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## Music and Art: An Aesthetic Experience

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**Music and Art: An Aesthetic Experience**  
**Samantha Martin**

Program Notes

“Love is an endless mystery, for it has nothing else to explain it.” – Rabindranath Tagore

**Per la gloria d’adorarvi (from *Griselda*).....Giovanni Battista Bononcini (1672-1750)**

Per la gloria d’adorarvi  
Voglio amarvi, o luci care.  
Amando penero,  
Ma sempre v’amerò,  
Sì, sì, nel mio penare,  
Penerò, v’amerò, luci care

For the joy of adoring you  
I want to love you, oh eyes dear.  
In loving you I will suffer,  
But I will not cease to love you.  
Yes, yes in my suffering: I will suffer  
I will suffer, I will love you, dear eyes!

Senza speme di diletto  
Vano affetto è sospirare,  
Ma i vostri dolci rai  
Chi vagheggiar può mai  
E non, e non v’amare?  
Penerò, v’amerò, luci care!

Without hope of joy/delight  
It is a vain affection to sigh  
But your sweet eyes  
Who could not help but admire them  
And not love you?  
I will suffer but I will love you, dear eyes!

“Per la gloria” is taken from the opera *Griselda*, and is sung by the character Ernesto, who is displaying his affection for the character Almirena. The lyrics of the piece describe unrequited love. Even though he is suffering and not receiving love in return, the narrator remains devoted, almost to the point of being obsessive about the eyes of his lover.

The piece of art chosen to represent this song is *The Artist and his Wife* by Giuseppe Baldryghi. The most notable feature of the painting is how the man (the artist) gazes adoringly at his wife, while she stares forward, not paying attention. In the background, the viewer can see that he is attempting to draw his wife, yet another example of how he is trying to show his affection. Despite this, she looks relatively unamused, even almost leaning away from him, much like the situation in “Per la gloria.”



Figure 1 Giuseppe Baldryghi, *The Artist and His Wife*. Oil on canvas, 63 x 49.2 in. Galleria Nazionale di Parma, Parma, Italy. Image from Public Domain.

**Mystery’s Song from (*The Fairy Queen*).....Henry Purcell (1659-1695)**

“Mystery’s Song” is exactly that: a song about mystery itself. The lyrics reflect a riddle in which the narrator is trying to get the listeners to guess his or her identity, as the song is told from the perspective of Mystery. It comes from Purcell’s English semi-opera *The Fairy Queen*, which was inspired by Shakespeare’s play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.



Figure 2 William Blake, *Oberon, Titania, and Puck, with Fairies Dancing*. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 18.7 x 26.6 in. Tate Britain, London, England. Image from Public Domain.

The artwork *Oberon, Titania, and Puck, with Fairies Dancing* by William Blake captures the playful attitude of “Mystery’s Song.” The blurred lines and lightness of the figures also add a sort of whimsy to the visual scene. The characters depicted here are the same characters as in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and because of this, relate to the semi-opera from which “Mystery’s Song” is taken.

**Wie melodien zieht es mir.....Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Wie Melodien zieht es  
Mir leise durch den Sinn,  
Wie Frühlingsblumen blüht es,  
Und schwebt wie Duft dahin.

It moves like a melody,  
Gently through my mind;  
It blossoms like spring flowers  
And wafts away like fragrance.

Doch kommt das Wort und faßt es  
Und führt es vor das Aug'  
Wie Nebelgrau erblaßt es  
Und schwindet wie ein Hauch.

But when it is captured in words,  
And placed before my eyes,  
It turns pale like a gray mist  
And disappears like a breath.

Und dennoch ruh in Reime  
Verborgen wohl ein Duft,  
Den mild aus stillen Keime  
Ein feuchtes Auge ruft.

And yet, remaining in my rhymes  
There hides still a fragrance,  
Which, mildly from the quiet bud,  
A moist eye calls forth.

The exact meaning of the text for this song is quite elusive and particularly hard to capture in language. The text is self-reflective and is primarily about poetry itself. A quote by Inge van Rij best expresses the beauty of the song. “Much is lost in the process of transferal from the mind of the poet to the word on the page, but the sensitive and sympathetic reader (moist eye) will still perceive the essence of the poet’s meaning.” Whether the song is about the inexplicable feeling that love creates, or maybe even other emotions, I like to think that this song is an anthem for feeling a certain way, but not quite knowing how to put it into words.

