and an ability to navigate intervallic leaps without any aural cues from the instrumental parts.

This work demands a high level of rhythmic precision. Mastering the various metric challenges, and ensuring the declamatory text is enunciated with clarity are

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<sup>141</sup> Kyle Adams, “Aspects of the Music/Text Relationship in Rap,” *Music Theory Online*, May 1, 2008, <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.08.14.2/mto.08.14.2.adams.html> (accessed May 31, 2019).

necessary for a successful performance of this work. The diction should maintain an American pronunciation throughout and the singer should be careful not to modify vowels, especially in the upper register beginning at m.361 as this could result in an overly classical style of singing not meant for this work (see Figure 5.12). The singer should use a crisp attack to create a percussive feel to her performance. A quick, clipped release on each syllable helps to maintain this percussive feeling, and aids in rhythmic accuracy.

The challenges for the singer are to maintain clarity of the text and pitches, and to navigate the long glissando from mm.195-247 (see Figure 5.7) This is especially important as there are only two sentences in this section stretched out over a long span of music (“We smoked every last bitch an hour ago so Big Daddy looked at his mother’s scenery, checked out her magazine. The colored moon rose through the open field late at night”). Not only are the words broken up by long rests, but some of the words are also broken down into syllables with rests between them. This poses a technical challenge for the singer as the composer is asking the singer to construct a glissando, through interrupted utterances, over a span of fifty measures while simultaneously singing a steady decrescendo. The singer must not start the glissando too early or allow the gradual change of pitch to affect the rhythmic pulse. Instead, they must continue to maintain a steady tempo and rhythmic accuracy.

Another notable performance challenge for the singer is maintaining a rhythmic pulse through the long periods of silences within the vocal line during the four instrumental interludes. Performing with an unrelenting subdivision of the beat is essential for accuracy of execution. Feeling a deep unrelenting and stable communal

pulse between all three performers is crucial for the ensemble to stay together, especially through the interludes, which involve long moments of silence juxtaposed with sparse rhythmic inflections in the piano and percussion.

The first long instrumental section occurs from mm.107-128. For rhythmic pulse, it may be helpful for the singer to note the right hand eighth-note figures in the piano on beat 2 at m.127 and the eighth-note rim shot on beat 2 at m.128 before the singer enters on m.129 (see Figure 5.9). Beginning at m.114 until the singer's entrance at m.128, the piano is repeatedly playing a D $\sharp$ . Depending on her vocal range, it may assist the singer to use this D $\sharp$  as a relative pitch cue for her entrance at m.129. For example, if the singer is entering on C5<sup>142</sup> at m.129, she may use the D $\sharp$  in the piano to hear an interval of a minor third below to find her entrance pitch.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting at measure 125 with the lyrics "I'll never forget America". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. In measure 127, a circled eighth note on beat 2 is marked with a red circle and the number "2". In measure 128, a circled eighth note rim shot on beat 2 is also marked with a red circle and the number "2". A red oval highlights the piano accompaniment in measure 129. Dynamics markings include *mf*, *f*, *mp*, and *f* for the vocal line, and *mf*, *f*, *mp*, and *f* for the piano accompaniment.

Figure 5.9 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.125-131; right hand eighth note figures in the piano on beat 2 at m.127 and the eighth note rim shot on beat 2 at m.128 annotated in red to assist singer with entrance after the long instrumental interlude

<sup>142</sup> C5 is the suggested pitch for a soprano at m.129 as shown in the Performance Instructions of the score see Figure 5.1, this does not need to be the sung pitch, however, the singer may choose to use this example as a cue for her own intervallic relationship between her chosen note and the notes in the piano.



Similarly, the next musical interlude occurs from mm.163-183. The singer can listen for the piano's cluster chord played *forte* on the downbeat of m.177 shown in Figure 5.10. This chord is continuously held through to m.182 when the pianist plays a new chord on beat two of m.182.

