

The thought behind the utterance:  
Aspects of Communication in Song.

C. Stephen Varcoe

PhD

The University of York  
Music Department  
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## **IMAGING SERVICES NORTH**

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# **THESIS CONTAINS**

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates how a classically trained recital singer may set about achieving mastery in his or her field. It draws upon the ideas and opinions of writers on singing, pedagogy, composition, aesthetics, rhetoric, acting and psychology. It also draws upon the experience of the author as a singer whose career has spanned thirty years as performer and recording artist, teacher of voice and repertoire, and who has written on the history and interpretation of English song.

The main thrust of the argument is that the complete performer must engage the mind in every aspect of the craft, whether it be in the creation of vocal sound, in the preparation of musical and textual material, or in the visualisation and realisation of the character of a song's protagonist: prescriptive instruction alone is not sufficient to achieve this aim.

Chapter one, *The voice*, maintains that intellect, musicianship, imagination and visualisation go hand-in-hand with vocal technique and natural talent to create the consummate performer.

Chapter two, *Visual presentation*, explores the visual element of performance, and how feeling may be convincingly displayed through appropriate use of the body.

Chapter three, *The mode of address*, looks at the delivery of text and how this may affect the performer's focus of attention.

Chapter four, *The poem's provenance*, discusses how the significance of a text may be affected by the context in which it is found.

Chapter five, *Meaning*, highlights some problems encountered in translating or interpreting texts.

Chapter six, *Interpretation of a non-English text*, looks in some detail at a particular song in order to explore how the nuanced meanings of poetic language can be preserved during the process of translation.

Chapter seven, *The thought behind the utterance*, contains a discussion of the moment the protagonist finds a new thought before expressing it.

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## Introduction

I have observed many singers whose performances lack integrity of interpretation or depth of understanding, and who fail to convince him that they know what they are singing about, seemingly unaware of any problem. Certainly there is much intensity and emotion to be heard, but often of a rather generalised nature. Students may be taught by very experienced coaches who know just how the repertoire is usually performed, and who can help to refine phrasing, language, diction and so on, but who do not necessarily teach them what is being communicated, and by whom. There may be several explanations for this, possibly the most persuasive being that the student is under great pressure of time to complete a course of instruction which will then be tested according to a set of more or less strict criteria. The voice as an instrument takes years to bring to a professional standard, and the need to learn a large amount of repertoire encourages teachers to hand down standard interpretations rather than stimulate the student's own ideas. Perhaps the innocent learner may have little to offer in terms of informed opinion, but without early incentives for self-learning, the student will slip into the habit of expecting to receive and reproduce someone else's concepts.

This thesis sets out to show the necessity of involving the mind in all aspects of singing: in the training of the voice; in the development of musical understanding; in interpreting texts in relation to their musical setting; and in creating and performing believable and consistent characterisations. Without imagination and visualisation a truly convincing performance cannot be achieved.

Of necessity this thesis is divided into chapters with individual titles, which could suggest a series of discrete subjects which are self-contained. In fact, since every aspect of singing impinges on every other aspect, everything involved in singing has to be treated holistically. It will be seen in chapter one, for example, that several dualisms are identified: technique versus interpretation; spontaneity versus memorisation; abstract conception versus concrete realisation. Much energy has been expended in arguing on each side of these divisions by writers with decided opinions and professional corners to defend in what seem sometimes to be polemical manifestos. All writers can be accused of a certain lack of balance, myself included, but part of the aim of this thesis is to find positions which show a middle way, a holistic synthesis of opposites.

One of the problematic areas for singers in their attempts to portray character is the difficulty of using the body convincingly, and much time and effort are devoted to training opera students to become good singing actors. But the focus of this thesis is not on the performance of opera, but on the performance of the song repertoire in the context of the traditional song recital. The opera singer, using costume, sets, directed movement and interaction with other characters on stage has in many respects an easier task than the recitalist standing by the piano without any of those benefits, and constrained by tradition and taste.

This thesis identifies several of the specific problems faced by recitalists and seeks to show how they may be overcome. Firstly, there is the limitation imposed by the physical position of the singer, particularly in the matter of presenting a song visually (chapter two). Given that the pianist is the equivalent of the orchestra in the pit, there is nobody on the concert platform with whom to interact. What are the implications of being visible to the audience? How should one show feelings? Are movement and gesture effective? Secondly, there is a problem related to the first, which is that the recitalist must know to whom the song is addressed, and how and where to project the focus of attention (chapter three). Too often the singer fails to match the delivery to the words, such as, for example, letting the eyes wander when intensity of feeling is required, or indulging in inappropriate byplay with the audience when an inner soliloquy is indicated.

The singer in an opera usually enacts the part of one character, who has a clearly defined role in the drama and for whom a suitable biography can quite easily be discovered. The third problem for the singer of songs is that the biographies of the gallery of characters being portrayed are not often so clear-cut. Indeed, the poet may originally have imagined a physical or emotional setting for his poetic persona which is no longer applicable in the altered context of a song. This and other difficulties in finding who it is that sings will be considered in chapter four.

A related difficulty for the recitalist, the fourth problem, lies in establishing one of the most fundamental elements of a song – what it *means*. In chapter five we look at this problem and see how poetic nuance may be compromised and limited when set to music, altering the reader's initial understanding. Another facet of this problem is that the meaning of the text may simply be obscure.

Text in a foreign language is the most obviously obscure, and the difficulty of translation is here presented as the recitalist's fifth problem. The student may find a



ready-made translation or make up his own, but without much careful research it is likely that many of the original text's nuances will be lost, resulting in yet another generalised performance. Chapter six gives the result of research into the translation of one poem, and highlights the difficulty of creating a fully-nuanced performance in a language which is not one's own.

The final problem discussed in the final chapter of this thesis is the one which set me on the path of writing it in the first place. When preparing a soliloquy (in English) for the part of Salieri in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri*, I was made aware of the need to clarify the exact moment at which a new thought strikes the character. Since then, I have increasingly observed how a singer can seem content only to follow the instructions given by poet and composer, rather than identifying so fully with the character being portrayed and with the pacing of the music as it unfolds, that the next note, phrase or sentence must come precisely when the composer has asked for it. The protagonist's thought becomes the singer's thought, and the performance is at last truly convincing.

## Chapter one

### The Voice

The singing voice at its simplest can be considered as pure sound, and as such it can be thought of as a musical instrument which the singer must learn to play. But since the voice is also the primary means by which human beings express their feelings, it can move us simply by the human quality of its tone. In addition, the voice is called upon to carry the words of our spoken language and to do so in a manner consistent with the meaning of that language. Add to this the decision-making process by which the singer chooses a particular path through a performance, and the whole mixture can and does provoke factional arguments amongst those who would assert the primacy of one element over another. This chapter seeks to address and balance these arguments.

#### *Writing about the voice*

Theorising about music has been going on for so long, 2000 or 3000 years, it is no surprise that it is a very confusing body of knowledge. Theorists of any particular time have written on topics of local interest, usually promoting them to the level of universal validity. The history of music theory can be read as a tale of ingenious special pleading for this or that musical style.<sup>1</sup>

For centuries experts have been writing treatises instructing singers in their craft, and the studies by Duey, Monahan, Fields and Burgin have drawn attention to their great number:<sup>2</sup> Duey looked at the *bel canto* period, centred on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but spilling over into the nineteenth; Monahan limited himself to examining 160 documents covering the period from 1777 to 1927; Fields looked at 702 relating to the years 1928 to 1942; Burgin looked at 803 relating to 1943 to 1971. There is as yet

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<sup>1</sup> Erickson, Robert. 'New Music and Psychology', from Deutsch, Diana, ed. *The Psychology of Music*, London: Academic Press, 1982, 520.

<sup>2</sup> Duey, Philip. *Bel Canto in its Golden Age*, New York: King's Crown Press, 1951; Monahan, Brent. *The Art of Singing: A Compendium of Thoughts on Singing Published between 1777 & 1927*, Metuchen NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978; Fields, Victor. *Training the Singing Voice*, New York: King's Crown Press, 1947; Burgin, John C. *Teaching Singing*, Metuchen NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1973.

(September 2008) no single work providing an overview of developments since that date, but it is clear that there has been a continuing output of new publications about singing, particularly those dealing with vocal physiology: a 30-minute search of the University Library catalogue in Cambridge resulted in finding more than twenty books on the singing voice published since 1980.

Written advice has been available from teachers, composers, singers, instrumentalists, poets and critics, some of it well expressed, some contradictory and confusing. Much of the confusion stems from a lack of agreed definition of certain terms, such as ‘compass’, ‘diction’, ‘vibrato’, ‘tremolo’, and the ‘head, middle and chest’ registers.<sup>3</sup> Even when, largely as a result of Garcia’s perfection of the laryngoscope in 1855, science began to be used to assist the work of singing teachers, the presence of diagrams and cross sections to illustrate the physiology of the voice often only gave an appearance of understanding, the accompanying text displaying an underlying ignorance of the true mechanics of voice production. For example, E. G. White writes in 1918 that ‘in neither speech nor song do the vocal cords actually create the tone’, but that the sound is produced in the sinuses,<sup>4</sup> and this was in spite of the fact that Antoine Ferrein had conclusively shown in 1741 that the sound of the voice was initiated by vibration in the *cordes vocals*.<sup>5</sup> It remains the case today, however, that with all the physiological research carried out so far, much remains unknown about how the voice functions:

The anatomy of support for phonation is especially complicated and not completely understood; and performers who use the terms ‘diaphragm’ and ‘support’ do not always mean the same thing.<sup>6</sup>

As with the exact character of velopharyngeal closure itself, not all the answers are clear regarding the degree to which velopharyngeal closure may be modified in singing.<sup>7</sup>

...the type of falsetto singing used by countertenors is probably different from other types of falsetto. The fundamental frequency control may very well differ between such different types of phonation in falsetto register.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Monahan, *The Art of Singing*, 228.

<sup>4</sup> White, Ernest. *The Voice Beautiful in Speech and Song* (1909), rev. ed. London: J. M. Dent, 1918, 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Ferrein did not publish his experimental findings, but Gordon Holmes described those findings in his *History of the progress of Laryngology from the Earliest Times to the Present*, published in *The Medical Press* (London) between July 15 and September 9 1885. The work is cited in Duey, *Bel Canto in its Golden Age*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Sataloff, Robert. ‘G. Paul Moore lecture: Rational thought: The impact of voice science upon voice care’, *Journal of Voice* 9/3 (Sept. 1995), 219.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, Richard. *The Structure of Singing*, Belmont CA: Schirmer, 1996, 68.

Indeed, Duey, writing in 1951, maintains that the physiological study of singing initiated by Garcia and developed ever since, had not brought us to the position of mastery achieved by the great exponents of *bel canto*, who possessed none of these scientific advantages.

Lilli Lehmann has a good deal of science in her book, *How to Sing*, originally published in German as *Meine Gesangskunst*, and she includes several dozen diagrams of the vocal tract. Here is a sample from her chapter 'The Attack and the Vowels':

Above all strike out the so-called pure vowel *ah* – since it is the root of all evil – and also eliminate from the memory that it is a single tone. Even though the vowel *ah* in various combinations sounds like *ah*, it has, notwithstanding its fundamental feature of vowel blending necessary to its tone form, nothing in common with the accustomed vowel *ah* as it is ordinarily spoken. Our musical table for the vowel *ah* and for the attack presents itself as follows: Vowel  $\bar{e}$  = tone-height, tone-carrier, head voice;  $\bar{a}$  = strength, brightness, place determining vowel, note line upon which we sing;  $\bar{o}$  = tone-depth, flexibility, covering, euphony, chest resonance.

These three vowels, concentrated in the proper mixture and attacked simultaneously, give the vowel *ah* as the artist needs it. They determine the fundamental position of each tone, and are at the same time the attack itself, which is neither a single vowel nor a separate function of the vocal organs but a triple sound on one tone.<sup>9</sup>

From a logical standpoint this is clearly an impossibility: one vowel is quite distinct from another, and even though the full spectrum of vowels stretches seamlessly from *ee* to *oo* as if part of a rainbow of sound, the individual vowels *e*, *a* and *oo* cannot be combined to form a single sound in the same manner as three different colours can be mixed on a painter's palette. Whatever the timbre, volume or pitch of the voice, it utters one vowel at a time. Lehmann is presumably asking for the singer to *imagine* three different sounds simultaneously in three different parts of the vocal tract in order to create the most effective, musical singing tone or timbre, and those of us who are involved in singing pedagogy will probably recognise the truth underlying what she writes. Part of her

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<sup>8</sup> Sundberg, Johan. *The Science of the Singing Voice*, DeKalb IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1987, 41.

<sup>9</sup> Lehmann, Lilli. *How to Sing* (1902), trans. Richard Aldritch, New York: Dover Publications, 1993, 31.

problem in trying to communicate such an idea is that she has only words to do so here, and not very many of them at that; and the fact that this is a translation probably does not help the reader to grasp her meaning either. But it should be understood that what she writes about *ah* is not so much based upon science as upon imagination. The reader's opinion of what she has to say might be coloured by the words of Hugo Wolf, who wrote in the *Wiener Salonblatt* on January 25, 1885, that although Lilli Lehmann was a 'sublime vision of ecstasy transfigured' in the 'Liebestod' of *Tristan*, it was 'a shame that she enunciates so badly. Not a single word was comprehensible.' He wrote much the same two weeks later.<sup>10</sup>

Another writer on singing who includes many diagrams and uses scientific terminology is Lucie Manen. During World War II she practised as a physiotherapist and subsequently continued to research the physiology of the voice. In spite of this scientific and medical background she uses an imaginative device for showing how to breathe correctly and prepare the body and the voice for the onset of sound:

In order to understand the correct inspiration for singing, let us imagine a short scene and analyse it in slow motion. The singer enters a room and sees a letter on the table addressed to him. He picks it up, looks at the handwriting without recognising it, opens the envelope and reads something. He is startled. His reactions will involve a change of his facial expression from indifference to agreeable surprise, in which the whole system participates. In physical terms:

- (1) he draws a quick, snatched breath; his larynx closes, he holds his breath;
- (2) his jaws separate and are kept horizontal;
- (3) his chest is lifted, the abdomen is flattened;
- (4) his cheeks are lifted, the nasal space is widened;
- (5) his eyebrows are raised, eyes open.

Now the singer gives expression to his joyful reaction to this agreeable surprise.

- (6) His larynx opens, he exclaims 'ah!': the larynx closes. The jaws remain separated, the chest remains lifted.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *The Music Criticism of Hugo Wolf*, ed. & trans. Henry Pleasants, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978, 108.

<sup>11</sup> Manen, Lucie. *The Art of Singing*, London: Faber Music 1974, 18.

Here is a clever piece of instruction which transcends problems of translation and the defining of terms, and gains the desired end through imagining a reflex action using a simple thought experiment. Once again, imagination is the key to this example, just as it is at the root of all vocal pedagogy. Teaching the physiology of the voice has its place in enhancing a student's understanding, but so much that is involved in creating good singing tone is based on *apparent* sensation rather than the direct operation of muscles within the vocal tract. White's anatomically absurd statement (qv) about the voice originating in the sinuses possesses a kind of truth if one treats it as a statement about what singing feels like. Hemsley, one of Manen's pupils, writes thus:

The study of singing, in our tradition, can be reduced to two things:

1. Training the mind and the imagination to give clear and precise impulses to which the body can react;
2. Training the body to react with maximum precision and energy.<sup>12</sup>

### *The voice as Instrument*

Barthes writes of the 'grain' of the voice, his term for that essence which is the body speaking its mother tongue, and he uses the archetypal voice of the Russian cantor as an example of that essence.<sup>13</sup> Wagner, in a critique of Beethoven's ninth symphony, writes of the vocal entry at 'Ihr Freunde, nicht diese Töne!' that it is not so much the meaning of the words which engages our emotion, but the human quality of the sound itself.<sup>14</sup> Marafioti, who bases his remarks upon his observations of Caruso's singing, maintains that the voice's expressive power can sometimes be independent of the words being sung:

There is no medium for expressing human sentiments or feelings so high, so strong, and so effective as to bear comparison with the human voice. Its power of impressiveness is incommensurable, not only in relation to the significance of the words spoken, but at times even independent of them, when it lies wholly and intrinsically in the timbre and inflection of the voice itself.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hemsley, Thomas. *Singing and Imagination*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*, ed. & trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana, 1977, 181-2.

<sup>14</sup> Wagner, Richard. *Wagner on Music and Drama* (1964), ed. Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn, trans. Ashton Ellis, London: Victor Gollancz, 1970, 171-2.

<sup>15</sup> Marafioti, P. Mario. *Caruso's Method of Voice Production* (1922), New York: Dover, 1949, 187.

Langer calls the voice ‘the prime avenue of self-expression’,<sup>16</sup> while Mursell describes it as ‘the fundamental medium of musical performance’:

[The voice] involves and engages all those psychological functions upon which music itself depends more directly and completely than any artificial instrument. We feel and perceive music more immediately and express it more directly in the voice than in any other way ... The vocal mechanism is the entire psychophysical personality.<sup>17</sup>

Roem states that the emotional quality of the voice makes it difficult to ‘disentangle’ its sound from the meaning of what is being sung.<sup>18</sup>

These commentators all assert that there is something which moves us in the very sound of the vocal instrument, and this is an extremely important factor for all students of singing to understand and use to their advantage. Pavarotti’s singing of ‘Nessun dorma’ creates weak-kneed delight amongst listeners who know nothing of the story of *Turandot*, nothing of opera nor of the Italian language. But Hahn, while acknowledging the fundamental appeal of the exceptional voice and its beauty, criticises the traditional Italian *bel canto* school by saying that they attach too much importance to this aspect of singing and ignore other elements of the art. He writes of the beautiful voice as ‘a most beautiful thing even in the absence of the intellectual element that should be added to it.’<sup>19</sup> Croiza echoes these thoughts:

I do not reproach singers for concentrating on their voices, I reproach them for working only on the voice instead of lessening their vocal concern by developing in parallel within themselves the thought, the will, the expression.<sup>20</sup>

A similar warning is sounded by Marafioti, who insists on the paramount importance of words, even though his thesis is based upon one of the greatest voices of the age of recorded music:

As for the significance of the word, of which the human voice is the supreme medium, its power of effectiveness is far more inestimable than

<sup>16</sup> Langer, Susanne. *Feeling and Form*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953, 141.

<sup>17</sup> Mursell, James. *The Psychology of Music* (1937), New York: Johnson Reprint, 1970, 224.

<sup>18</sup> Roem, Ned. *Music from Inside Out*, New York: Braziller, 1967, 66.

<sup>19</sup> Hahn, Reynaldo. *On Singers and Singing* (1957), trans. Léopold Simoneau, Bromley: Christopher Helm, 1990, 27

<sup>20</sup> Croiza, Claire. *The Singer as Interpreter: Claire Croiza’s Master Classes*, ed. & trans. Betty Bannerman, London: Victor Gollancz, 1989, 43.

that of the simple sound, which, in spite of its beauty, can never approximate the same effectiveness on human beings as can words.<sup>21</sup>

Stanislavski, writing about an aria in *La Bohème*, warns that:

there is so much powerful enchantment in the Puccini melody itself – so much lightheartedness [sic], warmth, joy, enthusiasm – that it seems one can simply give oneself up to this music and not think at all about the words. This, indeed, is what often happens with extremely good vocalists.<sup>22</sup>

Wagner writes of something similar with his description of Tichatschek at rehearsals of *Rienzi* in Dresden. It appears that this singer learnt all the misprints in the libretto and sang ‘the wrong words with the same palpable verve as the correct ones’, yet Wagner says that nonetheless he was ‘amply rewarded by the irresistible appeal of his glorious voice.’<sup>23</sup>

A clear exposition of the differentiation between sound and the thing sung, between *la voce* and Hahn’s ‘intellectual element’, is given by Barthes, with his definitions of the terms *geno-song* and *pheno-song*. Briefly, the *geno-song* is the sound of the voice and the language, not its meaning as language per se, but ‘the space where meaning germinates’, which he called the *diction* of the language. Crucially, he maintains that it has nothing to do with communication or expression, though this seems to be contradicted by Sundberg’s work on emotional phonation (qv pp. 16/17). Communication and expression, in Barthes’ terms, are reserved for the *pheno-song*, covering everything from style and taste to representation of feeling and the personality of the performer.<sup>24</sup> *Geno-song* must be close to Langer’s idea of ‘impassioned utterance’, the ‘ardor [sic] for the import conveyed’, without which any performance will be cold. Yet she argues that the required warmth cannot simply be created by technique since the feeling of ‘ardor’ is real.<sup>25</sup> Stanislavski wrote in similar vein:

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<sup>21</sup> Marafioti, *Caruso's Method of Voice Production*, 188.