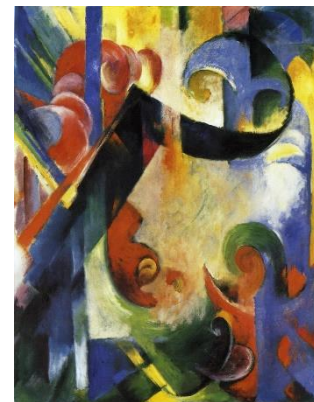


Figure 3 Franz Marc, *Broken Forms*. Oil on canvas, 84.5 x 112 cm. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, New York. Image from ArtStor.

The painting *Broken Forms* by Franz Marc follows a similar concept. While the onlooker can make out various shapes and grasp the essence of the artist’s idea, much is still lost in the transferal. I admire the lightness in the center of the painting that makes it look like mist, as well as the bold colors. I think even though the colors are bold, they mingle with one another, and it almost seems as if the image is floating away, just barely out of grasp.

“Sehnsucht; the inconsolable longing in the human heart for we know not what.” – C.S. Lewis

<b>Lied der Mignon</b> .....	<b>Franz Schubert (1797-1828)</b>
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt	Only one who knows longing
Weiß, was ich leide!	Knows what I suffer!
Allein und abgetrennt	Alone and cut off
Von aller Freude	From all joy,
Seh ich an's Firmament	I look into the firmament
Nach jener Seite.	In that direction.
Ach, der mich liebt und kennt,	Ach! He who loves and knows me
Ist in der Weite.	Is far away.
Es schwindelt mir, es brennt	I am reeling,
Mein Eingeweide.	My entrails are burning!
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt	Only one who knows longing
Weiß, was ich leide!	Knows what I suffer.

The text “Lied der Mignon” comes from Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meisters Leherjahre*. Mignon is a character in the novel who not only has an incredibly troubled past, but also has powerful feelings for the man who has saved her from a life in the circus. “Lied der Mignon” or “Song of Mignon” is the song in which she experiences these feelings of longing and desire that torture her.

*Sehnsucht (Traumerei)* by Heinrich Vogeler shows a woman looking longingly into the distance. Although a lot calmer than the feelings expressed in “Lied der Mignon,” the painting gives off a sense of despair and solitude. The woman in this image seems far away from wherever she wants to be, and her body language suggests she has given up. In many ways, this is how I picture Mignon when the song ends—hopeless and still longing for what she apparently cannot have.



Figure 4 Heinrich Vogeler, *Sehnsucht (Traumerei)*. Oil on canvas. Private Collection. Image from Public Domain.

<b>Ch'è faro senza Euridice (from Orfeo ed Euridice)</b> .....	<b>Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1749)</b>
Ahimè! Dove trascorsi	Alas! Where does it take me,
Ove mi spinse undelirio d'amor?	To where does it drive me, this delirium of love?
Sposa! Euridice! Consorte!	Spouse! Euridice! Wife!
Ah! Più non vive,	Ah, no longer she lives,
La chiamo invan.	I call in vain.
Misero me!	Miserable me!
La perdo e di nuovo e per sempre!	Her I have lost, and this time it is forever!
Oh legge! Oh morte! Oh ricordo crudel!	Oh judgement, oh sad death, oh memory cruel!
Non ho soccorso, non m'avanza consiglio.	No have I help, none gives me advice.
Io veggo solo (Oh fierra vista!)	I see only (oh fearful vision!)
Il luttuoso aspetto dell'orrido mio stato!	The mournful image of my horrible state!
Saziati sorte rea.	Fill yourself, wicked fate.
Son disperato!	I am desperate.
Che farò senza Euridice?	What will I do without Euridice?
Dove andrò senza il mio ben?	Where will I go without my wonderful one?
Euridice, Oh Dio, Rispondi!	Euridice, oh God, answer!
Io son pure il tuo fedel.	I am entirely your loyal one.
Euridice, Ah! non m'avanza	Euridice! Ah, none gives me

Più soccorso, più speranza,  
Né dal mondo, né dal ciel!  
Che farò senza Euridice?  
Dove andrò senza il mio ben?

Any help, any hope  
Neither from the world nor from heaven.  
What will I do without Euridice?  
Where will I go without my wonderful one?

The opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* was inspired by the myth of Orpheus, a man who could charm his way out of almost any situation by playing music. In the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Orfeo is on his way back from the Underworld, the land of Hades. After traveling there to rescue Euridice, his lover, he has been told he can bring Euridice back from Hades as long he does not turn around to look at her. Tempted by Euridice herself, he glances back for a moment, and she immediately dies. This aria is Orfeo's lament, as he ponders what he will do without Euridice. Orfeo is at his most desperate trying to win back the affection of the gods with music.