The image displays a musical score for the song "Simon & Garfunkel and The Prophets of Rage" from measures 172 to 188. The score is arranged in three systems. The first system (measures 172-177) shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part features a cluster chord on the downbeat of measure 177, circled in red. The second system (measures 178-183) continues the piano accompaniment, with a new chord on the second beat of measure 182, also circled in red. The third system (measures 184-188) shows the vocal line with lyrics: "A spy! Burn! Be care-ful! Burn! Burn! Burn his bow-tie! Burn his cam-era!". The vocal line is enclosed in a red box. The piano part includes the instruction "[Rim shots sempre]" and dynamic markings such as *poco f*, *Somewhat deadpan*, *mp*, *mf*, *p*, and *f*.

- 10 -

Figure 5.10 Simon & Garfunkel and The Prophets of Rage, mm.172-188; cluster chord in piano played *forte* on the downbeat of m.177 with a new chord at m.182 on beat two to assist with singer's next entrance annotated in red

The third interlude occurs from mm. 251-280. The singer can listen for the eighth-note cluster chords at mm. 277-278 in the piano. At m. 281 the voice and percussion play in rhythmic unison so the singer needs to lead this entrance with her breath to assist in a precise entrance (see Figure 5.11).

275

15

*p* *mp* *f* *mf* *p* *mp* *f* *p*

- 15 -

279

*p ma marcato e staccato*

Red Ka - thy, blue aching lights, and I don't know why, Count-ing the cars pulled

*p leggiero* *p* *p* *mp*

15

*mp*

Figure 5.11 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.279-284; the singer can listen for the eighth note cluster chords in the piano annotated in red

The final interlude happens from mm.292-360. This entrance is likely the easiest for the singer to hear as the piano plays cluster chords in changing meters from 2/4 to 3/4 to 4/4 time with the percussion playing a repeated rhythmic pattern at m.358 (see Figure 5.12).

The image displays a musical score for piano and voice. The piano part is written in treble and bass clefs. The first system shows a sequence of meters: 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4, each circled in red. The second system, starting at measure 358, is in 4/4 time and includes the vocal line with the lyrics "All come to look for the". The piano accompaniment in the second system features cluster chords, with two of them circled in red. The tempo and dynamics are marked as *mf* urgent, a little breathless.

Figure 5.12 Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage, mm.349-363; the singer can listen for the changing meters, annotated in red, by listening to the piano chords from m. 348-360 and the percussion's entrance at m. 358 to assist with timing of the vocal line entry at m.361

### **Summary of *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage***

By borrowing elements from folk and hip-hop music and deliberately interfering with their regularity, both rhythmically and melodically, Rolfe integrates the two popular music styles into his own compositional style. Because the piano is the only pitched instrument, the dissonant chords act as a percussive effect reflective of the aesthetic of Public Enemy. The rhythmic disjointedness, non-traditional use of voice, and industrial sounds of the percussion can be disorientating for the performers as well as the audience. While Rolfe has written many tonal compositions, this is a piece that explores other emotional states and is purposefully jarring to the ear. Similar to rap music, *Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage* lacks a melody, instead focusing on rhythm and lyrics.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion and Future Directions

Opportunities to work with living composers are an invaluable way to gain more insight and knowledge into their musical style and compositions. This study promotes the significance of James Rolfe's contribution to vocal chamber music, and provides a comprehensive guide to three of his vocal chamber works for singers, and more specifically soprano voice types. As exhibited in the performance guides, Rolfe's works display careful attention to text setting, emotionally mature and dramatic content, and a shifting musical style based on the influence of varying poetic and musical genres.

The analyses presented in this study uncover important elements of Rolfe's style by which a performer may shape her interpretation of the vocal chamber works presented, and may also be a resource to discover his other vocal compositions in art song, opera, and choral music. Specifically, the analyzed works demonstrate Rolfe's ability to write for various vocal styles through differences in rhythmic energy, texture, tonality, and modality, while still maintaining his unique musical language. Currently, there is little written about Rolfe's music, and the hopeful expectation of this study is that more scholars and performers will take a broader interest in his music, and explore the music of other living Canadian composers.