<sup>22</sup> Stanislavski, Constantin, and Pavel Rumyantsev. *Stanislavski on Opera*, trans. Elizabeth Hapgood, New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1975, 233.

<sup>23</sup> Wagner, Richard. *My Life*, ed. Mary Whittall, trans. Andrew Gray, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, 227-8.

<sup>24</sup> Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 182-3.

<sup>25</sup> Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 141.



If your heart is empty and cold, so will be the auditorium. I cannot go on forever just admiring the timbre of your voice. You must offer me something more, some food for thought.<sup>26</sup>

This ardour or ‘something more’ is like Hanslick’s ‘electric spark’ which the performer conjures out of the music and gives to the listener, even though he is in reality only revealing what is inherent in the composition.

To the performer it is granted to release directly the feeling which possesses him, through his instrument, and breathe into his performance the wild storms, the passionate fervour, the serene power and joy of his inwardness. The bodily ardour that through my fingertips suddenly presses the soulful vibrato upon the string, or pulls the bow, or indeed makes itself audible in song, in actual fact makes possible the most personal outpouring of feeling in music-making....the emotionally cathartic and stimulating aspect of music is situated in the reproductive act, which coaxes the electric spark out of its obscure secret place and flashes it across to the listener.<sup>27</sup>

### *Technique versus interpretation*

Another way of dividing singing into two different and often opposing categories, is to speak of technique and interpretation. Students of singing at conservatoires will be well aware of this division, in that their tuition is usually split between their vocal teachers, responsible for building the voice on a sound technical basis, and all the rest – teachers of harmony and musical history, coaches in repertoire, movement, languages and the like – who are responsible for encouraging singers to be musicians who can interpret their scores and communicate them to the listener. This division is the cause of much argument and anxiety when a teacher from one side appears to contradict a teacher from the other. Hemsley finds the key to this dilemma by emphasising that every aspect of singing is engendered in the imagination, which could be described as the unifying principle behind the whole process.

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<sup>26</sup> Stanislavski, *Stanislavski on Opera*, 92.

<sup>27</sup> Hanslick, Eduard. *On the Musically Beautiful* (1854), trans. Geoffrey Payzant, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986, 49.

I make no apology for repeating that the greatest enemy of interpretation is self-consciousness in all its forms. And perhaps the greatest cause of self-consciousness among singers is obsession with voice, and the practice of divorcing what is called 'technique' from what is called 'interpretation', and forgetting the sheer joy in singing; of failing to put into practice the principle that all singing, in all its aspects, physical, emotional, and spiritual, must be initiated in the singer's imagination.<sup>28</sup>

Averino criticises the standard approach of singing teachers who give out exercises that are really designed for instrumentalists, and for locating the different notes. She sees this as ignoring the 'creative roles of imagination and impulse', and forgetting that it is the *urge* to produce a sound which is its very essence.<sup>29</sup> Kagen writes that many technical problems experienced by young singers are the result of not having a clear image in their minds of the 'sound of the musical and phonetic content' of their songs.<sup>30</sup> Much good work can be achieved in teaching through demonstration and imitation, whereby students mimic certain qualities of what they hear.

Auditory feedback is available to students through the use of recording equipment which is now of a size and quality that it can provide a relatively faithful reproduction of the sound of the voice at a modest cost: it is the aural equivalent of singing in front of a mirror, and can guide the imagination to more effective use of the voice. Recordings can also be used in vocal pedagogy, either for illustrating technical aspects of teaching, as in the CD accompanying Smith's *The Naked Voice*,<sup>31</sup> or for coaching correct pronunciation, as with the CDs accompanying the *Language of Song* series.<sup>32</sup> Alongside such recordings, computer programs such as VoceVista and WinSingad are increasingly finding a place in singing pedagogy, though these are not directly relevant to this study.

A further stimulus to the imagination is the use of commercial recordings, which can expose the student to the vocal quality and musical style of a great variety of singers past and present, though it does carry the danger of creating pale imitations of others' interpretations rather than personal response to the songs. Nevertheless, treated with

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<sup>28</sup> Hemsley, *Singing and Imagination*, 196.

<sup>29</sup> Averino, Olga. *Principles and Art of Singing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Aarhus: Forlaget Intention, 1988, 9 and 39.

<sup>30</sup> Kagen, Sergius. *On Studying Singing*, New York: Dover, 1950, 47.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, W. Stephen (with Michael Chipman). *The Naked Voice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Kemp, Nicola-Jane and Heidi Pegler, eds. *The Language of Song*, London: Faber Music, 2006.

discrimination and an awareness of potential dangers, recordings, as Narmour has said, are primary source documents not only for scholars but for performers also.<sup>33</sup>

Mursell points out that 'higher mental processes are important in the control of the voice', emphasising, like Averino, the central role of imagination in both the physical production of vocal tone and in the setting up of the appropriate emotional conditions most favourable for creating that tone. It should be noted here that he does not call for emotions appropriate to the song (joy, sorrow, despair, elation etc.), but 'pleasant' emotions which set in train the kind of autonomous actions which are conducive to good singing (cf. the extract from Manen above).<sup>34</sup> Mursell also underlines the need for relaxation of the face for good vocal tone, and that this can be created by 'setting up a pleasurable and interesting situation, to which it is a natural response.'<sup>35</sup> This is difficult to reconcile with the notion that the singer should find the appropriate emotional conditions for the song, though it is clear both from a moment's introspection and from experience that singing while truly grief-stricken, for example, would be quite impossible: the requisite fine control of diaphragm and larynx would be lost. Indeed, as Fonagy shows, emotional phonation in speech leads in some cases to muscular tensions which would be inimical to good singing: the most destructive effects he notes are for 'spiteful whispering', 'suppressed rage' and the 'contemptuous growl'.<sup>36</sup>

Sundberg has studied a singer's use of expressive devices for a variety of emotional contexts, by performing songs in two different modes: emotionally neutral and emotionally expressive. He discovered that variations in tempo, loudness and dynamic contrast depend to a large extent upon whether the emotion is agitated or non-agitated. But he also discovered that a singer in expressive mode uses lower formant frequencies for the vowels in comparison with non-expressive mode, thereby creating an 'expressive' tone colour, regardless of the specific emotion being called for, and whether it is agitated or non-agitated.<sup>37</sup> This expressive tone colour is one of the central elements of teaching students who wish to become opera singers.

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<sup>33</sup> Narmour, Eugene. 'On the Relationship of Analytical Theory to Performance and Interpretation', from Narmour, Eugene, and Ruth Solie. *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, Stuyvesant NY: Pendragon Press, 1988, 318.

<sup>34</sup> Mursell, *The Psychology of Music*, 228-9.

<sup>35</sup> Mursell, James, and Mabelle Glenn. *The Psychology of School Music Teaching*, New York: Silver Burdett, 1938, 287.

<sup>36</sup> Fonagy, Ivan. 'Mimik auf glottaler Ebene', *Phonetica* 8 (1962), 218.

<sup>37</sup> Sundberg, Johan et al., 'A singer's expression of emotion in sung performance', *STL – Quarterly Progress and Status report*, 35/2-3 (1994), 89.

If the singer should have at heart a pleasant emotion when singing, as advocated by Mursell, or a kind of joyful surprise as advocated by Manen, rather than the actual emotion being described, then according to Langer there is an equivalent response in the heart of the listener. This response is not the feeling being expressed in the song, but what she terms 'the aesthetic emotion', or a 'pervasive feeling of exhilaration'.<sup>38</sup>

Several commentators have written that the intention of the musician is at the core of the process of performing, and the present writer has experienced many instances where students' interpretations have been transformed by their being encouraged to find deeper, personal meaning in what they are doing. Barzun writes that music's significance evaporates if the performer's intention is wrong,<sup>39</sup> and Ferguson underlines its importance in tracing the thought behind the utterance. If, as he maintains, the performer impersonates the composer, then the singer has the further task of impersonating the poet too, and finding the congruence between two creative minds. He also draws attention to the shared background of performer and observer which enables the imaginative performer to communicate the essence of his visualisations through an 'accumulated store of associable experiences'.<sup>40</sup>

The singer's visualisations cover the whole of the preparation of a song and its enactment in performance: the identity and the feelings of the protagonist; the creation of vocal colour; the structure of the music. Delineating the identity of the protagonist can in many cases be a purely imaginative exercise, calling upon Ferguson's store of experiences, but when, as Hahn points out, that protagonist is a well-known historical or literary figure (Henry VIII in Hahn's example), then if the visualisation does not correspond with the listener's own knowledge and visualisation, the impression will be 'insufficient and incomplete'. Similarly, if a known scene is being evoked (the Egypt of *Aida* in his example), then without a clear picture in the mind's eye, the singer will not convince.<sup>41</sup> In both these cases the associable experiences will not be shared between performer and listener. As well as conjuring up a clear vision of character and of physical surroundings, he must where necessary conjure up a state of mind and feel the inherent emotion at the moment of singing; the body will respond with appropriate vocal colour.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 395.

<sup>39</sup> Barzun, Jacques. *Critical Questions*, ed. Bea Friedland, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 88-9.

<sup>40</sup> Ferguson, Donald, *Music as Metaphor*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960, 89.

<sup>41</sup> Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, 107.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 121 and 174.

Once more, however, the question arises whether emotions should be truly experienced at the moment of singing, bringing the danger of a loss of control, or whether a cooler recollection in tranquillity should be practised. Garrick, it seems, was always emotionally cool in relation to his roles, and Diderot cites him<sup>43</sup> to support his theory that an actor should not feel personal emotion in his playing.<sup>44</sup> Quantz advocates the simulation of emotion when playing music, and describes it as not only allowable but necessary.<sup>45</sup> Much of Stanislavski's work was dedicated to the problem of the expression of feelings on stage, and he developed Ribot's theory of 'affective memory' (calling it 'emotional memory') to describe how this might be resolved. One of the ways in which a stage emotion differs from a real emotion is that there is nothing real that has caused it; but in spite of this the actor can find the appropriate feeling because he has experienced something like it in actuality. Indeed, he has experienced similar feelings in similar circumstances many times, and out of this accumulation of experience comes a distillation or essence of underlying emotion, and it is this which he brings to bear upon his performance.<sup>46</sup> On preparing for a role, however, Stanislavski teaches that feelings should not at first be explored, but that only after studying the role and bringing together material related to its physical aspect, can feelings be allowed to arise spontaneously.<sup>47</sup> A corollary to the performer finding the relevant feelings from his own past experience is presented by Cicero, who suggests that the listener responds to what he hears in the same manner.<sup>48</sup>

Jerzy Grotowski, founder of the Theatre Laboratory in Poland in 1959, writes that methods such as Stanislavski's and Artaud's tend to lead to clichés in performance if an actor tries to apply them as a set of rules. Stanislavski was in retrospect ill-served by his followers who made of his continually evolving teaching a quasi-religious dogma.<sup>49</sup> Harold Guskin writes that Stanislavski was reacting to the habits of his time, and new

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<sup>43</sup> Diderot, Denis. *The Paradox of Acting* (1773), ed. & trans. Wallace Pollock, London: Chatto and Windus, 1883, 38-9.

<sup>44</sup> Cole, Toby and Helen Chinoy, eds. *Actors on Acting*, New York: Crown Publishers, 1949, 132.

<sup>45</sup> Quantz, Johann. *On Playing the Flute* (1752), ed. & trans. Edward Reilly, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Faber and Faber, 1985, 273.

<sup>46</sup> Moore, Sonia. *The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor* (1960), rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, 49-52.

<sup>47</sup> Stanislavski, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*, trans. Elizabeth Hapgood, New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1936, 53.

<sup>48</sup> Cicero, M. Tullius. *On Oratory and Orators (De Oratore)*, ed. & trans. John Watson, rev. ed. (1970), Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois Press, 1986, 141.

<sup>49</sup> Grotowski, Jerzy, ed. Eugenio Barba. *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), London: Eyre Methuen, 1976, 174, 185.

habits require new reactions.<sup>50</sup> New media also require new solutions, hence his chapter: 'Acting in Film and Television'.<sup>51</sup>

### *Spontaneity versus memorisation*

The chapter on visual presentation contains a discussion of whether or not gesture is admissible in a song recital. If the singer should choose to use some 'natural' gestures to illustrate the performance, the question then arises about the extent to which they should be spontaneous or rehearsed. If they are not rehearsed, then the problem occurs, witnessed by the present writer in teaching situations, of not only calling up the gesture, but of completing it and allowing the hands to fall back to their default position or moving on to the next gesture. Emmons & Sonntag suggest that only an exceptionally skilled actor can hope to reproduce gestures identically without looking 'faked and staged'.<sup>52</sup> Edmund Kean, the celebrated actor of the early nineteenth century, rehearsed everything down to the finest details, and once it had all been fixed, he acted his part 'with the precision of a singer who has thoroughly learned his air'.<sup>53</sup> This is instructive not only for the insight which it gives into Kean's acting, but for the assumption that the singer should always memorise his part so that he can reproduce it with precision, and by extension that neither singer nor actor have any licence for spontaneity. Hemsley suggests that spontaneity is essential, but only after certain preparatory criteria have been met,<sup>54</sup> and it is hard to see how a mechanical reproduction of a memorised set of actions and reactions could possibly convince an audience that the performer was being sincere. This is exactly the kind of problem that Stanislavski sought to address, and he specifically lambasted the 'mechanical' actor:

To reproduce feelings you must be able to identify them out of your own experience. But as mechanical actors do not experience feelings they cannot reproduce their external results. With the aid of his face, mimicry, voice and gestures, the mechanical actor offers the public nothing but the dead mask of non-existent feeling. For this there has been worked out a large assortment of picturesque effects which pretend to portray all sorts

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<sup>50</sup> Guskin, Harold. *How to Stop Acting*, London: Methuen, 2004, 38.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 119-150.

<sup>52</sup> Emmons, Shirlee and Stanley Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital*, New York: Schirmer, 1979, 120.

<sup>53</sup> Lewes, George. *On Actors and the Art of Acting*, London: Smith, Elder, 1875, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Hemsley, *Singing and Imagination*, 47.

of feelings through external means. Some of these established clichés have become traditional, and are passed down from generation to generation; as for instance spreading your hand over your heart to express love.<sup>55</sup>

He aimed to find a way of bringing the creativity of the subconscious under the control of the conscious mind without stifling that creativity:

After an actor has consciously prepared the pattern of his role and approaches the play's events as if they were happening for the first time (following Stanislavski's formula, "today, here, now," which makes every performance different), his contact with the audience may give birth to true, spontaneous actions that are unexpected even by the actor himself. These are moments of "subconscious" creativity when an actor *improvises* although his text and the pattern of his role are firmly fixed. Such creativity or inspirational improvisation is the goal and essence of the Stanislavski school of acting. All Stanislavski's searchings were directed to finding means to "harness" this phenomenon and to subordinate it to an actor's conscious control. Actors are rarely aware of these moments of subconscious creativity and have difficulty in keeping them; the moments die if an actor tries to repeat them mechanically.<sup>56</sup>

Sloboda writes that performance variability is the reason why attending live music is worthwhile, with performance decisions made in the moment, and that a strictly predetermined plan would probably be neither possible nor desirable.<sup>57</sup> However, in a later study he found that consciously planned effects were indeed made at certain emotionally significant moments in a performance, and that these could be identified by the listener.<sup>58</sup> Hahn argues that only the physical aspects of a performance should be prepared in advance, although he did not mean to include gesture in this, and that the vision of the song itself, clearly present in the mind during the period of preparation, should be allowed to fade into the background until the actual moment of singing: 'thus

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<sup>55</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Moore, *The Stanislavski System*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> Sloboda, John. *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 97-8. The present writer kept a diary of a series of 9 performances of Bach's *Matthäus Passion* for the *Bach Vereniging* in Holland, March 2002. There are many instances of performance decisions being made on the spur of the moment for a variety of reasons, either connected with personal or vocal issues, or in reaction to the musical or physical surroundings.

<sup>58</sup> Sloboda, John and Andreas C. Lehmann, 'Tracking Performance Correlates of Changes in Perceived Intensity of Emotion during Different Interpretations of a Chopin Piano Prelude', *Music Perception* 19/1 (Fall 2001), 113.

you create a kind of surprise for yourself'.<sup>59</sup> Experience of performing and teaching suggests that it would be wrong to dismiss the preparation of what might be termed the emotional framework of a song, such as was occurring in Sloboda's study, though that same experience supports Hahn's injunction to be 'in the moment' as the song unfolds. In addition, performing decisions take place continuously, either as a result of directed choice or in reaction to ongoing imperfections in the execution. The predetermined plan, the musicologist's analysis of the work, must give way to the momentary realisation. As Janet Schmalfeldt has said:

An additional skill not demanded of the analyst is required of the performer – the creative ability to have moment-by-moment control over relationships in sound.<sup>60</sup>

### *Analysis as a tool*

There is a kind of Ideal Performance which is sought by both analysts and performers: by analysts who are looking for the perfect conception of the work; and by performers who are looking for the perfect execution. Historically, musicologists have tended to concentrate upon works of music as if they had no relation to the actual sound they make in performance. The work would sometimes be considered in relation to its reception by listeners, but the role of the performer was usually glossed over. Though musicologists have in recent times taken a much greater interest in the process of performance, Davies, in 2001, could still write of the 'justifiable unease' at the way scholars have focussed on works through the scores while those aspects which are regarded as the province of the performer are ignored.<sup>61</sup> Lester writes that 'with rare and quite circumscribed exceptions something is absent from [the] literature [of analysis] – namely performers and their performances.'<sup>62</sup> Deryck Cooke, for example, solves the messy problem of performance by explicitly ignoring the real performer and replacing him with one who transmits the composer's intention 'practically unmodified', thereby

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<sup>59</sup> Hahn, *On Singers and Singing*, 173.

<sup>60</sup> Schmalfeldt, Janet. 'On the Relation of Analysis to Performance', *Journal of Music Theory* 29 (1985), 28.

<sup>61</sup> Davies, Stephen. *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, 102-3.

<sup>62</sup> Lester, Joel. 'Performance and Analysis: Interaction and Interpretation', from Rink, John, ed. *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 197.



begging a whole series of awkward questions, such as the very personal nature of a voice, a performer's individual approach to the relevant style, or the length of time between composition and performance.<sup>63</sup>

Howell draws attention to the notion of an 'irreconcilable difference' between the rationalistic analyst and the instinctive performer.<sup>64</sup> Nicholas Cook quotes several writers who have demanded that a precise idea of how a musical work is to be performed should precede the realisation of that work, thus creating a dualism between 'the abstract conception and the concrete realization'.<sup>65</sup> For the analyst, this is not so much a dualism as a hierarchy, with analysis a necessary prelude to any performance decisions, so that Meyer can write that analysis tells a performer how the work *should* be performed.<sup>66</sup> Cook cites Narmour as one who asserts the primacy of analysis over performance, for after completion of the analytical process the score can be annotated accordingly and the performance judged 'objectively' against it. He makes this objective judgment by comparing five recordings of a passage in Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*.<sup>67</sup> Cook's list of writers includes Clarke and Todd, for example, who subscribe to the 'generative' approach to performance, whose effect is to 'explain expression away, and with it the performer'.<sup>68</sup> Berry, another of the authors cited by Cook, seeks to come to the aid of the performer by guiding his interpretation with musical analysis. He writes that:

Although the interpreter's impulsive response to the score can fortuitously hit on convincing approaches through a developed (if often unreasoned) sense of appropriateness, the purely intuitive is unlikely to afford a necessary grasp of – or place in – the comprehended whole.<sup>69</sup>

While acknowledging that with long experience a 'gifted interpreter' can find a suitable tempo or dynamic contour 'relatively spontaneously', he claims that 'without searching analytical study' two examples of musical imagery in Wolf's 'Anakreons Grab' (ex. 1)

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<sup>63</sup> Cooke, Deryck. *The Language of Music*, London: Oxford University Press, 1959, 204.

<sup>64</sup> Howell, Tim. 'Analysis and Performance', from Paynter, John. *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought*, vol. 2, London: Routledge, 1992, 698.

<sup>65</sup> Cook, Nicholas. 'Analysing Performance, Performing Analysis', from Cook, Nicholas and Mark Everist, eds. *Rethinking Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 247-8.