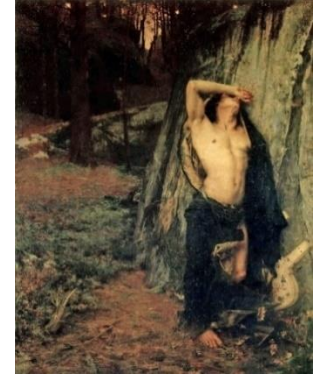


Figure 5 Pascal-Adolphe-Jean Dagnan-Bouveret, *Orpheus's Sorrow*. Oil on Canvas, 59 x 42 1/2 in (150 x 108 cm).  
Musee des Beaux-Arts, Mulhouse.

*Orpheus' Sorrow* by Pascal Adolphe Jean Dagnan-Bouveret is a painting created specifically about Orpheus and his despair after Euridice is taken away from him. His clothes appear tattered, and his instrument is hidden behind him on the ground. He appears as pathetic and without hope in this image as he does in the song. Although one can hear pleasing melodies throughout the aria in Orfeo's efforts to please the gods, the image illustrates just how much the situation has devastated him.

**Les berceaux.....Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)**

Le long du Quai, les grands vaisseaux  
Que la houle incline en silence,  
Ne prennent pas garde aux berceaux  
Que la main des femmes balance.

Along the quay, the great ships  
That the sea-swells tilt in silence,  
Take no notice of the cradles  
Rocked by the hands of women.

Mais viendra le jour des adieux,  
Car il faut que les femmes pleurent  
Et que les hommes curieux  
Tentent les horizons qui leurrent!

But the day of parting will come,  
Because women must weep  
And curious men must be tempted  
Towards horizons that lure them!

Et ce jour-là les grands vaisseaux,  
Fuyant le port qui diminue,  
Sentent leur masse retenue  
Par l'âme des lointains berceaux.

And that day, the great ships,  
Fleeing from the port that grows small,  
Will feel their mass restrained  
By the soul of distant cradles.

In the song "Les Berceaux", the women are watching their men leave, while the waves rocking the boats are compared to the women rocking their cradles. The men long to discover the world at sea, but are also pulled and restrained by their families. The sense of longing for adventure but also to be close to the ones you love are both felt in the lyrics of this piece.



*Moonlight* by Henri Moret seems to convey the ships in the distance and the rocking of the waves. I like to think of this as the scene that the women observe as their men depart from shore. The light on the horizon makes this image seem more hopeful than just another shipwreck scene. In my opinion, it looks as if they are traveling towards the “horizons that lure them,” as the song states.

Figure 6 Henri Moret, *Moonlight*. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

“Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better.” – Albert Einstein

**Beau soir.....Claude Debussy (1862-1918)**

Lorsque au soleil couchant les rivières sont roses, Et qu'un tiède frisson court sur les champs de blé Un conseil d'être heureux Semble sortir des choses Et monter vers le coeur troublé.	When rivers are pink in the setting sun, And a warm ripple Crosses over the fields of wheat, The advice to be happy Seems to emanate from things And ascends toward the troubled heart.
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Un conseil de goûter le charme d'être au monde, Cependant qu'on est jeune et que le soir est beau, Car nous nous en allons comme s'en va cette onde Elle à la mer, nous au tombeau.	A suggestion to taste the charms of the world While one is young and the evening is fair, For we are on our way just as this wave is: It is to the sea, we to the tomb.
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“Beau Soir” speaks to the realization that we will not be young forever and as a result, we should savor the beauty of the evening. The lyrics compare human life to that of a sea, but while the wave goes to the sea, humans go to the tomb. The parallels to nature are a poetic retelling of the circle of life, hinting that everything must end eventually. Because of this, we should enjoy life and the beautiful evening while we can.



Figure 7 Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night Over the Rhone*. Oil on canvas, 28.5 x 36.2 in. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Image from Musée d'Orsay.

*Starry Night over the Rhone* by Vincent Van Gogh illustrates the beauty of the evening, from the lights of a distant town reflecting on the water to the stars in the sky. Perhaps this is the sea to which the wave flows and it is a part of the beautiful evening. In the bottom corner there is a couple walking through a field. I feel as though these people could be to whom the song is sung, receiving advice to enjoy the evening while it is fair and while they are still young.