While many composers exhibit defining characteristics that make their music and style detectable to the ear, it is interesting that each of chamber works analyzed in this monograph exhibits a different compositional trait: *Six Songs* is heavily focused on the text with the melodic and harmonic functions working to heighten the poetry; *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* emphasizes rhythmic motives to mimic the style of

rap music; and *Phrases* centers on changes in texture to highlight the fragmentation of the poetry and music.

Despite the differing styles, there are several characteristics consistently found in these analyzed works. Rolfe is sensitive to the demands of the text: he often shifts meters and employs diverse rhythmic patterns to accommodate the rhythmic designs of poems, and he employs varying textures to support the tessitura of the soprano voice. His music often blurs the boundaries of tonality, employing chromaticism and non-functional harmonic progressions to illustrate the text. Rolfe's writing favours the middle voice with the vocal tessitura rarely utilizing the extremes of range. From the vocal writing, it appears he loves the richness and subtlety of tone found in this register, perhaps finding the brilliance of the higher tessitura less suited to chamber music. Another characteristic of his songs is the influence of popular music. The vocal chamber works in this performance guide each have a personal style that combine some of the qualities of classical and popular music.

This monograph provides a valuable tool for teachers and singers. By supplying biographical information, musical interpretation and analyses, poetic interpretation and analyses, and vocal considerations in one place, the study of these works becomes more readily accessible to vocal instructors and advanced sopranos. It is my hope that the analyses and interpretations of these works spark greater exploration by singers into more of Rolfe's vocal music, and that of other Canadian composers.

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## Appendix One: *Simon & Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage* Original Lyrics

### Appendix 1.1: “America” Lyrics

Let us be lovers, we'll marry our fortunes together.  
I've got some real estate here in my bag.  
So we bought a pack of cigarettes, and Mrs. Wagner's pies,  
And walked off to look for America.

“Kathy,” I said as we boarded a Greyhound in Pittsburgh,  
“Michigan seems like a dream to me now.”  
It took me four days to hitchhike from Saginaw.  
I've gone to look for America.

Laughing on the bus,  
Playing games with the faces,  
She said the man in the gabardine suit was a spy.  
I said, “Be careful, his bowtie is really a camera.”

“Toss me a cigarette, I think there's one in my raincoat.”  
We smoked the last one an hour ago.  
So I looked at the scenery, she read her magazine;  
And the moon rose over an open field.

“Kathy, I'm lost,” I said,  
Though I knew she was sleeping.  
“I'm empty and aching and I don't know why.”  
Counting the cars on the New Jersey Turnpike  
They've all come  
To look for America,  
All come to look for America,  
All come to look for America.

## Appendix 1.2: “Burn Hollywood Burn” Lyrics

Burn Hollywood burn I smell a riot  
 Goin' on first they're guilty now they're gone  
 Yeah I'll check out a movie  
 But it'll take a Black one to move me  
 Get me the hell away from this TV  
 All this news and views are beneath me  
 Cause all I hear about is shots ringin' out  
 So I rather kick some slang out  
 All right fellas let's go hand out  
 Hollywood or would they not  
 Make us all look bad like I know they had  
 But some things I'll never forget yeah  
 So step and fetch this shit  
 For all the years we looked like clowns  
 The joke is over smell the smoke from all around  
 Burn Hollywood burn

Ice Cube is down with the PE  
 Now every single bitch wanna see me  
 Big Daddy is smooth word to muther  
 Let's check out a flick that exploits the color  
 Roamin' thru Hollywood late at night  
 Red and blue lights what a common sight  
 Pulled to the curb getting' played like a sucker  
 Don't fight the power ... the mother fucker  
 As I walk the streets of Hollywood Boulevard  
 Thinin' how hard it was to those that starred  
 In the movies portrayin' the roles  
 Of butlers and maids slaves and hoes  
 Many intelligent Black men seemed to look uncivilized  
 When on the screen  
 Like a guess I figure you to play some jigaboo

On the plantation, what else can a nigger do  
 And Black women in this profession  
 As for playin' a lawyer, out of the question  
 For what they play Aunt Jemima is the perfect term  
 Even if now she got a perm  
 So let's make our own movies like Spike Lee

Cause the roles being offered don't strike me  
 There's nothing that the Black man could use to earn  
 Burn Hollywood burn

## Appendix Two: James Rolfe's Vocal Chamber Works

The vocal chamber works are listed in reverse chronological order by composition date. These works and information on all of James Rolfe's compositions can be found on the composer's website at [jamesrolfe.ca](http://jamesrolfe.ca).