<sup>66</sup> Meyer, Leonard. *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1973, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Narmour, 'On the Relationship of Analytical Theory to Performance and Interpretation', from Narmour and Solie, *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, 331-339.

<sup>68</sup> Cook, Nicholas. 'Analysing Performance, Performing Analysis', from Cook and Everist, *Rethinking Music*, 242.

<sup>69</sup> Berry, Wallace. *Musical Structure & Performance*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989, 217-8.

would not be 'materially accessible to singer or pianist'. The two examples, 'masterfully apt expressions' of the words *Leben* and *Ruh*, are to be found in bars 8 to 12.<sup>70</sup>

Ex. 1. Wolf, 'Anakreons Grab', bars 8-12.

le Göt - ter mit Le - - - ben schön be - pflanzt und ge -  
 ziert? Es ist A - na - kre-ons Ruh.

([What grave is here, that all] the gods with beautiful life have planted and adorned? It is Anakreon's last rest.)

For the first example he emphasises the agogic stress of *Leben*, 'the tonal fluctuation to subdominant and its subdominant, crescendo, active surface rhythms, and heightened chromaticism and dissonance.' For the second, *Ruh* is presented as outlining 'the G-major triad, interim goal of preceding tonal motions. The vocal melody descends, dissonances resolve, all rhythms slow in a lengthening of durational values, and there is a complementary diminuendo'.

Performers are not generally experts in musical analysis, and Rorem proposes the view that the performer should be non-analytical:

Complete understanding is no more a requisite of musical performers than of actors. The actor who overdoes his investigation of a playwright's motives turns out to be a director, a critic, or a ham. Great works possess too many levels of diagnosis for one person to ascertain *and* interpret

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 42-3.

simultaneously. The performer's job is to project, not analyze. Analysis is for the musicologist and the composer.<sup>71</sup>

Meyer concedes that the performer may not be an analyst:

The performance of a piece of music is ... the actualization of an analytic act – even though such analysis may have been intuitive and unsystematic.<sup>72</sup>

Meyer's comments support the view that with experience and a well-formed understanding of Wolf and the Lieder tradition, performers would surely be led to Berry's conclusions simply by listening and paying attention to the music. In addition, more than simply apt expressions of *Leben* and *Ruh* can be found. The harmonic profusion and dissonance of bars 8 to 10 might illustrate the abundance and tangle of the undergrowth which obscures the grave, whether or not the subdominant of the subdominant is specified. The increasing intensity of the crescendo, and the agogic stress of *Leben* and of the upper line of the piano, could represent not only the life-force itself but the poet's excitement at what will be revealed. The higher pitch of the second syllable of *geziert* illustrates the poet's question, which is echoed in bars 11 and 12 by the piano and then answered with a peaceful settling of the dissonance. The rest for the voice after *Es ist* suggests a final removal of the concealing vegetation before the definitive answer.

If these discoveries relating to the meaning and the imaginative context of the poem were not inherent in the sound of the music, there would be some justification in condemning Wolf's song as a failure; that they are to be found by listening is a confirmation of Wolf's mastery. This neatly demonstrates Cook's contention that intellectual and bodily knowledge, another way of describing the dualism between the abstract and the concrete, should proceed hand-in-hand – the very act of performance leads to a deeper understanding of the work.

In opposition to the idea that musicology must play a part in developing the interpretation of a song is the claim by some singers that they base their performing decisions on 'instinct', and are reluctant to engage with anything which might be considered too 'intellectual', relying instead on a beautiful voice, a secure vocal technique and a good memory for what they have learnt. This kind of unconscious response to their work is in truth based to a large extent on experience, and at a certain

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<sup>71</sup> Rorem, *Music from Inside Out*, 65.

<sup>72</sup> Meyer, *Explaining Music*, 29.

high level of achievement, who is to say that they are necessarily wrong? Wagner's description of Tichatschek at rehearsal (qv) offers some support for such an approach. For young singers, however, lacking that experience but needing to understand the principles which underpin their art, the intellect is surely indispensable.

### *Dangers of prescription*

The prescriptive nature of much writing about musical works from the analyst's standpoint is also to be found in writing from the pedagogical standpoint. Books written as guides to song interpretation (Plunket Greene,<sup>73</sup> Lotte Lehmann,<sup>74</sup> Moore,<sup>75</sup> Bernac,<sup>76</sup> Varcoe<sup>77</sup> and others) can appear to suggest that there exists a definitive performance of a song. Repertoire coaches can create a similar impression, particularly if they are working with young students who do not have the width of experience of a mature singer. As Grotowski has said, telling someone how to play a role leads to banality and a negation of creativity.<sup>78</sup> Yet, as Martin writes, the guidance of a master is an essential part of the development of a performer. He describes what occurs in such a relationship as:

shaping performance practices which are dictated not only by formal musical requirements, or the creative energies of individuals, but by the norms and values of an established interpretive community.<sup>79</sup>

It is difficult in such circumstances to avoid prescription, given the inexperience of the recipients, but the element which is missing in such prescription is the process of decision-making: the imaginative and creative intention which lifts a performance from the merely competent to the inspired; from a good job to a work of art. There is little to satisfy the listener in a naïve performance of a song from a singer without knowledge and background in the genre, and the pedagogue treads a fine line between guidance that is too prescriptive and that which is hardly guidance at all. The best kind of guidance is that

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<sup>73</sup> Greene, H. Plunkett. *Interpretation in Song*, London: MacMillan, 1912.

<sup>74</sup> Lehmann, Lotte. *More than Singing*, London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1946.

<sup>75</sup> Moore, Gerald. *Singer and Accompanist: The Performance of Fifty Songs* (1953), London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982.

<sup>76</sup> Bernac, Pierre. *The Interpretation of French Song*, London: Cassell, 1970.

<sup>77</sup> Varcoe, Stephen. *Sing English Song: A Practical Approach to the Language and the Repertoire*, London: Thames Publishing, 2000.

<sup>78</sup> Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 97.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, Peter. *Music and the Sociological Gaze*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, 30. He writes with a sociological view of music, its reception, which stands apart from both musicological analysis and the process of performance.

which explains the reasons behind making performance decisions: the thought behind the utterance.<sup>80</sup>

### *Memorisation as aid to vocal production*

The playwright and director, David Belasco, writes of working with his actors on their speeches for several weeks before allowing them to memorise their roles in order that they should be thoroughly familiar with their characters and avoided the danger of parroting the text.<sup>81</sup> Guskin goes into greater detail about the process of beginning to study and learn a part, again cautioning against memorising as such, but taking the lines 'off the page' and responding to them moment by moment, thereby building up a more and more precise picture of the character over time – the lines would become memorised by default.<sup>82</sup> Alfred Lunt, however, put forward the opposite view, that 'in studying a part, the first thing we do is learn our lines.'<sup>83</sup> For most stage productions, and certainly for opera productions, there is not the luxury of such a lengthy period of work with the director as Belasco requires, besides which the technical aspects of singing require that the opera singer has the score properly learnt before starting the stage work. For singers of songs, though, history shows that until the twentieth century they were not expected to sing from memory.<sup>84</sup> From then on, it seems that most commentators have regarded singing from memory as essential to good presentation at a recital.<sup>85</sup> Emmons & Sonntag stress the importance of having the memorised material 'reside in the subconscious'.<sup>86</sup> The singer is released from the anxiety of trying to recall what comes next, and can set the voice free to fulfil its proper function, which is to give expression in as clear a manner as possible to the singer's understanding of the role.

Singers often speak of getting their music 'in the body', that is, knowing it so well that the voice seems to find the notes and articulations of its own accord. This would

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<sup>80</sup> Narmour, 'On the Relationship of Analytical Theory to Performance and Interpretation', from Narmour and Solie, *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, 317.

<sup>81</sup> Belasco, David, 'Creating Atmosphere', from Cole, Toby and Helen Chinoy, *Directors on Directing* (first published as *Directing the Play*, 1953), London: Peter Owen, 1964, 132.

<sup>82</sup> Guskin, *How to Stop Acting*, 45.

<sup>83</sup> Goodman, Randolph. *Drama on Stage*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, 401, cited in Cole and Chinoy, *Actors on Acting*, 608.

<sup>84</sup> Kravitt, Edward. *The Lied, Mirror of Late Romanticism*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996, 22. Also Monahan, *The Art of Singing*, 214.

<sup>85</sup> From three studies of singing treatises covering the period 1777 to 1972: Monahan, *The Art of Singing*, 214; Burgin, *Teaching Singing*, 166; Fields, *Training the singing voice*, 231.

<sup>86</sup> Emmons and Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital*, 198.

agree with Kagen's statement on having a clear idea of the precise phonation of vocal sounds (qv), and is consistent with the notion of 'motor memory', defined by Cytowic as 'behaviour that becomes automatic after learning'.<sup>87</sup> His assertion that 'thinking about what you are doing degrades your ability to do it' refers to processes that have become so ingrained through habit that the body acts without conscious input. Green, in *The Inner Game of Music*, identifies conscious monitoring as a cause of much anxiety and compromised performance. He devised techniques which bypass the judgmental part of the mind and harness the body's knowledge of how to act.<sup>88</sup> However, in a normal performance situation there is indeed a continuous monitoring of one's output, responding to momentary changes in the musical or physical environment and, if necessary, altering the overall plan to accommodate any new factors. In that sense the performer is in fact thinking about what he is doing, and acting accordingly: Cytowic's statement thus appears false. And yet in another sense the performer's changing plans will simply bring into play another set of learned responses – singing louder or softer, changing the vocal timbre and so on – and it is these learned responses which will be degraded if they are thought about: in which case Cytowic's statement is true, because it is not the mind which sings, but the body. Many musicians and other performers (and sportsmen) have reported feeling that they are standing to one side of their performance and watching it happen without their conscious control. This is usually described as a peak experience which only occurs rarely, and seems to have a more profound quality than that of getting the notes in the body: on the contrary, the present writer feels that it is more like being out of the body.

### *Diction*

Several dualisms have so far been identified: geno-song versus pheno-song; abstract conception versus concrete realisation; technique versus interpretation. To these could be added voice versus words, alluded to by Marafioti and Stanislavski above. The chapters on diction in the works of Monahan, Fields and Burgin<sup>89</sup> present a total of 881 statements on the subject, many of them mutually contradictory. These statements read

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<sup>87</sup> Cytowic, Richard. *The man who tasted shapes*, New York: Putnam, 1993, 177.

<sup>88</sup> Green, Barry (with W. Timothy Gallwey). *The Inner Game of Music* (1986), London: Pan Books, 1987.

<sup>89</sup> Monahan, *The Art of Singing*, 186; Fields, *Training the singing voice*, 191; Burgin, *Teaching Singing*, 141.

like manifestos based upon prejudice or partly understood science, and any attempt to pick a way through such a maze of material must itself be a result of personal prejudice. Earlier in this chapter there were quotes from Sataloff, Miller and Sundberg to the effect that scientific knowledge of the singing voice is far from being complete. One of the facts identified by the research of Fonagy,<sup>90</sup> is that there are emotional effects not only on *phonation* in speech (qv), but also in *articulation*. I have found, working with students at the Royal College of Music in London, that without encouragement to think about the emotional content of the text, they often use inappropriately forceful diction because they have been warned about being insufficiently intelligible. When this kind of diction is used in a song expressing melancholy, consolation and other gentle feelings, the result is usually bizarre. Croiza writes:

Between the two extremes [of tragedy and comedy] is placed a scale of articulation that varies according to the character of the work, of the text and of the situations. They can be tender, energetic, imperative or imploring. Songs call for one or another, according to whether the character is more or less dramatic, or more or less intimate.<sup>91</sup>

Grotowski argues that 'the multiplicity of types of diction existing in life should also be found on the stage'.<sup>92</sup> Support for the theory that the singer uses different modes of articulation for different emotional states comes from a study by Kotlyar and Morozov, cited by Sundberg, which showed that listeners could identify each of five emotions when excerpts of songs were given with the chosen emotional colour.<sup>93</sup> Assuming that every singer has experienced the normal range of human emotions, it only requires self-observation under different (feigned or real) emotional states to build a repertoire of suitable styles of articulation for each state.

Over-emphatic diction as described above is at least an attempt to be intelligible, even if it results in an inappropriate transmission of feeling or in the exaggerated distortion of sound peculiar to singers. Lack of intelligibility is much more prevalent, and it is more so in female than male singers. The reasons for this gender difference must rest to a great extent on the physics of sound, perhaps because the male voice generally sings at a pitch which is nearer to that of speech than does the female, and it would be

<sup>90</sup> Fonagy, Ivan. 'La mimique buccale', *Phonetica* 33 (1976), 40-1.

<sup>91</sup> Croiza, *The Singer as Interpreter*, 48.

<sup>92</sup> Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, 135.

<sup>93</sup> Kotlyar, G. M. and V. P. Morozov, 'Acoustical correlates of the emotional content of vocalized speech', *Soviet Physics Acoustics*, 22 (1976), 208-211, cited in Sundberg, Johan. 'Perception of Singing', from Deutsch, *The Psychology of Music*, 93.

unreasonable to claim that women are lazier in this regard than men. The soprano typically has to sing up to 1000 Hz (approximately Top C) or even higher, whereas the average frequency of female speech is about 350 Hz.<sup>94</sup> Vowels become distorted at the high end of the soprano's range, and Sundberg maintains that because composers know this, they avoid placing crucial text at the upper end of the voice or else repeat it lower down.<sup>95</sup> In fact this is far from always being so, and much of later twentieth century music presents problems in this area. However, there are singers of both sexes who have exemplary diction and who give the lie to the dualistic assertion that clear words and classic beauty of tone are incompatible. Miller puts forward the view that phonetic precision and good vocalisation are linked,<sup>96</sup> and that consonants should be integrated into the singing process. He advocates practising by isolating voiceless sounds and becoming familiar with their production:

Consonants need not be considered unwelcome intruders that impede good vocalization. If each consonant is permitted to enjoy its brief but exact phonetic location and is allowed a clean departure when its stint is over, the singer's ideal of the "pure" vowel will not be violated ... The best way to deal with voiceless sounds in singing is to isolate them and analyze them phonetically. Later, when they appear separately or when they group in clusters, even in quickly delivered recitative or soaring vocal line, they will be met as manageable acquaintances.<sup>97</sup>

My own experience is that this form of practice is usually very helpful to students, though I would include voiced consonants as well as unvoiced. When confronted with groups of consonants in a word or pair of words, the singer's attention is drawn to the problem by moving slowly from one consonant to the next and discovering the subtle movements of the mouth and tongue which are usually articulated automatically. This technique can eliminate much of the 'singer-ese' which bedevils performance, and produce something closer to real speech.

The fact remains, however, that in spite of every effort on the part of the singer, the text may still be inaudible. Ivey claims that some twentieth century poetry, being of an experimental kind, creates problems of understanding when set to music:

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<sup>94</sup> Sundberg, 'Perception of Singing', from Deutsch, *The Psychology of Music*, 62.

<sup>95</sup> Sundberg, Johan. 'The acoustics of the singing voice', *Scientific American*, 236/3 (1994), 90.

<sup>96</sup> Miller, *The Structure of Singing*, 105.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* 105 and 79.



From the standpoint of the voice in its role as a significant element in the musico-poetic endeavour, there is a hazard inherent in utilizing the more experimental types of poetry. The obscurity of such texts is difficult enough to cope with in even the most careful and leisurely reading. They become all but incomprehensible in song, where the fleeting nature of the delivery creates an insurmountable barrier to assimilation by the listener.<sup>98</sup>

Stacey makes a similar claim, but goes on to ask whether intelligibility in such circumstances is strictly necessary, 'when the word is no longer necessarily conveying a logical message',<sup>99</sup> and Boulez goes so far as to say that music effectively destroys the poem as the poet conceived it.<sup>100</sup> In that case, unintelligibility in the broadest sense is an inherent function of singing generally, and it is not just experimental twentieth century texts which exhibit this problem. In the narrower sense of being able to distinguish a singer's words, an example which presents a fundamental difficulty for the singer is the Elizabethan poem 'Sephestia's Lullaby' (lines 3 to 10) as set by Britten. This suffers on two counts: one, that the words are intrinsically difficult to decipher, being in a condensed form; and two, that the music from line three has a very fast tempo.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,  
 When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.  
 Mother's wag, pretty boy,  
 Father's sorrow, father's joy;  
 When thy father first did see  
 Such a boy by him and me,  
 He was glad, I was woe,  
 Fortune changed made him so,  
 When he left his pretty boy  
 Last his sorrow, first his joy.<sup>101</sup>

Walton's 'The Lord Mayor's Table' is another song which suffers in this respect, partly because of the use of melisma and partly because of the unusual words:

Let all the Nine Muses lay by their abuses,  
 Their railing and drolling on tricks of the Strand,

<sup>98</sup> Ivey, *Song: Anatomy, Imagery and Styles*, 235.

<sup>99</sup> Stacey, Peter. *Contemporary Tendencies in the Relationship of Music and Text with Special Reference to Pli Selon Pli (Boulez) and Laborintus II (Berio)*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1989, 16.

<sup>100</sup> Boulez, Pierre. *Notes of an Apprenticeship*, ed. Paul Thévenin, trans. Herbert Weinstock, New York: A. A. Knopf, 1968, 54-57.

<sup>101</sup> Greene, *Menaphon*, 27-8.

To pen us a ditty in praise of the City,  
 Their treasure, and pleasure, their pow'r and command.<sup>102</sup>

A line from Peter Burra's 'Not even Summer', from Britten's *The Red Cockatoo*, has a compound word which surely not one listener in a hundred would understand correctly, however good the singer's diction: '... where the sea-girls lie ...'.<sup>103</sup>

Schafer, in his introduction to *Ezra Pound and Music*, writes that much of the articulation of verse is lost when made into song, including 'complex ideas and uncommon words', even including rhyme.<sup>104</sup> While experience commands agreement with the first part of this statement, it suggests that rhyme, far from being lost in song, can be the signpost which helps the listener to follow the text. In 'Sephestia' the word 'joy' can be inferred from the rhyme with the previous 'boy': alternatively, a partly-heard 'boy' can be inferred from the subsequent 'joy'.

A fashionable method of overcoming the problem of unintelligible words is to have them printed in the concert programme so that the listener may follow them as the song progresses. For the communication of song as explored in this thesis, the printing of words in this manner is an objectionable distraction. Outside the context of a musical performance, sight is the most important of the five senses, and we will discover in the following chapter how the visual presentation of a song is a crucial element of its success: place a printed text in front of listeners and they no longer experience the complete performance of the song, only a background of sound. The eye will continually be carried forward beyond the present moment of the music, and the mind will be encouraged to make deductions about meaning and significance which are not necessarily part of the composer's understanding. If there proves to be no issue with the audibility of the text both because the singer's diction is first rate and because the music allows the text to come through easily, then the obvious course is to leave well alone. If there is an issue, either because the singer's diction is poor (not something most would admit to) or because the acoustics of the performance space are overly resonant or because of problems such as the ones found in the Britten and Walton above, it is surely far better to read the poem before it is sung: this was Wolf's usual practice.<sup>105</sup> Alternatively, a spoken synopsis might be provided: even a written synopsis would be less disruptive than the usual full text and translation.

<sup>102</sup> Jordan, *The Goldsmiths Jubilee*, 11-2.

<sup>103</sup> Britten, Benjamin. *The Red Cockatoo*, London: Faber Music, 1994, 18.

<sup>104</sup> Pound, Ezra. *Ezra Pound and Music*, ed. R. Murray Schafer, London: Faber & Faber, 1978, 12.

<sup>105</sup> Newman, Ernest. *Hugo Wolf*, London: Methuen, 1907, 26.

## *Summary*

We have seen some of the difficulties which beset the singer, and how many of the requirements of good singing seem to contend with each other. These struggles between different aspects of singing have a long and enduring history, and are the stuff of daily arguments at conservatoires and universities. Yet the true master-singer, male or female, rises above the contentious noise and achieves a working synthesis of all the arguments. Those who aspire to mastery have a duty to find such a synthesis themselves, and this chapter has demonstrated that there are teachers and writers who have shown the way through their work.

## Chapter two

### Visual presentation

Because a song carries the specific ideas of its text as well as the more generalised feeling-tone of its music, the visual presentation of a singer's performance is highly relevant. If the singer's demeanour is at odds with the thoughts being expressed, then the spectator is likely to become confused. The whole body is involved in transmitting messages of meaning through stance, movement and gesture, but the most important area of the body for expressing feeling and intention is the face; and within the face it is the eyes which have the most important role. This chapter explores some of the writing about gesture and the visual transmission of meaning from Classical times to the present day.