**Asturiana (from *Siete Canciones Populares Española*, no. 3).....Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)**

Por ver si me consolaba, Arrime a un pino verde, Por ver si me consoloaba.	To see whether it would console me, I drew near a green pine, To see whether it would console me.
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Por verme llorar, lloraba. Y el pino como era verde, Por verme llorar, lloraba.	Seeing me weep, it wept; And the pine, being green, Seeing me weep, wept.
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The song “Asturiana” is about finding empathy with nature. In the song, the singer expresses grief and sadness, and seems to find consolidation by being with the trees in nature. The song is from the Asturias, a mountain and forest region in northern Spain. De Falla used the original melody and text from the folk song, and reshaped the accompaniment for the piece, which I feel adds depth to the text and vocal line.

Spanish painter Pablo Picasso is known for his abstracted subjects, but in this painting, *La Rue de Bois*, you can clearly make out the shape of the tree. Even though the tree is standing tall and it is not a pine like the song mentions, there is still a quality to it that makes it somber. The bareness and angular shape of the branches suggests that this is the type of tree one could find consolidation with, especially in times of grief.

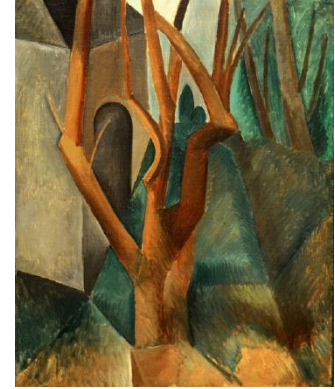


Figure 8 Pablo Picasso, *La Rue des Bois* or *Paris*. Oil on canvas, 39.5 x 32 in. Museum of Modern Art, Manhattan. Image from Museum of Modern Art Collection.

“Here is a small fact: You are going to die.... Does this worry you? I urge you—don’t be afraid. I’m nothing if not fair.” – Death in *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

**Der Tod und das Mädchen.....Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Das Mädchen

Vorüber! Ach, vorüber!  
Geh wilder Knochenmann!  
Ich bin noch jung, geh Lieber!  
Und rühre mich nicht an.

The Maiden

"Pass over! Ah, pass over!  
Go, savage man of bone!  
I am still young - go, devoted one!  
And do not bother me."

Der Tod

“Gib deine Hand, Du schön und zart Gebild!  
Bin Freund, und komme nicht, zu strafen.  
Sey gutes Muths! ich bin nicht wild,  
Sollst sanft in meinen Armen schlafen.

Death

"Give me your hand, you fair and tender form!  
I am a friend; I do not come to punish.  
Be of good cheer! I am not savage.  
You shall sleep gently in my arms."

In this song, the maiden is on the brink of death. Because of some of the word choices within the lyrics, I imagine a scene in which she has attempted suicide. However, now that death has appeared, she is changing her mind and no longer wants to die. The lyrics switch to death’s perspective in the second half of the piece, claiming to be friendly and offering the maiden a gentle slumber. The tonality in the music changes from a haunting minor to a major key, making the listener think that all is resolved, even though it means that the maiden has accepted her fate and died.



Figure 9 Egon Schiele, *Death and the Maiden*. Oil on canvas. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna, Austria. Image from ArtStor.

The poetry of “Death and the Maiden” has been painted, illustrated, and conveyed in many pieces of art through the years. I chose Egon Schiele’s *Death and the Maiden* because of how the maiden and Death embrace one another. Because the

maiden calls death “devoted one” and Death introduces himself as a friend in the poem, this is the image that I see when the funeral march happens at the end of the song, as the maiden is in fact, gently sleeping in Death’s arms.

**The Song of Black Max (as told by de Kooning boys)..... William Bolcom (b. 1938)**

“The Song of Black Max” is another characterization of Death. In this version, Death is a character named “Black Max.” Every person that Black Max tips his broad, black hat to is his victim. Seeing Black Max is a certain sign that you are about to die. This involves the businessmen in the street at the beginning, as well as the narrator at the end of the song.

This song was inspired by the artist Willem de Kooning, as the complete title of the song is “Black Max: As Told by de Kooning Boys.” The reference to the “de Kooning Boys” is a reference to the artist Willem de Kooning, who, according to Anthony Tommasini of the New York Times, told Bolcom and lyricist Arnold Weinstein about “an enticingly nefarious character who roamed a Rotterdam neighborhood when de Kooning was a child.” I would speculate that de Kooning’s painting “Black Untitled” is an abstract image of this character. Looking at it closely, you can make out the wispy face of a man and a large black hat. It is my guess that this is the figure one could picture when imagining Black Max.



Figure 10 Willem de Kooning, *Black Untitled*. Oil and enamel on paper, mounted on wood. 29 7/8 x 40 in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Image from ArtStor.



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