### *Fresh Face*

**Poet:** James Rolfe (b. 1961)

**Composition Date:** 2013

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano

**Instruments:** Harp

**Language:** English

**Length:** 3 minutes

**Commission:** Soundstreams Canada

**Premiere:** February, 5, 2013 at the Bank of Montreal Main Office in Toronto, ON with Carla Huhtanen, soprano and harpist Sanya Eng, harpist

Rolfe wrote the text for *Fresh Face*, which requires the soprano to use extended vocal techniques to mimic the sound of a dog barking. It was commissioned by Soundstreams Canada on the occasion of their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and dedicated to R. Murray Schafer, in celebration of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Schafer suggested the musical theme (S-C-H-A-F-E-R) on which the words and music are built.

### *Five and a Half Bridges*

**Poet:** André Alexis (b. 1957)

**Composition Date:** 2012

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano, SATB chorus

**Instruments:** Ethnic percussion, ethnic plucked strings, organ, double bass

**Language:** English

**Length:** 13 minutes

**Commission:** Soundstreams Canada (Lawrence Cherney, Artistic Director) with the assistance of The Canada Council for the Arts.

**Premiere:** January 27, 2013 at "The Three Faces of Jerusalem" concert at Koerner Hall, Toronto, ON with Françoise Atlan, soprano; Kiya Tabassian, setar; Pierre-Yves Martel, viola de gamba; Yair Dalal, oud/violin; Ben Grossman, percussion; Paul Jenkins, portative organ; SATB quartet; David Fallis, conductor



Rolfe and Alexis collaborated using the concept of a bridge as metaphor for connection, the bridge as erotic symbol, as symbol of desire and longing. He wrote verses for five actual bridges: Pont-Neuf in Paris; the Stone Arch in Shahrak, Yemen; Arkadiko in Mycenaea; Si-o-se Pol in Isfahan, Iran; and the Alexandra Bridge (a favourite from Rolfe's and Alexis' Ottawa childhoods). They form a journey toward the final bridge in Jerusalem: imaginary, unfinished, a bridge to connect this world to a better version of the world.

### *Winter*

**Poet:** Archibald Lampman (1861-1899)

**Composition Date:** 2012

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Tenor

**Instruments:** Eight cellos

**Language:** English

**Length:** 15 minutes

**Commission:** New Music Concerts (Robert Aitken, Artistic Director) with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council

**Premiere:** September 23, 2012 at the Betty Oliphant Theatre in Toronto, ON with Lawrence Wiliford, tenor and New Music Concerts ensemble

Rolfe was inspired by Archibald Lampman's poems about winter, which reminded him of the winters from his childhood spent in Ottawa, ON. Rolfe was drawn to this Victorian-era poetry because it transcends its own time with rhythm, phrasing, and imagery – three characteristics that Rolfe looks for when selecting poetry. Tenor Lawrence Wiliford, who premiered the work, collaborated with Rolfe on the vocal writing.

### *Tango: Del Amor Imprevisto*

**Poet:** Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936)

**Composition Date:** 2011

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Contra-alto

**Instruments:** violin, bandoneon, piano, bass

**Language:** Spanish

**Length:** 4 minutes

**Commission:** Soundstreams Canada

**Premiere:** November 29, 2011 at the 'Tango' concert presented by Soundstreams at Korner Hall in Toronto, On with Veronica Larc, contra-alto; Serouj Kradjian, piano; Lara St. John, violin; Hector Del Curto, bandoneon; Dave Young, bass