#### *Gaze*

When we look at complex objects our eyes move continuously within a small field, concentrating for brief periods before moving on and returning most often to areas of particular interest. Viewing a human face, for example, we spend most of our time on the eyes and the mouth, with the eyes predominating.<sup>1</sup> We look at others to study their behaviour and appearance, and to make assessments of the correlation of their words with their intentions by receiving important non-verbal signals. If they are lying, their bodies betray the deception.<sup>2</sup> According to Nummenmaa, although simple emotions can be read from eyebrows, nose and mouth, more complex ones can better be read from the eyes.<sup>3</sup> Baron-Cohen *et al* refined Nummenmaa's experiments and found that the mouth alone was not a reliable indicator of emotion, but that a comparison between viewing the whole face and viewing just the eyes gave similar or better results to the eyes for interpreting complex emotions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yarbus, Alfred. *Eye Movement and Vision*, cited in Argyle, Michael and Mark Cook. *Gaze and Mutual Gaze*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Ekman, Paul and W. V. Friesen. 'Nonverbal leakage and clues to deception', *Psychiatry* 32 (1969), 88-106.

<sup>3</sup> Nummenmaa, Tapio. *The Language of the Face* (University of Jyväskylä. Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research No. 9), Jyväskylä, Finland: 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Baron-Cohen, Simon, Sally Wheelwright and Theresa Jolliffe. 'Is there a "Language of the Eyes"?' *Visual Cognition* 4/3 (1997), 311.

We use gaze more when listening becomes difficult, not only for the purpose of lip-reading, but for interpreting other visual cues. The frequency and duration of gaze is found to be variable across cultures. Studies show Arabs using a high level of gaze in comparison with the English, whom they prefer when they respond with a similar amount of gaze. Swedes gaze more while talking than do the English, and Greeks, who stare at people in public places more than other Europeans, feel rejected when in Western Europe because they are not being stared at. Japanese look very little at another's eyes, but look at the neck region instead.<sup>5</sup> These cultural variations could have implications for a singer when it comes to deciding whether or how much to look at individual members of the audience. The English and Japanese might feel uncomfortable being looked at directly, while the Arabs and the Greeks might welcome the experience. Whatever judgments might be made in different circumstances, the singer needs to realise that gaze is a mutual phenomenon: the performer's gaze is not only a signal to the spectator that he or she is truly absorbed in the role being portrayed, but the spectator's gaze is continually monitoring that signal in order to confirm or deny the truth of what is being affirmed.

From Argyle and Cook<sup>6</sup> we learn that Tomkins and McCarter used observations of themselves and others to conclude that:

The main emotions involve the eyes as follows:

*Interest-excitement*: eyebrows down, eyes track and look

*Enjoyment-joy*: smiling eyes, circular wrinkles

*Distress-anguish*: cry, arched eyebrows

*Fear-terror*: eyes frozen open

*Shame-humiliation*: eyes down

*Anger-rage*: eyes narrowed.<sup>7</sup>

They also found that looking downwards was an indicator of sadness. This work suggests that there are certain absolutes in the way human beings signal their feelings with the eyes, but if we consider any one of the findings above through the medium of our own experience, they begin to seem less certain. *Interest-excitement*, for example, might just as well involve the eyebrows being raised and the eyes wide open: conversely, 'eyebrows down, eyes track and look' might signify wariness or suspicion. The value, such as it is, of these findings, is in emphasising the importance of the eyes as indicators of emotions,

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<sup>5</sup> Argyle and Cook, *Gaze and Mutual Gaze*, 26-31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 94.

<sup>7</sup> Tomkins, Sylvan and Robert McCarter. 'What and where are the primary affects? Some evidence for a theory', *Perc. Mot. Skills* 18 (1964), 119.

and the singer's response is to understand that a clear idea of the feelings involved, coupled with the body's innate knowledge of emotional signalling, will result in a performance that carries conviction.

Some of the other eye-signals which have been studied have included looking away, which is a consistent reaction when one is asked a question or when considering how to articulate an idea,<sup>8</sup> and the direction of each individual's gaze-breaking is fairly consistent, with those concerned in the arts and humanities shifting gaze to the left, and those in the sciences shifting to the right.<sup>9</sup> Verbal questions have been found to elicit a downward shift, and spatial questions an upward shift.<sup>10</sup> Another example of this kind of behaviour is to be found in studies by Rutter and Stephenson,<sup>11</sup> and Hinchliffe *et al*,<sup>12</sup> which showed that depressives gaze for less time than non-depressives.

Results from a study by Pegna *et al* indicate that, for reading the emotions in a face, there is a deep-seated mechanism which bypasses normal consciousness. The study's subject had suffered two strokes which had destroyed the part of the brain involved with experiencing vision, the visual cortex: although his eyes and their muscular and nervous systems were unimpaired, he was functionally blind, unable to distinguish any visual stimulus. And yet, when presented with pairs of pictures of faces showing either angry/happy, sad/happy or fearful/happy, he was able to 'guess' the correct answer at a statistically significant rate. Neutral faces, angry gestures, fierce animals, or ordinary objects produced only random guesses. The researchers are clear that this is an ability possessed by human beings generally, rather than some specialised development in the brain of a blind man, because the study was so soon after the subject had suffered his strokes.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Day, M. E. 'An eye-movement phenomenon relating to attention, thought and anxiety', *Perc. Mot. Skills* 19 (1964), 443; and Duke, J. D. 'Lateral eye movement behaviour', *J. General Psychol.* 78 (1968), 189.

<sup>9</sup> Bakan, Paul. 'Hypnotizability, laterality of eye-movements, and functional brain asymmetry', *Perc. Mot. Skills* 28 (1969), 927; and Bakan, Paul. 'The eyes have it', *Psychology Today* 4 (Apr. 1971), 64.

<sup>10</sup> Ehrlichman, Howard, Susan Weiner and A. K. Baker. 'Effects of verbal and spatial questions on initial gaze shifts', *Neuropsychologia* 12 (1974), 265; and Galin, David and Robert Ornstein. 'Individual differences in cognitive style – I. Reflective eye movements', *Neuropsychologia* 12 (1974), 367.

<sup>11</sup> Rutter, D. R. and G. M. Stephenson. 'Visual interaction in a group of schizophrenic and depressive patients', *Brit. J. Soc. Clin. Psychol.* 11 (1972), 57.

<sup>12</sup> Hinchliffe, Mary, Meredith Lancashire and F. J. Roberts. 'A study of eye-contact changes in depressed and recovered psychiatric patients', *Brit. J. Psychiat.* 119 (1971), 213.

<sup>13</sup> Pegna, Alan, Asaid Khateb and François Lazeyras. 'Discriminating emotional faces without primary visual cortices involves the right amygdala', *Nature Neuroscience* 8 (2005), 24-5.

### *The singer's expressive face*

These and many other studies show that there is a clearly-defined repertoire of emotional signals to be found in the face, and especially the eyes, and it would therefore appear that a singer should learn that repertoire of signals in order to reinforce the affects which he understands the song to be communicating. Or rather, the singer should attend to what his body already knows about appropriate facial movements in the real situations he has experienced, and reproduce them in his performance. And with knowledge of the way human beings naturally shift their gaze, he would have access to a series of expressive devices which do not necessarily call for anything as obvious or crude as looking down at a stream, up to the moon, or off to the side for some nameless horror. Instead, he would be behaving as if he were considering what to communicate in a natural manner, using the audience as his interlocutor. There is however a danger that the observer will distinguish between a feigned expression of emotion and real, spontaneous expression, and the available evidence indicates that such a distinction can be made:<sup>14</sup> we shall return to the implications of that evidence later. Such a danger of being 'found out' is likely to be insignificant in a performance context when set against the benefit of appropriate, if false, expression rather than unrelated grimace. Indeed, Quantz specifically allows for the performer to pretend to experience an emotion, though he warns against bringing this pretence into everyday life.<sup>15</sup>

All of these visual factors are of great consequence to the singer. If the non-verbal messages signalled by his body are at odds with the supposed meaning of the song, the listener/spectator may become confused and uncomfortable. If he were simply expressing his own feelings and ideas to a group of friends, then it is likely there would be no dilemma: expression and the thing expressed would be congruent, and all the involuntary movements connected with his words would reinforce the message. Austin suggests as much when writing about the orator who speaks of his own opinions and beliefs:

Expression of countenance, so important to the public speaker, will follow almost of course to all who sincerely deliver their true sentiments. But far

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<sup>14</sup> Bull, Peter. *Communication under the Microscope: the theory and Practice of Microanalysis*, Hove: Routledge, 2002, 31-34.

<sup>15</sup> Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, 273.

from this as well as from the other requisites of true eloquence will he be, whose heart is not engaged in the cause which he pleads.<sup>16</sup>

But when the singer performs a song, usually by someone else, which involves reading a score and text, memorising it, and perhaps feigning the emotions it seems to call for, he needs the skills of an actor to convince the listener/spectator. Indeed, to be truly convincing he would need the skills of a great actor. Pinker highlights the difference between a social smile and a genuine smile, one springing from the cortex and muscles under voluntary control, the other from the limbic system and involuntary. Only the very best actors can avoid a mannered look when they are required to express emotion.<sup>17</sup>

A potential source of discrepancy between the feeling communicated by the singer and the message presented by his body is the singer's smile. Sundberg explained that qualities of voice and vowel are dependant on the formant frequencies of the vocal tract, which in turn depend on the length of the vocal tract. Lowering the larynx, a technique favoured for classical voice production, lengthens the vocal tract, whereas smiling shortens it.<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere he suggested that this may be the reason some teachers advocate smiling for singing high notes.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, if the singer's smile has become part of her method of voice production, it can result in a ludicrous mismatch between what is seen and what is meant, and it can be as reprehensible as the worst kind of *body manipulator* (see below).

The singer who portrays a character on the opera stage is operating under a different set of conventions and criteria from one who sings songs at a piano. Bull points out the advantage of gesture over facial expression or gaze when an orator speaks to a large audience which may be quite distant, and for 'orator' we could substitute 'opera singer'.<sup>20</sup> A song recitalist, however, finds that his stage has been reduced to the belly of the piano, which calls for a different set of conventions, requiring a very limited degree of movement and gesture. Such movement has to be as economical and precise as possible, and eye movement offers the most economical of all. Moreover, although some vocal stars give recitals in such venues as London's Royal Festival Hall, which seats 3,000, this kind of concert usually takes place in a small or medium-sized hall such as the Wigmore Hall (550 seats) or Purcell Room (360). Indeed, we know that Schubert often

<sup>16</sup> Austin, Gilbert. *Chironomia: or, A Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery*, London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1806, 95.

<sup>17</sup> Pinker, Steven. *How the Mind Works*, London: Allen Lane, 1997, 415.

<sup>18</sup> Sundberg, *The Science of the Singing Voice*, 20-24.

<sup>19</sup> Sundberg, 'The acoustics of the singing voice', 90.

<sup>20</sup> Bull, *Communication under the Microscope*, 51-53.



performed his songs in rooms holding twenty or thirty, and for today's recitalist an audience of one hundred could be considered a reasonably large crowd. Audiences are therefore close enough for facial expression and gaze to be potentially important factors, which may in fact render the gesture unnecessary. Rumyantsev describes Stanislavski's opera training studio where all the action was at such close range that every movement and every slightest change in the expression of the eyes was plainly visible.<sup>21</sup>

### *Stillness*

Many authorities, from both the actor's and the musician's camp, have emphasised the need for bodily stillness and minimal gesture. Barnett quotes several eighteenth and nineteenth century writers on acting and oratory who have discussed stillness, amongst them Aristippe (1826), who says that 'there is often a great deal of expression in not assuming any', and Smith (1867): 'the most difficult acquirement in action, and the most important, is standing still'.<sup>22</sup> Seckerson, in a newspaper review of a song recital at the Wigmore Hall, writes that the singer's habitual movement around the platform used to make it seem as if he were being deceitful: his new-found stillness harnessed his energy and drew the audience into his confidence.<sup>23</sup>

One of the attributes of the great film star is to be able to use the face expressively but appear not to be doing so. Olivier saw Marilyn Monroe as one of those 'rare people whose gifts were almost invisible to the naked eye', but for whom 'a miracle took place in the tiny space between the lens and the negative'.<sup>24</sup> People who worked with Greta Garbo claimed that her face did not change, but 'it had an extraordinary plasticity, a mirrorlike quality';<sup>25</sup> 'the muscles in her face would not move, and yet her eyes would express exactly what she needed';<sup>26</sup> 'I have seen her change from love to hate and never alter her facial expression'.<sup>27</sup> Johnstone maintains that her body transmitted the emotion which was then perceived as coming from the face.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Stanislavski, *Stanislavski on Opera*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Barnett, Dene. *The Art of Gesture: The practices and principles of eighteenth century acting*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987, 158-60.

<sup>23</sup> Seckerson, Edward. 'Simon Keenlyside', *The Independent*, 11 January 2008, *Extra*, 15(D).

<sup>24</sup> Olivier, Laurence. *Confessions of an Actor*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1982, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Zierold, Norman. *Garbo*, New York: Stein & Day, 1969, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, Charles, quoted in Johnstone, Keith. *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, London: Faber & Faber, 1979, 185.

<sup>27</sup> Brownlow, Kevin. *The Parade's gone by*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1968, 146.

<sup>28</sup> Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, 185.

Appropriate facial expressions are very difficult to simulate without the spectator detecting a deception.<sup>29</sup> For example, a social smile and a smile of pleasure involve different muscle groups, and actors will either fail to convince with their mannered representation or they must study to be facial athletes or use something like Stanislavski's Method to convince the viewer.<sup>30</sup> A way of overcoming this problem in real life is to cultivate a poker face which gives away as little as possible of a speaker's thoughts. Communist Party members in the Soviet Union were schooled in presenting a totally impassive face, of which Leonid Brezhnev was a prime exponent.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps the real skill of Monroe, Garbo and other stars was in understanding that minimal facial movement not only removes the possibility of detecting a lie but it places the onus of interpreting the expression, or the lack of it, firmly on to the spectator, who will see what he or she wishes or expects to see.

Johnstone maintains that a still head while speaking confers authority, and that playing a tragic hero like Hamlet requires such stillness, whereas the gravedigger can be allowed, and even encouraged, to move his head around.<sup>32</sup> Talma describes how the eighteenth century actor Lekain portrayed authority figures without excessive movement or vocal force.<sup>33</sup> The point is not simply that a performer should focus attention on a scene in the mind's eye and therefore concentrate his or her own and the audience's response,<sup>34</sup> but that there is an inbuilt tendency in the human being to assume that what is being said with stillness is more worthy of attention. A corollary of this is that when authority has to be stripped from a song, the head and eyes can be made to move.<sup>35</sup> Writers on the song recital have generally advised almost complete immobility apart from the 'expressive' face (see below). Potter suggests that this stricture springs from the 'quasi-religious nature of the performance'.<sup>36</sup> The trappings of the traditional recital may bear a certain resemblance to a traditional Christian church service – the special venue, the vestments, the hushed expectation from the congregation/audience – but at the root of it is the sense that what is being heard is worth paying close attention to, and that

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<sup>29</sup> Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London: Allen Lane, 1969, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 415.

<sup>31</sup> Mead, Margaret. *Soviet Attitudes toward Authority*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955, 65-6.

<sup>32</sup> Johnstone, *Impro*, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Talma, François. *Talma on the Actor's Art*, London: Bickers, 1883, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Croiza, *The Singer as Interpreter*, 29.

<sup>35</sup> Purcell's 'mad songs' would be suitable material for this kind of freedom of movement, and I witnessed just this kind of presentation by Evelyn Tubb at the Dartington Summer School in Devon on August 2 2006, which very effectively emphasised the alienation of the personae from normal, sane behaviour.

<sup>36</sup> Potter, John. *Vocal Authority*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 182-3.

extraneous movement is a distraction. Besides, although this rapt attention may smack of religion to someone brought up in the Northern Protestant tradition, someone from a Southern Revivalist background would probably not recognise the analogy. It is perhaps worth noting that for certain musicians such as Mogwai and Sigur Ros, who are not in the classical music tradition, audiences are expected to be silent and to listen intently, and both players and listeners are intolerant of extraneous noise at these concerts.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, most rock and pop bands playing their hit numbers would be surprised if their listeners were not joining in with sound and movement. Each kind of performance follows the convention proper to it.

### *Three kinds of gesture*

Potter (citing Ekman) describes three types of gesture as occurring in the song recital: *the emblem*, which covers the entrance and exit of the performers, bowing, preparing for the next song etc; *the body manipulator*, redundant movement of the head, hands and body, frowning the brows, as a result of nervous and unconscious impulse; *the illustrator*, either defining a spatial relationship or emphasising a specific point in a song.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Emblems:*

The choice of *emblem*, defined by Boal as a *ritual gesture*,<sup>39</sup> depends upon what the performer wishes to communicate both about the occasion and about himself: much of this will be part of habitual behaviour, especially for an experienced singer, but it will usually be based upon norms of social behaviour expected in the context of a musical performance. If it is not based on those norms, then that fact may in itself represent a deliberate rejection of those norms, and an assumption of a different set. A singer may wish to sit and sing, in imitation of Johannes Vogl, perhaps, or emphasise how relaxed he feels by chatting with the pianist.

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<sup>37</sup> 'There are passages in our music where it can be very difficult for us to hear each other play because of audience or bar noise. I'd imagine it wouldn't be as much of a problem for us if we were an out and out metal punk or perhaps even pop band. It distracts me very much if I can hear individual people near the front who seem to be oblivious that there are other audience members around them, who all seem to be trying to pay attention. The talkers should really be at the back with the other talkers, not down the front making it harder for us to do the job that the other audience members have paid us to do.' Email to the author from John Cummings, lead guitarist of Mogwai, received February 18 2009.

<sup>38</sup> Ekman, Paul. 'Biological and cultural contributions to body and facial movement' in Blacking, John, ed. *The Anthropology of the Body*, London: Academic Press, 1977, 49; cited in Potter, *Vocal Authority*, 182.

<sup>39</sup> Boal, Augusto. *Games for actors and non-actors*, trans. Adrian Jackson, London: Routledge, 1992, 182.

### *Body manipulators:*

Duey quotes thirteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century sources which castigate unnecessary movements by singers.<sup>40</sup> Tosi in 1723 advocated singing before a mirror so as to get rid of ‘convulsive motions of the body or the face’,<sup>41</sup> while Bayly in 1771 called for ‘a graceful posture, void of all tricks, such as twisting the head and body, knitting the brows, distorting the mouth and shaking the jaw, that he may make an agreeable appearance.’<sup>42</sup> Monahan cites 19th and early twentieth century writers who make similar points.<sup>43</sup> In the mid-sixteenth century the Italian actor Leone di Somi criticised those who made unconscious movements with their hands: ‘when there is no need to make gestures, they ought to hang naturally at the sides’;<sup>44</sup> while three hundred years later the Frenchman François Delsarte<sup>45</sup> deplored the motiveless gesture. Ekman<sup>46</sup> quotes observers of speakers with many body manipulator actions as describing such people as ‘awkward, tense and untrustworthy’. Seckerson’s comments, mentioned earlier, that the singer’s ‘incessant prowling’, his ‘shifty body language’ made him seem to be lying to his audience, are in part concerned with the problem of body manipulators.<sup>47</sup> Dayme suggests that the effort to keep the hands still can in itself lead to extraneous twitches of these and other body parts.<sup>48</sup> Not only is there general agreement on this subject over the centuries, but common sense and observation show that there is every reason to eliminate these unnecessary actions.

Many of these motions prove to be very difficult to eradicate because they are often an outward manifestation of deep-seated insecurities. But they can also be the residue of something learnt: a movement suggested by a teacher to make a difficult note or passage seem easier; a gesture used by the singer in rehearsal or in a recording session to help make the performance more expressive; a preparatory movement before making a

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<sup>40</sup> Duey, *Bel Canto in its Golden Age*, 34, 38-9.

<sup>41</sup> Tosi, Pier Francesco. *Observations on the Florid Song*, Trans. Mr. Galliard, ed. Michael Pilkington, London: Stainer & Bell, 1987, 40.

<sup>42</sup> Bayly, Anselm. *A Practical Treatise on Singing and Playing with Just Expression and Real Elegance*, London: J. Ridley, 1771, 42.

<sup>43</sup> Monahan, *The Art of Singing*, 218-9.

<sup>44</sup> Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre: A Study of Theatrical Art from the Beginnings to the Present Day*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937, 253.

<sup>45</sup> Delsarte, François. *Delsarte System of Oratory*, trans. Abby Alger, New York: Edgar S. Werner, 1893, 522.

<sup>46</sup> Ekman, ‘Biological and cultural contributions to body and facial movement’ in Blacking, *The Anthropology of the Body*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Seckerson, ‘Simon Keenlyside’, *The Independent*, 11 January 2008. Extra: 15 (D).

<sup>48</sup> Dayme, Meribeth. *The Performer’s Voice: Realizing your Vocal Potential*, New York: Norton, 2005, 141.

vocal entry, or indicating the pulse of the music with nodding of the head. Being unconscious and/or habitual, they are functions of the performer rather than the character he portrays, and as such they serve to distract the observer from absorbing the meaning of the performance. However, the general agreement found amongst commentators on eliminating *body manipulators* is not found in the matter of *illustrators*.

### *Illustrators:*

#### 1. Facial expression.

Modern theories of communication referred to above, supported by sophisticated experimental techniques and philosophical arguments, have their antecedents in the study and practice of rhetoric. Indeed, if we are looking for a repertoire of emotional signals to help a singer to present a song on the concert platform, the predecessor of that repertoire is to be found in the rules of gesture laid down for the lyric and dramatic stage. And those rules themselves had their origins in ancient Greece and Rome.

Classical Rhetoric existed to give an orator the tools to move and persuade his hearers, both in terms of the subject matter of his discourse and in its manner of delivery, but in medieval Europe the study of rhetoric was confined to the church. The Renaissance saw the 'rediscovery' of classical ideas and scholarship, and rhetoric became the corner-stone of education and culture. The source-texts were not the Greek of Aristotle, Plato or Hermogenes but the Latin of Cicero and Quintilian, and the unknown author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. These works were based upon the earlier Greek, but contained much more that was of practical use to the Roman orator.

Ancient Greek and Roman orators looked to actors for guidance on techniques of delivery. Cicero writes that 'all depends on the countenance; and even in that the eyes hold sovereign sway',<sup>49</sup> while Quintilian underlines the importance of the face, because this is where men 'fix their gaze'.<sup>50</sup> In the eighteenth century Riccoboni said much the same, and suggested using a mirror to practise,<sup>51</sup> as did Aaron Hill.<sup>52</sup> Heywood called for

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<sup>49</sup> Cicero, M. Tullius. *On Oratory and Orators (De Oratore)*, ed. and trans. John Watson, rev. ed. (1970), Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois Press, 1986, 258.

<sup>50</sup> Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. Donald Russell, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001, 123.

<sup>51</sup> Riccoboni not only advises using a mirror, he writes: 'Oh! se agli occhi di tutte le persone/ fosse appiccato un filo e si portasse/al punto ove lo sguardo si dispone! / A quai de' membri credi si attaccasse/ la gomina formata? Solo al viso' (Oh! If from the eyes of all the spectators a line could be drawn to the place where he is looking, where would they meet? Only in the face [of the actor] – author's translation). Riccoboni, Luigi. *Dell'Arte rappresentativa*, London: 1728, chapter 4, lines 1, 2, 16-20.

‘a moderate and fit countenance’;<sup>53</sup> Aston described Thomas Doggett as ‘the best face-player’ and wrote that Sandford ‘acted strongly with his face’.<sup>54</sup> This suggests what might now be regarded as grimacing, and Gillette’s comments from almost two hundred years later (1915) mock the exaggerated gesture and facial expression of ‘the Palmy Days’ of acting.<sup>55</sup> Delsarte maintained that Ravignan ‘touched [his audience] by the general expression of his face, and fascinated them by his gaze’.<sup>56</sup>

In his treatise of 1827,<sup>57</sup> Johannes Jelgerhuis gives an exhaustive account of the gesture and facial expression used in Amsterdam’s Schouwburg, and though he describes the practice existing in his own time, he does so with reference to the past styles found in that theatre. Amsterdam’s position as a centre of European trade since the sixteenth century made it an ideal location for absorbing successive waves of acting styles, all based on the original classicistic theories developed in the Renaissance. The *symbolic* style covered the period up to 1665, when the second Schouwburg building was constructed; the *rational* style lasted until the third building and the reconstitution of the company in 1774; and the *sensible* thereafter until Jelgerhuis’ time. This succession of companies, coupled with the innate conservatism of the Dutch, meant that they preserved elements of style which harked back to the ancient Classical tradition as understood in the Renaissance.<sup>58</sup> Jelgerhuis, an accomplished artist and draughtsman, intending his advice to be taken by opera singers as well as actors, includes in his treatise examples of facial expressions which display Grief, Surprise, Terror, Anger, Contempt and Jealousy. These are accompanied and further reinforced by illustrations of bodily gestures, which also show Disparagement, Shame and Welcome.<sup>59</sup>

In contrast with Jelgerhuis, Duey’s sixteenth and seventeenth century writers on singing seem for the most part to have called for stillness of the face as well as the body: nothing should move but the voice.<sup>60</sup> Monahan’s study finds little relevant material on deliberate facial expression until the early 19th century, when Tetrizzini suggests the use

<sup>52</sup> Hill, Aaron. *The Works of the late Aaron Hill*, London: 1753, 359-60.

<sup>53</sup> Heywood, Thomas. *An Apology for Actors* (1612), facsimile, New York: Garland Publishing, 1973, no page numbers.

<sup>54</sup> Aston, *A Brief Supplement to Colley Cibber, Esq.* (1747), cited in Cole & Chinoy *Actors on Acting*, 115.

<sup>55</sup> Gillette, W. H. *The Illusion of the First Time in Acting*, New York: Columbia University Dramatic Museum, 1915, quoted in Cole & Chinoy, *Actors on Acting*, 564.

<sup>56</sup> Delsarte, *Delsarte System of Oratory*, 465.

<sup>57</sup> Jelgerhuis, Johannes. *Lessons on the Principles of Gesticulation and Mimic Expression*, Amsterdam: 1827.

<sup>58</sup> Golding, Alfred. *Classicistic Acting: Two Centuries of a Performance Tradition at the Amsterdam Schouwburg*, Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1984, ix-xiii.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 566-586; and Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 36-68.

<sup>60</sup> Duey, *Bel Canto in its Golden Age*, 34.

of eyes and forehead, and Frossard says that it is 'the eyes that speak'.<sup>61</sup> But the study passes over the comments of Garcia, who makes explicit the need to give to the face expressions which are congruent with the emotions being expressed.<sup>62</sup> However, Plüddemann describes Loewe as having sung his own ballad *Edward* 'while practically smiling', in other words without a visible play of emotion.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, Weingartner in 1899 extols 'facial pantomime', pointing out the absurdity of using the same expression for *Doppelgänger* as for *Feldeinsamkeit*.<sup>64</sup> Rumyantsev in the 1920s writes about the expression in the eyes and how the distant look invites the spectator to wonder what moves the singer so.<sup>65</sup> Some later writers have more to say on the subject, and Dayme stresses the importance of the eyes: 'watch a performer who is self-conscious. It is likely that the eyes are not really present in the room and neither is the message, because it has been forgotten.'<sup>66</sup> Croiza asks for a natural face, neither deformed nor lifeless, for 'the life of our facial expression is in the eyes and in the mouth';<sup>67</sup> Whitlock has: 'let your eyes and facial expression carry the mood along'.<sup>68</sup> Manen describes as fundamental 'the harmonious coordination of emotionally coloured tones with facial expression and gesture' and goes on to propose that the singer undergo the kind of training in these techniques which Stanislavski gave to his actors.<sup>69</sup> Scott has a different opinion:

It is only of secondary importance that a face should look "nice". Doubtless it is a happy coincidence when both ear and eye are pleased, but it will seldom happen that the use of the voice leaves the face in quite a natural, easy position. Tensions are involved which prevent this, and it is just as well to accept it straightaway.<sup>70</sup>

This is a pragmatic view which doubtless springs from observations of what really happens in performance, but seeing what can be achieved by the more talented vocal actors, it is equivalent to a counsel of despair.

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<sup>61</sup> Monahan, *The Art of Singing*, 218-9.

<sup>62</sup> Garcia, Manuel. *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing: Part Two* (1847 & 1872), ed. and trans. Donald Paschke, New York: Da Capo Press, 1975, 144.

<sup>63</sup> Plüddemann, Martin. *Balladen und Gesänge* Band 1, Nürnberg: W. Schmid, 1891, cited in Kravitt, *The Lied, Mirror of Late Romanticism*, 59.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* 57

<sup>65</sup> Stanislavski, *Stanislavski on Opera*, 32.

<sup>66</sup> Dayme, *The Performer's Voice*, 164.

<sup>67</sup> Croiza, *The Singer as Interpreter*, 30

<sup>68</sup> Burgin, *Teaching Singing*, 168. Other writers cited by Fields have similar things to say, one being: '[The singer's] face is a mirror in which the listener may see the song as definitely as he hears it.' Fields, *Training the singing voice*, 235.

<sup>69</sup> Manen, *The Art of Singing*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Burgin, *Teaching Singing*, 169.

One of the clearest expositions of the need for an expressive face, accompanied by some examples of suggestions for specific songs, comes from Emmons and Sonntag.<sup>71</sup> It is strange that many treatises on singing, in spite of going into meticulous detail about the workings of the vocal mechanism and the need for musical and textual understanding, have nothing to say about facial expression or gesture (Miller,<sup>72</sup> Bernac,<sup>73</sup> Hemsley,<sup>74</sup> for example).

Ekman, in his chapter in Blacking, entitled 'Biological and cultural contributions to body and facial movement', when discussing emotional responses, makes the important point that emotions only last for a short time. Surprise is quite clearly soon overcome, fear and anger perhaps less so, but the initial emotional impulse is eventually replaced by something better described as mood.<sup>75</sup> Quintilian, however, divides emotions into *pathos* and *ethos*, the first of which covers those that are brief, such as anger, fear etc, while *ethos* relates to 'calm and gentle ones which induce a feeling of goodwill', and which have a lasting quality. To concur with Ekman, it would probably be better to define *ethos* as 'mood'.<sup>76</sup> Ekman gives examples of faces clearly exhibiting disgust and fear, which he categorises as universal in significance, and these are very similar to the illustrations in Jelgerhuis and le Brun.<sup>77</sup> He also describes more complex emotions which are a blend of more than one simple emotion, giving as an example a picture of a woman showing sadness and happiness together. For the most part it is blends such as this which are likely to be most appropriate for the singer of songs to exhibit. The majority of song texts describe the poet's state of mind, his present mood as it springs from his remembrance of past events, rather than actually reliving those events. Ekman goes on to define what he calls *Display Rules*, which inhibit certain natural emotional responses according to habits of social behaviour, and he cites the beauty contest, where only the winner is expected to cry, for example, or the 'pecking order' of emotional display at a funeral. Display rules peculiar to the context of the song recital may serve to inhibit some of the expected emotional demonstration.

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<sup>71</sup> Emmons and Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital*, 118-9.

<sup>72</sup> Miller, *The Structure of Singing*.

<sup>73</sup> Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song*.

<sup>74</sup> Hemsley, *Singing and Imagination*.

<sup>75</sup> Ekman, 'Biological and cultural contributions to body and facial movement', in Blacking, *The Anthropology of the Body*, 55-6.

<sup>76</sup> Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 49 and 55.

<sup>77</sup> Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 331-2.



## 2. Bodily gesture.

William Kempe in 1588 writes that children should be taught to recognise 'every trope, every figure, as well of words as of sentences; but also the Rhetorical pronunciation and gesture fit for every word, sentence and affection'.<sup>78</sup> Pauley cites this and other contemporary sources, arguing that actors and orators shared common ground in their use of gesture: he suggests furthermore that the songs of the seventeenth century, many of them having a theatrical origin, would be treated in a similar manner.<sup>79</sup> Mattheson has a whole chapter of *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* devoted to the Art of Gesticulation, basing his thesis on what was known of Classical rhetoric.<sup>80</sup>

By the eighteenth century, gesture on the English stage had reached the condition almost of language, one whose meaning was well known to regular theatregoers. Austin gives explicit and detailed instructions on what gestures the actor should adopt during his speech, and he accompanies these instructions with specific illustrations of the poses to be struck. The actor was expected to underline individual words and phrases with their own proper action, and though we might be tempted to see this as some kind of early signing language for the deaf, it was essential that it be done with elegance, clarity and beauty.<sup>81</sup> Toft has annotated Storace's 1782 setting of the first two stanzas of Gray's *An elegy written in a country church-yard* with Austin's set of symbols for that poem, indicating movements of the hands, arms and feet, and appropriate facial expressions.<sup>82</sup> Following his instructions would result in a strange, slow ballet of antiquarian interest, perhaps, but hardly to be attempted in a regular song recital.

Lessing, however, writes that little was known of the way the ancient Greeks used their hands on stage, but that what was known showed a contrast between the pantomimists, who used their hands to take the place of speech, and the actors, who avoided gesture except for emphasis. The pantomimes' traditional gestures had specific meanings which would confuse spectators if used indiscriminately by the actors. He went

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<sup>78</sup> Kempe, William. *The Education of Children in Learning*, London: 1588, cited in Joseph, Bertram. *Elizabethan Acting*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Pauley, S. M. *Rhetoric and the performance of seventeenth-century English continuo song*, New York: Stanford University Press, 1995, 40-50.

<sup>80</sup> Mattheson, Johann. *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), ed. and trans. Ernest Harriss, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981, 132-143.

<sup>81</sup> Austin, *Chironomia*.

<sup>82</sup> Toft, Robert. *Heart to Heart: Expressive Singing in England 1780-1830*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 157.

on to condemn the habit of random gestures, even if they were beautiful, and counselled their use only when they could be made significant.<sup>83</sup>

Roman actors, like their eighteenth century English successors, were taught a repertoire of conventional gestures to signify the various affects they wished to convey. Rhetors were similarly coached, but in a different 'dialect' of gesture, and Quintilian recognised that their lack of spontaneity could lead to a loss of *fides* and *auctoritas* – truth and authority – a potential loss which was highlighted in chapter one of this thesis. Nevertheless, in spite of that danger he felt that nature should and could be improved by art, and that the ideal was to *appear* spontaneous.<sup>84</sup>

Aristotle had criticised those who overdid gestures in reciting or singing competitions, and this halfway house between condemning and condoning gesture while singing songs has remained the pattern for most subsequent writers. Some commentators on singing would prohibit it altogether: many of Duey's seventeenth and eighteenth century writers;<sup>85</sup> Marsop (1904)<sup>86</sup>; Galli-Curci (1923),<sup>87</sup> Croiza (before 1946)<sup>88</sup> and Graves (1954).<sup>89</sup> Garcia (1847) writes about emotion expressed in action and voice at the same time, indicating the parallel studies of voice and pantomime, but it is not clear whether his meaning extends beyond the operatic stage.<sup>90</sup> Some would allow gesture in a limited form, for example Lotte Lehmann, who, however, warns against anything that would be out of place in a concert, which is hardly a helpful comment for one who looks for guidance on the subject.<sup>91</sup> She seems to contradict herself by saying on another occasion that she hated gestures on the concert platform, but hated expressionless hands 'almost more'.<sup>92</sup> Most other commentators appear to have thought that a certain amount of gesture is desirable, or at least allowable: Mersenne insists that movement of the face

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<sup>83</sup> 'Grace [of gesture] in the wrong place is affectation and grimace, and the very same grace, too often repeated, becomes at last cold and then repulsive.' Lessing, *Selected Prose works of G. E. Lessing*, 244-5.

<sup>84</sup> Graf, Fritz. *The gestures of Roman actors and orators*, from Bremmer and Roodenburg, *A Cultural History of Gesture from Antiquity to the Present Day*, 36-52.

<sup>85</sup> Duey, 'Appearance and Pose', in *Bel Canto in its Golden Age*, 60-73.

<sup>86</sup> Kravitt, *The Lied, Mirror of Late Romanticism*, 25.

<sup>87</sup> Martens, F. H. *The Art of the Prima Donna and Concert Singer*, London: Appleton Press, 1923, 114.

<sup>88</sup> Croiza, *The Singer as Interpreter*, 55.

<sup>89</sup> Graves, Richard M. *Singing for Amateurs*, London: Oxford University Press, 1954, 43.

<sup>90</sup> Garcia, *A Complete Treatise on the Art of Singing*.

<sup>91</sup> 'How great is the power of expression conveyed by the eyes and the hands! I do not mean that you should ever make a gesture which would disturb the frame of concert singing.' Lehmann, Lotte, *More than Singing*, 13.

<sup>92</sup> Lehmann, Lotte. 'Teaching the Singer to Become an Interpretative Artist. An interview by Annabel Comfort', *Etude* (February 1946), 74.

and hands reflect the needs of the poetry;<sup>93</sup> Lilli Lehmann counsels habitual stillness in order to make the occasional movement more telling;<sup>94</sup> Calvé defends her own use of gesture;<sup>95</sup> Whitlock says that gesture should be ‘sparing’;<sup>96</sup> Manen calls for ‘coordination of emotionally coloured tones with facial expression and gesture’;<sup>97</sup> Emmons and Sonntag allow a gesture to happen ‘if traditionally and stylistically feasible’;<sup>98</sup> Spillman has ‘sparing’, and describes the ‘shattering’ effect of Janet Baker taking a step forward at a particular moment in ‘Gretchen am Spinnrade’.<sup>99</sup> I can recall a similar moment during Mahler’s *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with Fischer-Dieskau in London’s Festival Hall, at his first words of the third song: ‘Ich hab’ ein glühend Messer in meiner Brust’ (I have a glowing dagger in my breast). The singers featured in interviews with Martens are about evenly divided between those who would allow gestures and those who would not. One of the more interesting opinions is expressed by Anna Case, who believes that the more spiritual the subject of the song, the less gesture should be involved.<sup>100</sup> This has echoes of the practice of ornamentation in the Baroque and Classical periods, when florid ornaments, essential for the theatre, were discouraged in sacred music.<sup>101</sup>

The contrary point of view, that gesture should be allowed and encouraged, is suggested by the writing of Sundberg in ‘Emotional Body Movement and Sound’, where he states that ‘it is likely that expressive body movements are translated into acoustic terms in voice production.’<sup>102</sup> Aaron Hill writes in the mid-eighteenth century words to similar effect, arguing that imagination imprints emotion on the muscles of the face and the body, generating the appropriate sound of the voice and ‘disposition of the gesture’.<sup>103</sup> Davidson cites studies which show that people of very different ethnic and social backgrounds were not only able to distinguish the emotional content of a range of deliberately chosen hand movements, but also the correct emotional content of those

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<sup>93</sup> Mersenne, Marin. *Quaestiones Celeberrimae in Genesim, cum accurate textus explicatione*, Paris: 1623, cited in Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 37. Barnett gives the Mersenne reference (in English) as being on page 292, but the Latin original is without page numbers.

<sup>94</sup> Lehmann, Lilli, *How to Sing*, 106.

<sup>95</sup> Martens, *The Art of the Prima Donna and Concert Singer*, 41.

<sup>96</sup> Burgin, *Teaching Singing*, 168.

<sup>97</sup> Manen, *The Art of Singing*, 12.

<sup>98</sup> Emmons and Sonntag, *the Art of the Song Recital*, 120.

<sup>99</sup> Spillman, Robert. ‘Presentation of a Lieder recital’, in Hallmark, Rufus, ed. *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, New York: Schirmer Books, 1996, 325.

<sup>100</sup> ‘In songs of the more classic type, where the programmatic feature is absent, songs which idealize emotion in music – love, religion, a spiritual thought – action and gesture fall away. The spiritual, the ideal is best in the music alone.’ Martens, *The Art of the Prima Donna and Concert Singer*, 54.

<sup>101</sup> Toft, *Heart to Heart*, 1-14.

<sup>102</sup> Sundberg, *The Science of the Singing Voice*, 155.

<sup>103</sup> Hill, *The Works of the late Aaron Hill*, 356.

movements when transformed into an acoustic profile.<sup>104</sup> She goes on to propose that since music performance has a social dimension, more pedagogical emphasis should be placed on preparing for that social activity rather than simply on solitary practice. Elsewhere Davidson suggests that:

... bodily communication is a crucial element of musical performance, and that performers can benefit from understanding how they produce their music, not only for musical understanding, but also for audience and co-performer engagement.<sup>105</sup>

Davidson goes on to write that 'gestures help to formulate thoughts into utterances'.<sup>106</sup> This resembles to some extent the notion of Michael Chekhov, who coined the phrase 'psychological gesture' to describe an action designed to strengthen the actor's will in creating a role. The actor's intuition finds a specific gesture which encapsulates his idea of the essence of the character, or the essence of a scene played out by the character, and from this archetypal gesture springs the body's knowledge of how to create all the various details of the character, including, presumably, the style of vocal tone and attack.<sup>107</sup> Since this is designed for the performer's preparatory work and not for expressing feeling or action to an audience, it can play no part in the performance itself, at which point it might be understood as a body manipulator.