*Tango* is Rolfe's only vocal chamber work in Spanish. As Rolfe is highly motivated by rhythm, he was drawn to this poetry and challenge of writing in this dance rhythm. Rolfe states, "As an Anglo-Canadian composer writing a tango, I'm skating on thin ice. How can my stolid northern soul find its way into the very particular language, singing, rhythm, and soul of this dance? This tango is an imaginary journey, with me clutching my own peculiar musical baggage, and Federico García Lorca my guide. His incandescent ghazal lends both spark and structure, leading me through the dance."<sup>143</sup>

### ***Breathe***

**Poet:** Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), Antonio Scandello (1517-1580), and writer Anna Chatterton (b. XX)

**Composition Date:** 2010

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Two sopranos, mezzo-soprano

**Instruments:** Recorder, violin, percussion, chamber organ and lute

**Language:** English

**Length:** 19 minutes

**Commission:** Soundstreams Canada (Lawrence Cherney, Artistic Director) for Trio Mediaeval and the Toronto Consort, with the assistance of The Canada Council for the Arts and The Ontario Arts Council

**Premiere:** March 23, 2011 at St. Anne's Church, Toronto, ON with Trio Mediaeval (Linn Andrea Fuglseth, Torunn Ostrem Ossum and Berit Opheim Versto, standing in for Anna Maria Friman) and Toronto Consort (David Fallis, conductor)

*Breathe* weaves together the words of German composers Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) and Antonio Scandello (1517-1580) with those of Toronto writer Anna Chatterton. *Breathe* focuses on one of the four elements—air, fire, water, and earth—which are strongly present in the poetry. The piece begins with mirroring the element of water through the lyrical, flowing opening, air follows with a quick and restless tempo, then fire and earth are emulated through warm, close intervals. While the piece is written for early instruments, it may also be played on equivalent modern instruments.

### ***Joyce Songs***

**Poet:** James Joyce (1882-1941)

**Composition Date:** 2009

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor, baritone

**Instruments:** Piano

**Language:** English

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<sup>143</sup> "James Rolfe Chamber Voice," James Rolfe, <http://www.jamesrolfe.ca/category/music/chamber-voice/> (accessed August 24, 2019).

**Length:** 15 minutes

**Commission:** Aldeburgh Connection (Stephen Ralls, artistic director) with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council

**Premiere:** March 15, 2009 with Katherine Whyte, soprano, Lynne McMurtry, mezzo, Michael Colvin, tenor, Peter Barrett, baritone, and Stephen Ralls, piano

*Joyce Songs* is a set of eight songs set to poems by Irish novelist and poet James Joyce (1882-1941). The entire cycle is fifteen-minutes long, but songs may be performed individually or in any combination, in any suitable order. The following is the suggested order and voice type:

1. Frail – Tenor
2. I – Soprano, Mezzo, Tenor, Baritone
3. XI – Baritone
4. XVI – Tenor, Baritone
5. XX – Tenor
6. XXVIII – Tenor, Baritone
7. XXXV – Soprano, Mezzo, Tenor, Baritone
8. XXXVI – Baritone

### *Beloved*

**Poet:** Dennis Lee (b.1939)

**Composition Date:** 2005

**Publisher:** Score available online [https://www.momure.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/beloved\\_score.pdf](https://www.momure.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/beloved_score.pdf)

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano and mezzo-soprano

**Instruments:** Piano, one singer plays claves or woodblock, and the other plays the guero

**Language:** English

**Length:** 10 minutes

**Commission:** Toca Loca (Gregory Oh, Artistic Director), with the assistance of The Laidlaw Foundation

**Premiere:** February 26, 2005 at Toca Voca, Music Gallery, Toronto, ON with Heidi Klann, soprano; Vilma Indra Vitols, mezzo-soprano; Gregory Oh, pianist

*Beloved* is a duet for mezzo-soprano and soprano with piano and percussion. It sets five poems from Canadian poet Dennis Lee's book *Un* (2003). Lee's book is a brief and idealistic collection of poems about apocalyptic vision and human extinction, yet contains moments of humanity, hope, and humour. "Armageddon is coupled with redemption, despair with exhilaration, pollution with purity. The boiled-down words burst with unorthodox phrases and neologisms, and I have tried to marry their unruly force with unexpected musical counterparts."<sup>144</sup> The vocal lines are often independent

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<sup>144</sup> "Beloved," James Rolfe, <http://www.jamesrolfe.ca/category/music/chamber-voice/>, (accessed November 27, 2017).

from the piano, which argues and articulates against the vocal lines more than it accompanies. Although the percussion writing is quite regular for each voice, the challenges lies in maintaining the two independent lines. Similarly, the piano part has some tricky rhythmic patterns. The piece alternates between stark, percussive vocal lines to long, lyrical a cappella vocal lines.