I have observed that many singers at rehearsal and in the recording studio use 'expressive gestures' to accompany their singing, and they seem to find that the shape and quality of these gestures provides a corollary to what they are trying to achieve musically and emotionally in their singing. Most writing about the performance of classical music assumes that it is 'live', in the presence of listeners/observers who experience the music in real time. As Davies has written, this is not the manner in which most people receive music now, and of what they do hear through various electronic media, the majority will have been recorded in a studio.<sup>108</sup> Clearly visual presentation ceases to be an issue in these circumstances, but other issues arise. For instance,

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<sup>104</sup> Davidson, Jane. 'What does the Visual Information Contained in Music Performances offer the Observer? Some Preliminary Thoughts', in Steinberg, Reinhard, ed. *Music and the Mind Machine: Psychophysiology and Psychopathology of the Sense of Music*, Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1995, 103-115.

<sup>105</sup> Davidson, Jane. 'Bodily communication in musical performance', in Miell, Dorothy, Raymond MacDonald and David J. Hargreaves, eds. *Musical Communication*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 216.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* 222.

<sup>107</sup> Chekhov, Michael. *To the Actor*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953, 63-79.

<sup>108</sup> Davies, *Musical Works and Performances*, 295.

expressive gestures may be used, but moving the body or the head beyond quite restricted limits can adversely affect the sound quality at the microphone.

Kravitt's essay on declamation in *The Lied, Mirror of late Romanticism*, while tracing the history of changing styles in Lieder singing, has contemporary writers making much of the use and abuse of 'facial pantomime', but the same writers are curiously silent about the use of gesture by the body or the hands. Kravitt asserts that: 'the best concert singers did not indulge in exaggerated gesturing', implying that the worst concert singers did so indulge. He goes on to say that: 'the reinforcement of a word or phrase in a song by hand gestures or body movements had been frowned on, in principle', and then quotes Julius Stockhausen (1826-1906) who claimed that 'such effects belong on the stage'. In spite of this clear prohibition, Kravitt states that great artists did indeed use gesture subtly.<sup>109</sup>

For the modern performer attempting to decide whether or not to include gesture in presenting a song, it might be worth considering another of Quintilian's thoughts: that the language of gesture changes over time and between cultures. He acknowledges that it is not the gestures of the Greeks nor those of Cicero from 150 years earlier which he uses as his model, but those of contemporary patrician Romans.<sup>110</sup> There is no equivalent now to the kind of comprehensive lexicons of gestural meaning which would be understood by the Roman orator or the eighteenth century actor, but there is a recognisable repertoire of 'natural' gestures which a singer could call upon: the hand thrust forward with palm down to signify rejection; both arms out to the side with palms upwards to show openness; a hand on heart to suggest depth of feeling. Unfortunately, there is the danger in so doing of appearing to be a ham, of generalising the gesture and therefore generalising the feeling; the observer sees the singer going through his limited repertoire of standard gestures and eventually becomes bored. It requires a special talent to overcome this and make a truly convincing performance, and to paraphrase Lewes, good performing, like good writing, is remarkable for its individuality.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Kravitt, *The Lied, Mirror of Late Romanticism*, 55-6.

<sup>110</sup> Bremmer, Jan and Herman Roodenburg, eds. *A Cultural History of Gesture from Antiquity to the Present Day*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, 36-52.

<sup>111</sup> Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting*, 179. In fact, his second word is 'acting', but changing it expands the definition without altering the thrust of his statement.

## *Summary*

There is widespread agreement throughout history that the performer, whether orator, actor or singer, must take care that the face, and especially the eyes, should be used expressively. The expressive use of the rest of the body, particularly the hands, is a more contentious issue. The singer standing at the piano is subject to stricter limitations than when taking part in a stage production, and these limitations have a practical as well as a conventional basis. Students of singing need teaching on this topic just as they are taught about music, breathing, voice production, language and all the other elements of their craft.

## Chapter three

### The mode of address

A singer needs a clear idea of the character being portrayed and whom he or she is addressing. At its simplest level, we know that the song is being addressed to an audience, otherwise it would be not a performance but a rehearsal. However, the song's persona, the character the singer impersonates, may be addressing another character or be entirely unaware of being overheard at all. The focus of the singer's attention, therefore, should spring from the persona's point of view, not the performer's.

#### *Eliot's three voices of poetry*

Aristotle identified three kinds of poetry: lyric, dramatic and narrative; that is, the poet's inner musings, the presentation of character in a staged enactment, and the telling of a story.<sup>1</sup> The three kinds of poetry which T.S.Eliot identified were: 'the poet talking to himself – or nobody', equivalent to Aristotle's lyric; 'addressing an audience, whether large or small', roughly equivalent to Aristotle's narrative; and assuming the role of a character or characters in a drama, Aristotle's dramatic.<sup>2</sup> He did identify a fourth kind, the dramatic monologue, but then proceeded to show that in his opinion such poetry is really of the second kind, and the poet is addressing an audience through what Ezra Pound called a persona.<sup>3</sup> The performer, in fact, always presents the poem through the medium of a persona, even if that persona should happen to be 'the poet'. To muddy the waters somewhat, Eliot then asserted that every poem displays more than one of his three kinds at once.

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<sup>1</sup> 'It is possible to proceed either partly by narrative and partly by assuming a character other than your own – this is Homer's method – or by remaining yourself without any such change, or else to represent the characters as carrying out the whole action themselves'. Aristotle. *The Poetics*, trans. W. Hamilton Fife, London: W. Heinemann, 1965, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Eliot, Thomas S. *The Three Voices of Poetry*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1954, 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Pound's three divisions of poetry - logopoeia, phanopoeia and melopoeia – are not relevant to this study.

The following six poems, all set to music by Hugo Wolf, have been chosen with the intention of finding which of Eliot's three poetic voices they represent. This will then indicate the kind of delivery, or *decorum* in rhetorical terms, most appropriate for the singer to use.<sup>4</sup>

### *Six poems*

#### 1. 'Verborgenheit' – Mörike<sup>5</sup>

#### Secrecy

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!  
Locket nicht mit Liebesgaben,  
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben  
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!

Leave, o world, o leave me be!  
Tempt me not with gifts of love,  
Leave this heart to have alone  
Its bliss, its agony!

Was ich traure, weiss ich nicht,  
Es ist unbekanntes Wehe;  
Immerdar durch Tränen sehe  
Ich der Sonne liebes Licht.

Why I grieve, I do not know,  
My grief is unknown grief,  
All the time I see through tears  
The sun's delightful light.

Oft bin ich mir kaum bewusst  
Und die helle Freude zücket  
Durch die Schwere, so mich drückt,  
Wonniglich in meine Brust.

Often, scarce aware am I,  
Pure joy flashes  
Through the oppressing heaviness  
- Flashes blissful in my heart.

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!  
Locket nicht mit Liebesgaben,  
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben  
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!

Leave, o world, o leave me be!  
Tempt me not with gifts of love,  
Leave this heart to have alone  
Its bliss, its agony!

trans. Bird & Stokes<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For a brief treatment of the topic of Persona and Mode of Address, see Stein, Deborah and Robert Spillman. *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 29-33.

<sup>5</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *Gedichte von Eduard Mörike*, vol. I, Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, n/d, 46-48.

<sup>6</sup> Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*, trans. George Bird and Richard Stokes, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1987, 384-5.



Here is an introspective lyric, the private musings of a grief-stricken poet, but in spite of the private nature of these thoughts, he has set them down and given them to the world so that people may read and share in the depth of his feelings. Whether this was the true setting for Mörike's actual writing of the poem is not the point. He created a poetic persona, the Suffering Poet, to express these feelings. The intimate nature of the lyric suggests that it was not designed to be declaimed but read silently, and it fulfills Eliot's criterion of the poet speaking to himself.

Yet by making it into a song Hugo Wolf has not only created a new entity, he has reduced the options for reception of the work: the silent reader is replaced by the performer, and the intended recipient can now only be a listener. The suffering poet is musing aloud, and though he has listeners, we would expect him to be ignorant of the presence of any other person, and we would therefore expect the singer to place his focus in his mind, not upon us.

## 2. 'Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen' – anon. Italian, trans. Heyse<sup>7</sup>

Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen,  
 So trage nicht dein Haar gelockt, du Holde.  
 Lass von den Schultern frei sie niederwehen;  
 Wie Fäden sehn sie aus von purem Golde.  
 Wie goldne Fäden, die der Wind bewegt,  
 Schön sind die Haare, schön ist, die sie trägt!  
 Goldfäden, Seidenfäden, ungezählt,  
 Schön sind die Haare, schön ist, die sie strahlt!

And if you would see your lover die,  
 Then do not wear your hair in curls, my sweet.  
 Let it hang down freely from your shoulders;  
 Like threads of pure gold it seems.  
 Like golden threads which the wind stirs,  
 Beautiful is the hair, beautiful she who bears it!  
 Gold threads, silken threads, unnumbered,  
 Beautiful is the hair, beautiful she who combs it!

trans. Stephen Varcoe

The poet has left introspection, except insofar as he is expressing his inner feelings, and now makes a declaration to the beloved. We have it in written form, but we can either believe that the lover also receives it in written form or face-to-face. Whichever it might be, this is an intimate exchange, essentially private in character, and in terms of Eliot's criteria the poet is addressing an audience, but not the audience of the concert platform. When the poem becomes part of a song, then once again it is subject to the conventions of performance which allow for the presence of listeners, and the poetic persona

<sup>7</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *Spanish and Italian Songbooks*, New York: Dover Publications, 1989, 176-7.

represented by the singer addresses an unseen lover, overheard by the unacknowledged listeners.

3. 'In dem Schatten meiner Locken' – anon. Spanish, trans. Heyse<sup>8</sup>

1	In dem Schatten meiner Locken Schliefe mir mein Geliebter ein. Weck ich ihn nun auf? - Ach nein!	In the shadow of my tresses My beloved has fallen asleep. Do I wake him now? Ah no!
5	Sorglich strahlt ich meine krausen Locken täglich in der Frühe, Doch umsonst ist meine Mühe, Weil der Winde sie zerzausen. Lockenschatten, Windessausen Schlieferten den Liebsten ein.	Carefully I comb my curling Locks early each day, But in vain is my labour, As the winds dishevel them. Tresses' shadow, wind's bluster Lulled my beloved to sleep.
10	Weck ich ihn nun auf? - Ach nein!	Do I wake him now? Ah no!
15	Hören muss ich, wie ihn gräme, Dass er schmachtet schon so lange, Dass ihm Leben geb' und nehme Diese meine braune Wange. Und er nennt mich seine Schlange, Und doch schlief er bei mir ein. Weck ich ihn nun auf? - Ach nein!	I have to listen as he complains That he has already pined so long, That for him life is given and taken By this my brown cheek. And he calls me his serpent, And yet he fell asleep by my side. Do I wake him now? Ah no!

trans. Stephen Varcoe

The simplest interpretation of the persona created by the poet here is that of a loving and forgiving girl, perhaps jotting down these lines in her notebook as the lover sleeps by her side, asking herself whether or not she should wake him, in which case she is the poet speaking to herself. Performed as a song, this could be treated as a development of the style of 'Verborgenheit', with the additional element of an imagined companion, but otherwise done introspectively. Alternatively, the poetic persona could be addressing a third party, the listener, which considerably alters the situation. Now the poem would

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 37-9.

meet Eliot's second criterion – the poet addressing an audience – in which case the singer therefore acknowledges the audience's existence and interacts with it.<sup>9</sup>

4. 'Anakreons Grab' – Goethe<sup>10</sup>

Anakreon's grave

Wo die Rose hier blüht, wo Reben um Lorbeer  
sich schlingen,

Here, where the rose blooms, where the vine  
and laurel entwine,

Wo das Turtelchen lockt, wo sich das Grillchen  
ergötzt,

Where the turtle dove calls, where the cricket  
is glad,

Welch ein Grab ist hier, das alle Götter mit  
Leben

What grave is here, that all the gods with beautiful  
life

Schön bepflanzt und geziert? Es ist Anakreons  
Ruh.

Have planted and adorned? It is Anakreon's  
last rest.

Frühling, Sommer und Herbst genoss der  
Glückliche Dichter;

Spring, summer and autumn delighted the  
happy poet;

Vor dem Winter hat ihn endlich der Hügel  
geschützt.

From winter, finally, this mound has shielded  
him.

trans. Stephen Varcoe

There is some similarity between this and the previous poem, though here the poetic persona refers to an object (Anakreon's grave), not an individual (a lover), and he also asks a question, either of himself or of another. However, although we feel that the lover of 'In dem Schatten' has a genuine decision to make (whether to wake him or not), the position is not so clear with regard to the question in 'Anakreons Ruh'. Does this enquiry spring from ignorance, from a desire to know whose tomb the poet has stumbled upon? In that case the poet speaks to himself, parts the obscuring vegetation, and discovers the answer. Or is this a metaphorical question for the benefit of a witness, a reader, a listener who is encouraged to view the scene in his or her mind's eye, with the poetic persona acting as a cicerone? We can find such a guide in Italian Renaissance paintings: for example, Fra Angelico's *Madonna and Child with Saints and Angels* painted in about 1440, shows one of the saints turned to face the viewer, indicating with his hand the

<sup>9</sup> Wolf's song, however, underwent a metamorphosis when he included it in his opera *Der Corregidor* (Act 1, scene 4), where it is used by Frasquita as a piece of business to seduce the Corregidor while pretending that her husband Lukas is upstairs asleep, whereas in reality he is listening in the arbour. The singer's interpretation must therefore depend upon the song's context, and here we shall assume that this is simply the song as found in the *Spanisches Liederbuch*.

<sup>10</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *Ausgewählte Lieder*, Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1932, 150-1.

mother and child as if to say: “look, this is what I particularly want you to see”.<sup>11</sup> Other examples of this genre are Domenico Veneziano’s *St. Lucy Altarpiece* from the same date, where St. John the Baptist looks out at us as he points to the holy pair,<sup>12</sup> and Masaccio’s *The Trinity* of c.1425, where the Virgin Mary faces us and gestures towards her crucified son.<sup>13</sup> *The chalk cliffs of Rügen* (1818), by Goethe’s younger contemporary, Caspar David Friedrich, has a young girl drawing attention to the activity of one of her companions by pointing at him. The modern equivalent might be a television documentary such as one of David Attenborough’s Nature series, where the scenes are set up beforehand for the benefit of the viewer. If this is indeed the pattern of ‘Anakreons Grab’, the singer should therefore play the part of Angelico, Veneziano, Masaccio or Friedrich (or Attenborough) and look out at and challenge the audience.

If the question for the singer is whether to enact a true discovery or to offer a premeditated demonstration, then the title of the poem and its reference back to a Classical pattern of poetry represented by the anacreontic ode suggests an answer: the Romantic poets had reacted against the neoclassical ideal of the simple verse which expressed a single emotion and which described a domestic kind of landscape inhabited by shepherds and shepherdesses. The listener was often specifically invited to see what the poet had imagined, and the implication for the singer is therefore quite clear.<sup>14</sup>

##### 5. ‘Ich hab in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen’ – anon. Italian, trans. Heyse<sup>15</sup>

Ich hab in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen,	I have a true love living in Penna,
In der Maremmenebne einen andern,	In the plains of Maremma I have another,
Einen im schönen Hafen von Ancona,	One in the beautiful harbour of Ancona,
Zum vierten muss ich nach Viterbo wandern;	For the fourth I have to go to Viterbo;
Ein andrer wohnt in Casentino dort,	Another lives over in Casentino,
Der nächste lebt mit mir am selben Ort,	The next lives in the same town as me,

<sup>11</sup> Monastery of San Marco, Florence.

<sup>12</sup> Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

<sup>13</sup> Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, Jane. ‘In the Beginning was Poetry’, in Parsons, James, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 15-18. The seven Paul Eluard poems of Poulenc’s *Le travail du peintre* are examples of a modernist approach to this classical idea, offering in each case an exegesis of the painter’s style and methods, or Jules Renard’s prose in Ravel’s *Histoires naturelles*, describing the characteristics of particular animals.

<sup>15</sup> Wolf, *Spanish and Italian Songbooks*, 237-8.

Und wieder einen hab ich in Magione,  
Vier in La Fratta, zehn in Castiglione.

And I have yet another in Magione,  
Four in La Fratta, ten in Castiglione.

trans. Stephen Varcoe

On the basis of the internal evidence this is unequivocally a direct communication to a listener, suggesting to the singer that she should deliver it straight out at the audience, and the poem certainly fulfills Eliot's second criterion. But external evidence points to a different possibility. This is the last song in the *Italienisches Liederbuch*, a collection of 46 settings for male and female voices, and when it is sung in its entirety by two singers a dialogue begins to develop. There are protestations of love, there is longing, misunderstanding, disillusion, and in the end, a complete breakdown of the relationship. In the penultimate song the girl spits out curses at the man for betraying her, and this final number can be taken as her mocking him with a long list of her lovers. The song has now changed in its style of address, and though it is still of Eliot's second type, it is directed not at the audience but at the other singer. If it is not sung as part of the whole set, and without the other singer being physically present, she could still perform it as if to a third person. With or without the 'antagonist' in person, the audience now retreats into the position of unacknowledged eavesdropping.

## 6. 'Abschied' – Mörike<sup>16</sup>

## Farewell

1 Unangeklopft ein Herr tritt abends bei mir ein:  
"Ich habe die Her' Ihr Rezensent zu sein!"  
Sofort nimmt er das Licht in die Hand,  
Besieht lang meinen Schatten an die Wand,  
5 Rückt nah und fern: "Nun, lieber junger Mann,  
Sehn Sie doch gefälligst 'mal Ihre Nas' so von  
der Seite an!  
Sie geben zu, dass das ein Auswuchs is."  
"Das? Alle Wetter – gewiss!  
Ei Hasen! Ich dachte nicht, all' mein Lebtag  
nicht,  
10 Dass ich so eine Weltsnase führt' im Gesicht!!"

Unannounced, a man comes to visit me;  
"I have the honour to be your critic!"  
Thereupon he takes a light in his hand,  
Studies at length my shadow on the wall,  
Moves back and forth: "Now, my dear  
young man,  
Look, if you please, at your nose from  
the side.  
You must admit that it's an excrescence."  
"What? Good gracious – it's true!  
Well, I'll be – I didn't know, in all my  
born days,  
That I carried such a world-beating nose

<sup>16</sup> Wolf, *Gedichte von Eduard Mörike*, vol. V, 68-73.

		on my face!!”
	Der Mann sprach noch Verschied’nes hin und her,	The man then spoke about this and that,
	Ich weiss, auf meine Ehre, nicht mehr;	Though I can’t in all honesty remember
		what;
	Meinte vielleicht, ich sollt’ ihm beichten.	Perhaps he meant for me to confess to him.
	Zuletzt stand er auf; ich tat ihm leuchten.	At last he stood up; I brought a light.
15	Wie wir nun an der Treppe sind,	As we were now at the top of the stairs,
	Da geb’ ich ihm, ganz froh gesinnt,	I gave him, in a jocular manner,
	Einen kleinen Tritt,	A tiny kick,
	Nur so von hinten aufs gesässe, mit -	Just from behind up the arse, with -
	Alle Hagel! Ward das ein Gerumpel,	My goodness, wasn’t that a rumble,
20	Ein Gepurzel, ein Gehumpel!	A clatter, a tumble!
	Dergleichen hab’ ich nie gesehen,	The like of which I’ve never seen before,
	All’ mein Lebtag nicht gesehn,	All my life long I’ve never seen
	Einen Menschen so rasch die Trepp’ hinauf gehn!	A man go down the stairs so quickly!
		trans. Stephen Varcoe

Here is a narrative poem where the poetic persona, and therefore, for our purposes, the singer, relates an amusing incident: a fictitious one, perhaps, but one with which all artists and performers could easily identify. The existence of three personae – narrator, narrator as character in the story, and critic – suggests comparison with Cone’s study of ‘Erkönig’ which outlines the problems of decision-making in relation to multiple personae.<sup>17</sup> This poem is plainly meant to be addressed to an audience, but it also requires the assumption of more than one character, so perhaps it fulfills Eliot’s third criterion; or perhaps not. Eliot talks of ‘non-dramatic poetry which has a dramatic element in it’, giving the dramatic monologue as an example of this, and he goes on to deny that this fulfils his third criterion because it represents the poet himself speaking through the character.<sup>18</sup> By this token, ‘Abschied’ would not qualify as dramatic poetry, but as the poet presenting the audience with his own ideas and feelings dressed up as an amusing narrative: maybe Aristotle’s third criterion applies.