### *Bird*

**Poet:** Leonard Cohen (1934-2016)

**Composition Date:** 2005

**Publisher:** Currently not in circulation due to Copyrights

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano

**Instruments:** Flute, English horn, B flat clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion, piano, 2 violins, viola, violoncello, and bass

**Language:** English

**Length:** 5 minutes

**Commission:** Open Ears Festival for Patricia O’Callaghan, soprano, and the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, with the assistance of the Laidlaw Foundation

**Premiere:** April 29, 2005 in Kitchener, Ontario with Patricia O’Callaghan, soprano, and the Canadian Chamber Ensemble

*Bird* is a collaboration between composers John Oswald and James Rolfe, based on Canadian musician Leonard Cohen’s 1973 song *Bird on a Wire*. The piece begins with a vocalise marked “choose vowels and change phrasing ad lib.” supported by open octaves in the piano, crotales and glockenspiel. It requires moments of a cappella singing and extended vocal techniques with the singer silently mouthing words or speaking them on pitch. The words and music of Cohen’s original song are reworked freely with extended phrases, ornaments, and modulations. Rolfe’s version was written for soprano Patricia O’Callaghan who has sang many arrangements of Leonard Cohen songs throughout her career. The score is currently unavailable to performers due to a copyright issue.

### *Dust*

**Poet:** Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827) and Ecclesiastes (canonical Wisdom Book in the Old Testament)

**Composition Date:** 2003

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano

**Instruments:** Cello

**Language:** English

**Length:** 9 minutes

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**Commission:** Barbara Hannigan, soprano with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council

**Premiere:** April 4, 2003 by Barbara Hannigan, soprano; David Hetherington, cello (from Amici ensemble)

*Dust* was written for a concert with the theme of Vienna. This piece is Rolfe's homage to Schubert and uses texts from Müller's *Winterreise* mixed with lines from the Bible. It was commissioned by soprano Barbara Hannigan with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council. This piece is through-composed and centers on the story-telling of the text with the voice being supported by the cello. Much like Schubert does with piano accompaniment, Rolfe uses the cello to create sound effects to elevate the story-telling.

### ***Six Songs***

**Poet:** Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

**Composition Date:** 2001

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano (mezzo-soprano version with piano also available)

**Instruments:** String quartet (two violins, viola, cello), a piano version is also available

**Language:** English

**Length:** 16 minutes

**Commission:** Soundstreams Canada

**Premiere:** April 17, 2001 at Glenn Gould Studio, broadcast on TWO NEW HOURS on CBC Radio Two on May 6, 2001 with Measha Brueggergosman, soprano; Carol Fujino and Fujiko Imajishi, violins; Katherine Kajioka, viola; David Hetherington, violoncello

*Six Songs* uses 6 poems from Walt Whitman's famous *Leaves of Grass*. The poems are mostly from Whitman's earlier books of poetry with the poems progressing from youth to death. Rolfe previously used four of these poems to write the 4 art songs for Baritone. *Six Songs* was commissioned by Soundstreams. Please see Chapter Three for an in-depth analysis of this work.

### ***Simon and Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage***

**Poet:** Simon & Garfunkel and Public Enemy

**Composition Date:** 1993

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano

**Instruments:** Piano and percussion

**Language:** English

**Length:** 14 minutes

**Commission:** Continuum Contemporary Music with the assistance of The Ontario Arts Council

**Premiere:** Toronto on May 18, 1993 by Continuum Contemporary Music, with Barbara Hannigan, soprano, Barbara Pritchard, piano, and Trevor Tureski, percussion

Simon & Garfunkel & The Prophets of Rage merges texts from American folk-duo Simon and Garfunkel's song "America" and American rap group Public Enemy's song "Burn Hollywood Burn". Please see Chapter Five for an in-depth analysis of this work.

### *Fêtes de la Faim & Plainte*

**Poet:** Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891)

**Composition Date:** 1991

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano

**Instruments:** Flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion

**Language:** French

**Length:** 12 minutes

**Commission:** N/A

**Premiere:** 1991 Festival des Voix Nouvelles, Abbaye de Royaumont, France with L'Ensemble Contrechamps de Genève

*Fêtes de la Faim* was written for the 1991 Festival des Voix Nouvelles, Abbaye de Royaumont, France, where it was performed by L'Ensemble Contrechamps de Genève. The words are from the French poet Arthur Rimbaud's poem of the same name, written in 1871.

### *Phrases*

**Poet:** Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891)

**Composition Date:** 1991

**Publisher:** Canadian Music Centre

**Voice Type(s):** Soprano

**Instruments:** Piano and clarinet

**Language:** French

**Length:** 14 minutes

**Commission:** Continuum Contemporary Music

**Premiere:** Toronto by soprano Barbara Hannigan and Continuum Contemporary Music

The text of *Phrases* is a section of text of the same name from Arthur Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations*. Please see Chapter Four for an in-depth analysis of this work.

## **Appendix Three: Performance Events**

### **Appendix 3.1: Performance Event Program One, Lead Opera Role, January and February 2014**

**Mimi – La Bohème** – Giacomo Puccini – UWO Opera – January/February 2015 – Paul Davenport Theatre

- Fully staged production
- Performed with full orchestra
- Conductor: Alain Trudel
- Performance dates: Friday, January 30 at 8pm and Saturday, February 7 at 8pm in Paul Davenport Theatre

**Appendix 3.2: Performance Event Program Two, Lieder Recital, May 2016**

**May 26 2016  
4pm, von Kuster Hall  
Laura Duffy, *soprano*  
Samantha Lee, *piano***

Seligkeit	F. Schubert
Rastlose Liebe	(1797-1828)
Nacht und Traum	

Der du von dem Himmel bist	F. Liszt
O lieb', so lang du lieben kannst!	(1811-1886)
Kling leise, mein Lied	

Allerseelen	R. Strauss
Einerlei	(1864-1949)

**-Intermission-**

Vier Lieder, op. 2	A. Schoenberg
<i>Erwartung</i>	(1874-1951)
<i>Schenk mir deinen goldenen Kamm</i>	
<i>Erhebung</i>	
<i>Waldsonne</i>	

Selige Nacht	J. Marx
Nocturne	(1882-1964)
Hat dich die Liebe berührt	
Waldseligkeit	



**Appendix 3.3: Performance Event Program Three, Canadian Contemporary  
Repertoire, February 2016**

**February 16 2016  
6pm, von Kuster Hall  
Laura Duffy, *soprano*  
Samantha Lee, *piano***

Les Chanson du Coeur  
*J'ai fermé mon coeur*  
*Je tisserais un arc-en-ciel*  
*Voix d'yeux*

Jean Coulthard  
(1908-2000)

The Red, Red Heart  
*The beginning*  
*Naked in the city streets*  
*My mother's hands*  
*Laughter*  
*A red, red heart*

John Greer  
(b. 1954)

**-Intermission-**

City Night  
*City night*  
*You seek*  
*My moonlit darling*  
*Reach for sanity*  
*We sleep*  
*The blind cannot judge*

Alice Ping Yee Ho  
(b.1960)

Six Songs  
*I heard you*  
*Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only*  
*O you whom I often and silently come*  
*Trickle drops*  
*One hour to madness and joy*  
*A clear midnight*

James Rolfe  
(b.1961)

**Madeline Speller, *violin***  
**Tyler Mäkinen, *violin***  
**Katie McBean, *viola***  
**Patrick Theriault, *cello***