<sup>17</sup> Cone, Edward. *The Composer’s Voice*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, 1-38.

<sup>18</sup> Eliot, *The Three Voices of Poetry*, 19.

### *Modes of address of the featured poems*

These six poems, transformed into songs, exemplify different kinds of address, both severally and individually:

1. The poet speaking to himself, unaware of listeners.
2. The poet speaking to an audience (of one), unaware of other listeners.
- 3 (a). The poet speaking to herself, unaware of other listeners.  
or (b). The poet speaking to the concert audience.
- 4 (a). The poet speaking to herself.  
or (b). The poet speaking to an audience (of one), unaware of other listeners.  
or (c). The poet speaking to the concert audience.
- 5 (a). The poet speaking to an audience (of one), unaware of other listeners.  
or (b). The poet speaking to the concert audience.
6. The poet assuming characters and speaking to the concert audience in a narrative.

### *Focus of performer's attention*

The first two poems, spoken without awareness of the audience, call for a focus of attention removed from the auditorium itself.<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that the performer must have closed eyes nor that the house lights must be dimmed to nothing, but that he should achieve what Stanislavski called 'Solitude in Public'.<sup>20</sup> The audience inhabits a space where the fourth wall of the poet's room would be,<sup>21</sup> and naturally the face is turned towards this fourth wall. But the singer's eyes can focus either quite closely on the wall or some object nearer to him, or they can banish the wall altogether and reach out to the distant horizon. Whatever the appropriate point of focus may be, it is essential that the performer maintain and control it, because any unintended deviation will immediately be apparent to a spectator (see chapter two).

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<sup>19</sup> Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, 75.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 82.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 90-1.

If for the purposes of singing a song of Eliot's first type the singer is enjoined not to make eye-contact with the audience, then this emphasises one of the differences between the behaviour expected of a singer of art songs and that expected of a pop singer.<sup>22</sup> In her study of Annie Lennox singing a song of Eliot's first type, Jane Davidson describes some of the singer's actions as 'display', ie showing off to the audience and engaging directly with them in a manner apparently at odds with the meaning of the words being sung. She identifies this with one of the three forms of 'self' exhibited by pop singers – the 'star' self – the others being the communicator of the song text and the intimate self in the public forum.<sup>23</sup> According to normal practice and to the exhortations of teachers and writers (see chapter 2) a recital singer's freedom of action is very limited, certainly much more so than a pop star's, and the performer's ego is expected to be subdued in the service of the poetic and musical personae. Conventional wisdom is superseded, however, when the singer happens to be a famous operatic heavyweight making a concert appearance, and the manner is much more that of the star entertaining adoring fans, with the usual rules governing song recitals probably no longer applicable.<sup>24</sup>

Hugo Wolf had the most impressive and vivid way of reciting poetry, according to his friend Hermann Bahr, and that same vividness was apparent in his settings.<sup>25</sup> One of the reasons for choosing six poems which were set to music by him is therefore the importance he himself attached to faithfulness to the text. Newman states that no other composer had gone so consistently to the heart of a poem as he had, not even Schubert.<sup>26</sup> He goes on to write that the success of Wolf's songs is due to his assimilation of the text and its re-expression in musical terms.<sup>27</sup> Kramer, however, criticises what he calls 'the Wolf legend' articulated by Newman and others, and while agreeing that he chooses high quality poetry and transmutes it into song with 'minimal verbal breakage', he questions the assumption that Lieder should express in musical terms the affect of the poem. He

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<sup>22</sup> Emmons and Sonntag, *The Art of the Song Recital*, 119.

<sup>23</sup> Davidson, Jane. 'The role of the body in the production and perception of solo vocal performance: A case study of Annie Lennox', *Musicae Scientiae* V/2 (2001), 243-249.

<sup>24</sup> Carlo Bergonzi singing 'Non ti scorda di me' in Tokyo, 1986, for example, makes beckoning gestures while he sings his final high note, encouraging the audience to begin applauding. Bergonzi, Carlo. 'Non ti scorda di me' (Ernesto de Curtis), <<http://www.kiraku.tv/category/movie/id/21921/page/2>> February 16 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Newman, Ernest. *Hugo Wolf*, London: Methuen, 1907, 24-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 156-7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 185.



suggests that Wolf uses the music to ‘scrutinise’ the text: the text is the authority and the music conducts an oedipal dialogue with it. He claims that only by scrupulous faithfulness to the text can this dialogue take place without falsification, and the result is ‘unexpected and often unwelcome insight’ into the poem.<sup>28</sup> Glauert also makes the oedipal connection, suggesting that Wolf was torn between his early adulation of Wagner and his overwhelming need to justify his own compositional efforts, and that he solved this dilemma by making a kind of critique of his Wagnerian inheritance.<sup>29</sup>

For Wolf’s song ‘Verborgenheit’, the first of the texts given above, the singer’s focus is all in the mind. He might possibly consider that the persona is actually bathed in sunlight for the third and fourth lines of the second stanza, and if so, it could help him to make the interpretation personal and precise. The second text, ‘Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen’, is all addressed to the beloved, and the singer has to decide whether the persona addresses her directly, in the singer’s mind’s eye, or indirectly, in the singer’s and the persona’s mind’s eye. If this were a scene from opera there would be no such decision to make, because the girl would be physically present and all the singer’s focus would be on her, reinforced by various movements, caresses and so forth. In the recital, addressing the girl without her bodily presence creates the practical problem of whether or not the eyes should be required to focus exclusively on one place throughout the song. Although this may lead to clarity of intention, two minutes of such concentrated focus would take great skill to achieve if the singer’s attitude were not to become rigidly immobile, and might try the patience of the audience. Addressing her indirectly in the time-honoured fashion of the love poem enables a relaxation of this focus, taking it from a single external object and placing it within the mind, which is then free to conjure her picture at will, allowing some bodily flexibility. The skill of the singer here has to lie in transmitting this thought clearly to the audience.

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<sup>28</sup> Kramer, Lawrence. ‘Hugo Wolf: Subjectivity in the Fin-de-Siecle Lied’, in Hallmark, *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, 186-195.

<sup>29</sup> Glauert, Amanda. *Hugo Wolf and the Wagnerian Inheritance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 16.

### *The music clarifies the choice*

For 'In dem Schatten' the singer now has the choice between focussing on the imagined lover at her side or on the audience while referring with glances to the lover. The poem alone leaves this choice open, but if we follow Kramer's proposal and interrogate the music we may find the decision easier to make. Wolf's marking at the top of the song is *Leicht, zart, nicht schnell* – light, delicate, not fast – which is consistent with the intimate nature of the poem. But lines 4 to 7 (Sorglich strahlt ich....zersausen) are marked *forte* in the voice, accompanied in the piano by *mezzo forte, crescendo, forte, sforzando, piano, crescendo, forte* which suggests something other than gentle intimacy: there is passionate involvement. Similarly, lines 11 to 14 have *forte* in the voice and *mezzo forte, crescendo, forte* in the piano, and once again the passions are aroused, indicating something more powerful than a simple reading of the poem might suggest. Bearing in mind that all this takes place within the overall context given by *leicht, zart*, it nonetheless looks as though the girl is directing her feelings outwards to an audience, otherwise she will blast the poor man out of his slumber. Or is that too literal an interpretation of the scene? The *forte* outbursts represent the turmoil in the girl's mind, and should perhaps not be considered to be real in terms of the scene being enacted. The audience is eavesdropping on her 'silent' musings, and the lover can slumber on unaware. Notwithstanding that there may be no single definitive characterisation of this song in the terms discussed above, the singer must decide between the alternatives so as to communicate something precise and consistent to the audience.

The choices for *Anakreons Grab* outlined above are:

1. The persona is speaking to herself, unaware of an audience.
2. She is speaking to an unseen party, unaware of an audience.
3. She is addressing the audience.

Goethe's poem allows for the first and second of these if we read the poem as a genuine question followed by a genuine discovery, and it allows for the second and third if we read it as the words of a guide to a known destination. It is possible that a study of Wolf's setting of the poem may reduce the choices available. Markings of *sehr langsam und ruhig, zart* and *sehr zart* give an indication of the sort of vocal delivery that would be

expected, creating a calm, hushed atmosphere. At ‘geziert’, the end of the question (ex. 1), the voice is *pianissimo*; at ‘Es ist’ it is perhaps *piano*, although the precise level of dynamic here is not specified; and at ‘Anakreons Ruh’ it is *pianissimo* again, resolving onto the subdominant G major on ‘-na’ in second inversion. Here is the point of disclosure when the identity of the grave is discovered, yet it is accompanied by no great touches of revelation. After the voice has posed the question on ‘geziert’ the piano continues with *mezzo forte* dissonance and resolution which reinforce the question, followed by two more in *piano* and *pianissimo*, and there is even a fourth after the G major moment of discovery; moreover the resolution in G major is not completed until the second half of ‘Ruh’. The words which might best describe the mood at the words ‘Anakreons Ruh’ are reverence, calm, inner joy maybe, but nothing approaching surprise or astonishment: the implication is that the protagonist knows what she is about to reveal. The choice for the singer has therefore been reduced to a decision between engaging an unseen third party and addressing the audience, with the first choice of unwitnessed soliloquy being rejected.

Ex. 1. Wolf, *Anakreons Grab*, bars 9-12

10

und ge- ziert? — Es ist A - na - kre-ons Ruh.

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

The issue of concentrated focus encountered in ‘Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen’ does not arise in ‘Anakreons Ruh’ because attention in the latter is continually being drawn to objects round about – roses, vines, graves – and the singer can use the body, especially the eyes and head, to help demonstrate to the audience what is being seen in imagination. Of the two remaining choices for the performer, plainly addressing the audience has the advantage of directness, making the listener part of the process of communication.

### *The song approaches drama*

‘Ich hab in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen’ offers the choice of addressing

1. An unseen third party directly,
2. The audience directly,
3. The male singer who represents the third party, if all or part of the *Italienisches Liederbuch* is being performed.

Given the generally static and serious-minded form which is the song recital, anything which lightens the mood and exercises the audience’s faces with smiles is to be welcomed. The easiest opportunity for achieving this is with the third choice, where some by-play between the singers can be used for dramatic and comic effect, but it could be pedantically argued that this is a staging of the work, and that it falls outside the normal ambit of the song recital. Failing the presence of another singer, the pianist could be used in a similar way to represent the mocked lover, but the same objection might be raised. Of the ‘purer’ choices available, the second, ie direct involvement of the audience, has the same advantage of immediacy which was found for *Anakreons Grab*. But a clever actor-singer would surely be able to convince and amuse the audience by addressing an unseen adversary.

For ‘Abschied’ there can only be one form of address, and that is directly to the audience. This is another song which offers the chance to entertain and amuse, and it is up to the singer to decide how far to take the burlesque while describing the scene. In spite of the usual strictures against the use of gesture in anything but the eyes and face (qv), here is a case where a judicious use of the hands, and even the feet, could enhance the song’s effectiveness.

### *Summary*

This chapter has looked at six poems to try and establish the appropriate modes of address, and though it has explored some of the possibilities it does not pretend to be exhaustive. The intention has been to show how the singer might set about making

suitable choices, thereby helping to clarify the communication of the song. And although the assumption has been that the performer should always identify with the song's persona, in practice there can be circumstances when stepping outside that persona is an engaging and exciting deviation. This is probably more the province of the star singer than the student.

## Chapter four

### The poem's provenance

Reading the text of a song without reference to its origins, the singer will make certain deductions about its meaning from the internal evidence. There will be some circumstances, however, when it is necessary to modify those deductions according to external evidence based upon the text's origins, and there will be other circumstances where those origins can and should be disregarded. This chapter will explore a range of songs to show how the poem's provenance may sometimes be taken into account and sometimes ignored. It will also refer to some songs which, though sharing the same text, can nonetheless be on different sides of this contextual divide.

#### *Preparation of all aspects of performance*

Of the factors which affect the way someone may listen to a song, some will be unrelated to the song itself. Emotional and psychological issues may cloud the judgment; there may be an overriding interest in the appearance or reputation of the singer; the occasion may be an audition or the final of a prize, demanding specific criteria; the venue may be physically uncomfortable or have poor acoustics; and perhaps the singer's voice or the composer's style may simply be uncongenial to the listener. This awkward reality contrasts with the Ideal Listener who pays close attention to every nuance of the song and its performance, who is experienced in every genre of music being performed, and who can judge the standard of what is heard and seen against the very best performances of the past. This Ideal Listener is the notional individual for whom the singer is preparing his or her material in an attempt to become the Ideal Performer creating the Ideal Performance which was postulated in chapter one.

Barzun writes of the 'absolute superiority' of the great professional performer over the amateur. He warns, however, that what he calls 'the sublime professional' is an ideal created from many parts, the scientist's 'limiting case'.<sup>1</sup> The Ideal Performer, extolled by writers on singing over centuries, but as unlikely to exist as the Ideal

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<sup>1</sup> Barzun, Jacques. 'The Indispensable Amateur' (1949), in Barzun, *Critical Questions*, 33.

Listener, has meticulously studied and prepared not only all aspects of vocal production, but also the music and the text and their background; what is more, he understands the motivation of the songs' protagonists. Assuming that this should be the aim of every singer who aspires to be the sublime professional, then he or she takes on a series of roles each of which is expected to convince the listener of its authenticity. The role may seem to be clear from the internal evidence of a poem, but in the context of a song, or when external evidence is explored, the singer may find reason to re-evaluate it in order to avoid misunderstanding.

### *Evaluation and re-evaluation of text*

The fourth song of Britten's *A Charm of Lullabies*, published in 1949, is *A Charm* by Thomas Randolph (1605-1635), from the play *The Jealous Lovers*, of 1632:

Quiet! sleep! or I will make  
 Erinnys whip thee with a snake,  
 And cruel Rhadamanthus take  
 Thy body to the boiling lake,  
 Where fire and brimstone never slake;  
 Thy heart shall burn, thy head shall ache,  
 And ev'ry joint about thee quake;  
 And therefore dare not yet to wake!  
 Quiet, sleep!  
 Quiet, sleep!  
 Quiet!

Quiet! sleep! or thou shalt see  
 The horrid hags of Tartary,  
 Whose tresses ugly serpents be,  
 And Cerberus shall bark at thee,  
 And all the Furies that are three -  
 The worst is called Tisiphone, -  
 Shall lash thee to eternity;  
 And therefore sleep thou peacefully.

Quiet, sleep!

Quiet, sleep!

Quiet!

There is a problem here in reconciling the extraordinarily violent words and the equally violent nature of Britten's setting with the notion that this is a lullaby of sorts. The mother is distracted to the verge of insanity, it would seem, screaming out 'And therefore dare not yet to wake!' and 'And therefore sleep thou peacefully' with a full *fortissimo* and accents on every syllable. No child could possibly sleep through all this, but maybe the parent no longer cares: those who have experienced weeks of sleepless nights coping with a young child might be able to understand something of the frustration being expressed, but surely not to such a violent degree. Nonetheless, perhaps this is the only interpretation based on the internal evidence – the exasperated parent driven to the verge of insanity or homicide. The threats of perdition, however, do seem excessive in this context, since all the names mentioned in the poem are from classical mythology, and they are all associated with the underworld. Erinnys and Tisiphone are Furies, goddesses or spirits of vengeance; Rhadamanthus is a judge who punishes the damned; Cerberus is the three-headed dog which guards the gates of Hades; and Tartary is the region below Hades reserved for the Titans, but later for the souls of the wicked.<sup>2</sup>

If we turn to the original play, it becomes clear that this is not in fact a mother at her wit's end. In Act 4 scene 5 we see that two of the lovers, Tyndarus and Techmessa, have faked their deaths in order to avoid certain complications. Here they climb out of their coffins to make their escape, but are seen by the sexton and his wife, who faint with fright at seeing what they take to be supernatural apparitions. The lovers confer about their best course of action, so that when the witnesses show signs of waking up, they push them into the empty coffins and sing this song. The title 'A Charm' now makes more sense, since it is not a lullaby in the conventional meaning of the term, but a pretended threat as if from two spirits of the dead conjuring curses from Hades. The singer can now enjoy the pantomime of what is in fact a comic scene, and indeed it seems to the present writer to be too bizarre to be performable without reference to its origin.

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<sup>2</sup> Boyse, Samuel. *A New Pantheon*, London: J. Newbery, 1753, 60-63.



*Text removed from its original context*

A song removed from its original context, a play or novel, say, can develop a life of its own which does not necessarily bear any relation to its provenance. The poem 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt' appears in Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre*:

1	Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt Weiss, was ich leide! Allein und abgetrennt Von aller Freude,	Only he who knows longing knows what I suffer. Alone, cut off from all joy,
5	She' ich an's Firmament Nach jener Seite. Ach! der mich liebt und kennt Ist in der Weite. Es schwindelt mir, es brennt	I gaze at the firmament in that direction. Ah, he who loves and knows me is far away. I feel giddy,
10	Mein Eingeweide. Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt Weiss, was ich leide!	my vitals are aflame. Only he who knows longing knows what I suffer.
	J. W. von Goethe	trans. Richard Wigmore <sup>3</sup>

The text of this song is one of eight in the novel, or nine if one includes 'Der Sänger', an earlier poem published in 1783, and interpolated in the text of the novel. The original edition of 1795 (vols I – III) and 1796 (vol IV) had unaccompanied settings by Reichardt interleaved within the text. Subsequently Reichardt published the songs alone with piano accompaniment in 1809, though his duet version of 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt' was replaced by a new song for a single voice. As J. M. Stein has said, his melodies are in line with Goethe's theories concerning the setting of text to music as a 'modest embellishment' to the poem, and as they were published alongside a novel and sung by characters in that novel, they were expected to be appropriate to those characters and their situations.<sup>4</sup>

Wilhelm is one of a company of actors, Mignon a mysterious Italian girl, dressed as a boy of about twelve years old, who had been abducted by a circus troupe and brought across the Alps to Germany. Wilhelm frees her, and she joins his company of

<sup>3</sup> Wigmore, Richard. *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1992, 295.

<sup>4</sup> Stein, Jack. 'Musical Settings of the Songs from Wilhelm Meister', *Comparative Literature* 22/2 (Spring 1970), 126.

players. She is overjoyed when Wilhelm ‘adopts’ her as his son/daughter: at this point in the story she sings the song ‘Kennst du das Land’, an expression of longing for her distant native country, sung with ‘childlike innocence’, though with great expressive fervour.<sup>5</sup> Soon after this, Wilhelm

fell into a reverie, his heart full of ardent longing, and how in harmony with his feelings was the song which at that very moment Mignon and the Harper were singing with profound expression as an irregular duet, ‘Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt’.<sup>6</sup>

Unknown to the protagonists at this point is that Mignon is the blind harper’s daughter by his own sister.

In spite of its original context in the novel as ‘an irregular’ duet, nearly all subsequent settings have treated ‘Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt’ as one of Mignon’s solo songs. The song had therefore already become something other than Goethe originally conceived it, even in the hands of his friends Reichardt, who provided the settings originally interleaved with the text, and Zelter, who made four settings. Whatever form it takes, it has been claimed that ‘Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt’ differs from the other eight *Wilhelm Meister* songs in not being directly personal to the singer(s): neither Mignon nor the Harper has a lover ‘in der Weite’, nor, as far as we know, does Wilhelm. Reed describes it as ‘an expression of that generalised feeling of nostalgia which belonged both to the characters in the story and to the age in which they lived’.<sup>7</sup> This seems a strange claim, given that both Mignon and the Harper have left their families and their native land, and Mignon, whose song this becomes for most composers, was taken against her will from her loving foster-parents. For Mignon again there is a further possible interpretation, which is that the song is an expression of her secret love for her benefactor Wilhelm. He is far from her both in age and in terms of his own feelings, which are akin to those of a loving parent, though indeed she might properly describe him as ‘der mich liebt und kennt’.