**Appendix 3.4: Performance Event Program Four, Doctoral Lecture Recital,  
February 2018**

**February 17 2018  
6pm, von Kuster Hall  
Laura Duffy, *soprano*  
Samantha Lee, *piano***

**SELECTED WORKS OF JAMES ROLFE'S VOCAL CHAMBER MUSIC**

Simon and Garfunkel and the Prophets of Rage

James Rolfe  
(b.1961)

**Jake Schindler, *percussion***

**-Intermission-**

Phrases

James Rolfe  
(b.1961)

**Amanda Forest, *clarinet***

## Curriculum Vitae

LAURA DUFFY

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

<b>Private Voice Teacher</b>	London, Ontario, 2014 – Present
<b>Substitute Studio Teacher for Gloria Gassi</b>	Western University, March 2017
<b>Choral Teaching Assistant, St. Celica's Singers</b> Undergraduate Course	Western University, 2016 – 2018
<b>Performance Research and Literature Teaching Assistant</b> Masters Course	Western University, 2016 – 2018
<b>Italian Lyric Diction Teaching Assistant</b> Undergraduate/Masters Course	Western University, 2014 – 2015
<b>German Lyric Diction Teaching Assistant</b> Undergraduate/Masters Course	Western University, 2015
<b>French Lyric Diction Teaching Assistant</b> Undergraduate/Masters Course	Western University, 2015 – 2016
<b>Cantor, Siloam United Church</b>	London, Ontario, 2015 – 2018
<b>Voice Instructor, Walters Music Academy</b>	London, Ontario, 2011 – 2014
<b>Voice Instructor/Assistant Vocal Director, Centrepoint Music</b>	Ottawa, Ontario, 2009 – 2011

### SELECTED SERVICE ACTIVITIES

<b>Founder and President, Western University Student Chapter, National Association of Teachers of Singing (SNATS Western)</b>	Western University, 2015 – 2019
<b>Guest Lecturer, Voice Friday Lecture Series</b>	Western University, 2018

### PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

#### In Concert

Soprano Soloist, *Messiah*, Brockville Choir with Strings of St. John's, Brockville, ON  
 Featured Soloist, Stratford Symphony Orchestra, Stratford, ON  
 Featured Soloist, *Les Illuminations*, Strings of St. John's, Concert Series, Ottawa, ON  
 Featured Soloist, *Operafest*, Orchestra London, London ON  
 Featured Soloist, *An Afternoon of Arias and Art Song Charity Concert*, Arnprior, ON

**Opera**

Sophie – *Sophie* (world premiere), Western University  
 Mimi – *La Bohème*, University of Western Ontario Opera Company  
 Flora – *The Turn of the Screw*, Accademia Europea Dell’Opera  
 Lucinda/Rita Matlock – *Spoon River* (world premiere), Songfire Young Apprenticeship  
 Costanza – *Griselda*, University of Western Ontario Opera Company  
 Madame Lidoine – *Les Dialogues des Carmelites*, Queen’s Student Opera Company

**EDUCATION**

<b>Doctorate of Musical Arts</b> Vocal Performance	2019
Faculty of Music, Western University, London, ON	
<i>Supervisors:</i> Dr. Catherine Nolan and Dr. John Hess	
<i>Research Topic:</i> Canadian Composer James Rolfe’s Vocal Chamber Works – Performing Contemporary Vocal Chamber Music	
<b>Master of Music</b> in Literature and Vocal Performance	2011
Western University, London, ON	
<b>Bachelor of Music</b> in Vocal Performance	2008
Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario	

**AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

<b>Young Artist Concerto Competition Winner</b> , Stratford Symphony Orchestra Competition 2015	
Stratford, ON	
<b>Don Wright Faculty of Music Graduate Award</b>	2014
Western University, London, ON	
<b>Lloyd Burritt Scholarship</b> , Songfire Young Apprenticeship Program	2011
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC	
<b>Herbert and Stella Overton Award in Music</b>	2008
on the basis of exceptional achievement in applied music	
Queen’s University, Kingston, ON	