Goethe required that the poem be set and performed in a manner suitable to the character of the singer(s). This requirement may have been justified in its original context, but once it had left the confines of the novel, a composer would be free to interpret the poetry as he wished, for he ‘cannot allow his music to depend on purely

<sup>5</sup> Fox Strangways, Arthur. ‘The Songs in Wilhelm Meister’, *Music & Letters* 23/4 (Oct. 1942), 294.

<sup>6</sup> Goethe, Johann von. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795), quoted in Einstein, Alfred. *Schubert*, trans. David Ascoli (1951), London: Granada Publishing, 1971, 301.

<sup>7</sup> Reed, John. *The Schubert Song Companion* (1985), Manchester: Mandolin, 1997, 347.

external points' such as being suitable to 'the character of the young Italian child', in spite of Goethe's wishes in the matter.<sup>8</sup> 'The poem is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it'.<sup>9</sup> By the time Schubert composed his first settings in 1815, Goethe had made several alterations to the *Wilhelm Meister* poems and published them in his collected lyrics. They were now wholly detached from the novel and could legitimately be considered outside that context.

This statement would surely be true of a poem like 'Erlkönig', for example, which stands alone as a gripping ballad, in spite of what Goethe may originally have intended for the poem (see below). However, a song such as Mignon's 'So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde' decidedly requires a context. Here she is clad in a white dress to play the part of an angel, a girl who up to now has always dressed as a boy. She knows that she will soon die, when she will become an angel for ever. Without this gloss it would be hard to interpret the first two lines: 'So lasst mich scheinen, bis ich werde, zieht mir das weisse Kleid nicht aus!' (Thus let me seem till thus I become. Do not take off my white dress). Mignon's 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt' lies somewhere between these two examples, and a singer unfamiliar with *Wilhelm Meister* would not find it too difficult to provide an imaginative context for the song: indeed, she must do so in order to create an effective performance.

### Erlkönig – *development away from its origins*

Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?  
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind;  
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,  
Er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.

Who rides so late through night and wind?  
It is the father with his child.  
He has the boy in his arms,  
He holds him safely, he keeps him warm.

"Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?"  
"Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?  
Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif?"  
"Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif."

"My son, why do you hide your face in fear?"  
"Father, can you not see the Erlking?  
The Erlking with his crown and tail?"  
"My son, it is a streak of mist."

"Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir!  
Gar schöne Spiele spiel ich mit dir;

"Sweet child, come with me,  
I'll play wonderful games with you;

<sup>8</sup> Walker, Ernest. 'Goethe and some composers', *the Musical Times*, 73 (June 1 1932), 501.

<sup>9</sup> Wimsatt, William. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (1954), London: Methuen, 1970, 5.

Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,  
Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand."

Many a pretty flower grows on the shore,  
My mother has many a golden robe."

"Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,  
Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht?"

"Father, father, do you not hear  
What the Erlking softly promises me?"

"Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind:  
In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind."

"Calm, be calm, my child:  
The wind is rustling in the withered leaves."

"Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn?  
Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön;  
Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn  
Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein."

"Won't you come with me, my fine lad?  
My daughters shall wait upon you;  
My daughters lead the nightly dance,  
And will rock, and dance, and sing you to sleep."

"Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort  
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort?"

"Father, father, can you not see  
Erlking's daughters there in the darkness?"

"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:  
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau."

"My son, I can see clearly:  
It is the old grey willows gleaming."

"Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;  
Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt."

"I love you, your fair form allures me,  
And if you don't come willingly, I'll use force."

"Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt fasst er mich an!  
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!"

"Father, father, now he's seizing me!  
The Erlking has hurt me!"

Dem Vater grauset, er reitet geschwind,  
Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind,  
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not:  
In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.

The father shudders, he rides swiftly,  
Holding the moaning child in his arms;  
With one last effort he reaches home;  
The child lay dead in his arms.

J. W. von Goethe

trans. Richard Wigmore<sup>10</sup>

Goethe's play of 1782, *Die Fischerin*, contains the song 'Erlkönig', a poem which has inspired 131 settings, according to Düring<sup>11</sup>. Dortchen sings the song artlessly while sitting mending her nets, waiting for a young man. She finishes the song and says: "I've sung all my songs through twice now, and it looks as though I'll have to start all over again." The actress/singer who created the role, Corona Schröter, also wrote the original song, published in 1782 (ex. 1), a very simple eight-bar strophic ditty for mending nets to, with nothing of the drama of the poem in evidence except for what is implied in the marking of the published song – *Etwas langsam und abenteuerlich* –

<sup>10</sup> Wigmore, *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts*, 205-6.

<sup>11</sup> Düring, Werner-Joachim. *Erlkönig-Vertonungen: Eine historische und systematische Untersuchung*, Regensburg: G. Bosse, 1977, 1.

'fairly slow and mysterious'. The dynamic markings, given that they remain the same for each verse, cannot be seen as contributing to any variation in affect.<sup>12</sup>

Ex. 1. Schröter, 'Erlkönig', 1<sup>st</sup> strophe.

*Etwas langsam und abenteuerlich*

Wer reit' so spät durch Nacht\_ und Wind? Es ist der Va - ter mit sei - nem Kind; Er

hat\_ den Kna - ben wohl in\_ dem Arm, er fasst\_ ihn si - cher, er hält\_ ihn warm.

A singer who tried to re-create Schröter's song without understanding the original context would be puzzled at this apparent lack of any grasp of the story's dramatic drive, and an attempt to graft too emotional an interpretation of these powerful words on to this simple setting would be a travesty.

After publication of the poem in *Schriften* (1789), from Reichardt and Zelter onwards, it is the story of the ballad which takes the stage, creating a more or less dramatic *scena* according to the intentions of the composer. Here the travesty would be to treat the song as if it were being sung automatically and artlessly by a young girl at her nets, and now the debate about protagonists' biographies shifts from the situation of the original singer to the complex interplay between the characters in the song – narrator, father, child and Erlking – and the extent to which the song-setting justifies dramatic treatment. Reichardt's setting of 1793, marked *Sehr lebhaft und schauerlich* (ex. 2a) – 'very lively and gruesome' – while being very simple in concept, nonetheless requires some dramatic interpretation.<sup>13</sup> Stanzas 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 are all set to the same music,

<sup>12</sup> Friedländer, Max, ed. *Gedichte von Goethe in Compositionen seiner Zeitgenossen*, Weimar: Verlag der Goethe-Gesellschaft, 1896, 64.

<sup>13</sup> Friedländer, *Gedichte von Goethe*, 64-7.

marked *forte* or *piano* according to whether the father or the child sings, with the narrator's final stanza also *piano*.

Ex. 2. Reichardt, 'Erlkönig'.

(a) bars 1-17.

1 *Sehr lebhaft und schauerlich*

*p* *mf*

Wer rei - tet so spät durch Nacht und Wind? Es ist der Va - ter mit sei - nem Kind. Er

*p* *mf*

10

hat den Kna - ben wohl in dem Arm, er fasst ihn si - cher, er hält ihn warm.

(b) bars 33-49.

33 *pp*

"Du lie - bes Kind, komm, geh mit mir, gar schö - ne Spie - le spiel'ich mit dir. Manch

*pp*

col 8va

42

bun - te Blu - men sind an dem Strand, mei - ne Mut - ter hat manch gül - den Ge - wänd."

Stanzas 3, 5 and the first half of 7, marked *pianissimo*, belong to the Erlking, and are set to a monotone (ex. 2b). The intimate quality of this whispered invitation and threat can

have a dramatic effect in spite of the simplicity of means. The child's *fortissimo* cry, 'Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt fasst er mich an!' (bars 105-9) produces a powerful contrast. This is followed by a final stanza from the narrator in an unmodified *piano*, shocking in its matter-of-fact baldness, as if challenging the listener to say that he expected anything other than the story's tragic dénouement. Though this song has, as it were, escaped the strict boundary of Goethe's original concept, it nonetheless requires of the performer careful thought as to how far he should go in dramatising it beyond the rather bare bones of Reichardt's score.

Zelter's setting, '1797 begonnen, 1807 beendet' takes the dramatic development a stage further, and provides the singer with more detailed instruction.<sup>14</sup> As with Reichardt's song, stanzas 1, 2, 4 and 6 are essentially identical to each other, but there are key words at certain points to suggest the several characters' feelings: in the second stanza (ex. 3a), there is *besorgt* (apprehensive) for the father and *ängstlich* (anxious) for the son. The dynamics are more varied than in the Reichardt, and play a greater part in the indication of affect.

### Ex. 3. Zelter, 'Erlkönig'.

(a) bars 10-18.

10 *poco f, besorgt* *> più f, ängstlich*

Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht? Siehst Vater, du den Erl-könig nicht? den

15 *dolce*

Er - len - kö - nig mit Kron' und Schweif? Mein Sohn, es ist ein Ne - bel - streif.

<sup>14</sup> Friedländer, *Gedichte von Goethe*, 72-5.

## (b) bars 20-28.

20 *pp*

"Du lie - bes Kind, komm, geh' mit mir! gar schön - ne Spie - le spiel' ich mit dir, manch

25  
bun - te Blu - men sind an dem Strand, mei - ne Mut - ter hat manch gül - den Ge - wand."

## (c) bars 56-80.

56 *cresc*

"Ich lie - be dich, mich reizt dei - ne schön - ne Ge - stalt, und bist du nicht wil - lig, so

60 *anwachsend*

brauch ich Ge - walt." Mein Va - ter, mein Va - ter, jetzt fasst er mich an!

63 *bis* *zum* *Schrei* *Adagio morendo* *pp*

Erl - kö - nig hat mir ein Leids — ge - tan! Dem Va - ter grau - set's, er rei - tet ge - schwind, er



69

hält in Ar-men das äch-zen-de Kind, er-reicht den Hof mit Mü-he und Not, in sei-nen Ar-men das

74

Kind war todt.

77

The Erlking's stanzas 3 and 5 are, like Reichardt's, identical and marked *pianissimo*, though now on a steadily rising scale, suggestive of an increasing intensity (ex. 3b). Furthermore, they are accompanied by a more dissonant harmony which eventually resolves to the dominant A major.

The final two stanzas depart more radically from the pattern: stanza 7 (ex. 3c) has rhythmic elaboration in the lower voice of the right hand; a swift crescendo to the end of the Erlking's threat, increasing the intensity by rising to the flattened third of the subdominant; then the child's extended and rising outburst, which has the instruction *anwachsend bis zum Schrei* – 'growing to a cry/scream' – suggesting that the performer might ignore the normal rules of *bel canto* singing and make a frankly disagreeable sound; finally stanza 8 returns to *pianissimo* without any other indicated nuance, returns to G minor tonality, slower tempo and hesitant rhythm. The fortepiano completes the song, still *pianissimo*, with a dirge-like bass melisma.

Loewe's 1818 setting of the poem, published in 1824, gives the piano accompaniment far greater prominence.<sup>15</sup> There is a dramatic doubling in the bass and subsequent extension of the vocal line at the opening (ex. 4).

Ex. 4. Loewe, 'Erlkönig', bars 3-6.

3 *mp cresc* Wer rei-tet so spät durch Nacht und Wind? *f* Es ist der Va-ter mit sei-nem

*cresc* *f* *mf*

A sense of urgency is created by the omnipresent tremolo semiquavers (ex. 5), which also suggest the wind in the 'withered leaves', while the galloping horse is heard in the left hand.

Ex. 5. Loewe, 'Erlkönig', bars 44-48.

44 *p* Wind, in dür-ren Blät-tern säu-selt der Wind.\* *tremolo*

*p* *pp una corda*

*Ped.*

The strident dissonance in bar 47 suggests the evil, threatening quality of the Erlking's whispered invitation. By the time the father realises how sick the boy truly is (ex. 6), the horse's hooves positively thunder.

<sup>15</sup> Loewe, Carl. *Balladen und Lieder, Band I*, Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1940, 50-56.

Ex. 6. Loewe, 'Erlkönig', bars 80-83.

80

hat mir ein Leids ge - tan. Dem Va - ter grau - set's, er rei - tet ge

*ff*

From its first appearance in 1782 to its embodiment in Loewe's song of 1818, the simple song of the fisher-girl has been transformed by stages into a brilliant dramatic scena.

### *More songs out of context*

Goethe's *Faust* has Gretchen in her room singing 'Der König in Thule'. She feels that something is amiss – Faust and Mephistopheles have just been in the room without her knowledge – and she sings to comfort herself. The song is one she knows well, and she sings it 'negligently and somewhat mechanically'<sup>16</sup>, and though it has no direct applicability to the play's action, her intuition has coupled the handsome stranger with this tale of faithfulness unto death. Zelter's setting of the song, used by Goethe in performance, is measured and archaic in style, satisfying in its simplicity and comforting to a perplexed or agitated singer. With this song Goethe gives his hearers a clue to the workings of Gretchen's mind and to the likely direction of the play's narrative, but she herself is not consciously aware of its relevance to her feelings. As with 'Erlkönig', however, once the song has left its original context, it can receive a more engaged and less negligent performance – a performance which in another context Gretchen might be expected to give.

Eichendorff's novel *Ahnung und Gegenwart* was the original source of four of the poems used by Schumann in his 12 song *Liederkreis* opus 39, but the edition Schumann used was not the novel itself but the *Gedichte* of 1837. All the poems in this edition are given titles and collected under seven group headings whereas the poems as they appear in the novel are untitled. 'Waldesgespräch' appears in the novel as a duet between Count Leontin and the disguised Countess Romana: in *Gedichte* it comes in the seventh group,

<sup>16</sup> Stein, Jack. *Poem and Music in the German Lied from Gluck to Hugo Wolf*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971, 44.

*Romanzen*. 'Die Stille' is sung by the young Erwine disguised as a boy, who secretly loves Count Friedrich: in *Gedichte* it comes under the general heading of *Frühling und Liebe*. Schumann may or may not have known the novel and the context of these words, but the focus of the songs in this opus is not the Count and Countess, nor Erwine, but Clara Wieck and his love for her. Once again the connection with the original work has been cut, and there is nothing in their titles to remind us of that origin. Indeed, it could be said that the original context of the song is Robert and Clara's relationship.

The *Don Quichotte* songs of Ravel and Ibert, both written for Pabst's 1932 film of that title<sup>17</sup>, seem *prima facie* to require an understanding of the protagonist's character, since it is the Don who sings, and the performer must know what manner of man he is. He is ludicrously romantic and ridiculously self-deluded, and his references to Sancho Panza and Dulcinea in 'Chanson Romanesque' would be meaningless in the mouth of a performer who does not have some idea of his biography.

Mention of a character's name in the text of a song draws the listener's attention to what may be external to the essence of the poem, and compels the performer to research the song's provenance and in some way to inform the listener, either with programme notes or a spoken introduction. Purcell's 'Music for a while' contains the name Alecto – 'till Alecto free the dead' – but she is not a protagonist as such, rather a mythical being whose name an educated listener of Purcell's time would be expected to recognise.<sup>18</sup> In this case it is not so much the provenance of the song which is required, as an explanation to a modern audience whose knowledge of the Classics is likely to be rudimentary at best. By contrast the name Zempoalla from Purcell's 'You twice ten hundred Deities' is central to the understanding of this song.<sup>19</sup> She is the Indian Queen of the semi-opera of that name, and Ismeron, the high priest who sings the song, is conjuring the spirits to interpret her dream: without that background the song is merely interesting word-painting.

Purcell's 'Let the dreadful engines of eternal will', from D'Urfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote* of 1694, is sung by Cardenio, a character driven mad by the belief that his beloved Lucinda has fallen for his friend Fernando. His is a madness of real heartbreak, contrasting with the self-conscious zeal of the Don himself for Dulcinea, though it does not prevent him from acting rationally later in the play. Purcell's

<sup>17</sup> Only the Ibert songs were used for the film.

<sup>18</sup> Purcell, Henry. *Orpheus Britannicus*, London: 1721.

<sup>19</sup> Purcell, Henry. *The Indian Queen* (1695), London: Novello, 1912, 49-54.

characteristic hallmarks of portraying insanity are heard throughout the song, with extreme and sudden changes of affect, and occasional bursts of high tessitura. Price suggests that, like Lear, he is tormented by the knowledge of his own insanity.<sup>20</sup> He has not, however, lost his wits to the same extent as Bess of Bedlam (qv). Roberts states that ‘for all its power, the song’s comic context should not be overlooked in performance’, yet when the comic context is no longer there, *ie* when it is divorced from the play that once contained it, suggestions of comedy are likely to be met with incomprehension by the listener unless there is some detailed explanation of the original plot.<sup>21</sup> It could be argued that this is simply what was being advocated for ‘A Charm’ (qv), and that consistency would require something similar for ‘Let the dreadful engines’. The Purcell song, however, is easily understandable from the internal evidence as an expression of love-sick madness, whereas the Britten is incomprehensible without such an explanation.

In novels or in dramatic productions the protagonists already possess certain characteristics which it is the duty of the reader or the actor to divine and reproduce. It is once the text has left its original literary or theatrical setting that either a new context must be discovered, as with Schumann’s op. 39 above, or the singer’s imagination must provide a biography for the character which serves both the text and the music.

### *Shakespeare’s texts*

Of the incalculable number of compositions which must have been created for productions of Shakespeare plays over four centuries, very few are in the mainstream of the repertoire of English art song, Tippett’s *Songs for Ariel*, written for the Old Vic in 1962, being exceptional in this regard. Otherwise, Shakespeare’s lyrics have been used time and again by composers who had no particular interest in their original context, or knowledge of the traditional broadside ballads to which they often refer.<sup>22</sup>

In *Much Ado about Nothing* Balthazar sings ‘Sigh no more, ladies’, a song about the inconstancy of men sung to the Prince and Claudio. He claims beforehand to be a bad singer – ‘O! good my lord, tax not so bad a voice/To slander music any more than once’ – and since the actor who sang it, John Wilson, was a professional singer and composer,

<sup>20</sup> Price, Curtis. *Henry Purcell and the London Stage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 211.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts, Timothy. *Thirteen Mad Songs*, vol. 1, London: Voicebox, 1999, 41.

<sup>22</sup> For an exhaustive study of the provenance of the songs and snatches of song to be found in Shakespeare’s plays, see Duffin, Ross. *Shakespeare’s Songbook*, New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2004.

it might be presumed that he would make a deliberately uncouth sound to be true to the character. If a stage production were to have Balthazar sing beautifully, the song would possess a comic irony and/or additional aspects of false modesty and fishing for compliments, which would have to be accounted for in the production in some way. Yet without the play's context, or without some detailed explanation of the singer's motives in a recital, it is bizarre to imagine a performer intentionally producing an ugly sound for the exquisitely cultured settings by Quilter or Warlock.

With the plays, it is not usually the singer's character which is the central issue, but the character or situation of the person for whom the song is being sung. In *Measure for Measure* 'a boy' sings 'Take, O take those lips away' to the lovelorn Mariana. In *Much Ado about Nothing* (qv), Balthazar apparently sings 'Sigh no more, ladies' to the prince, but is indirectly singing for the benefit of Benedick whom he knows to be hiding behind the arbour. In *As you Like it* two Pages sing 'It was a lover and his lass', relevant to Touchstone and Audrey's coming marriage. The three most striking exceptions to this detachment of the performer from the personal nature of the song's message, are Ophelia, Desdemona and Ariel.

Ariel in *The Tempest* gives us the Shakespeare character perhaps most closely associated with his songs: he is a spirit, and since song is part of his natural means of communication, his songs are part of the plot of the play. Songs from other plays may be relevant to the plot, but they are not integral to it as these are. 'Come unto these yellow sands' is a call to his fellow spirits to dance and sing, and thereby he both shows Ferdinand the island's enchantment and leads him and his followers on. 'Full fathom five' convinces Ferdinand that his father Alonso has drowned in the shipwreck. His 'While you here do snoring lie' warns Gonzalo of danger, and 'Where the bee sucks' is his celebration of impending freedom. This connection with the plot makes it unlikely that a singer would create a successful performance of these songs without knowing who Ariel is, or at least, in the first and fourth songs, that he is a spirit.

Another song sung anonymously by 'musicians', is one, and it is the only one, that refers to a character by name – Silvia. 'Who is Silvia' from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* extols her qualities to Proteus, who imagines himself in love with her though in fact he really loves Julia, and Julia witnesses the singing in the guise of a boy. Such plot-convolutions may be perfectly comprehensible in the play, but a performance without reference to that context has no chance of conveying all these subtleties (cf. Britten's 'A

Charm'). Performers, and composers too, no doubt, seem content to recreate a charming ditty without great reflection.

The text of Haydn's 'She never told her love', from *Twelfth-Night* is unusual in that it is not a poem but a selection of blank verse:

'A blank, my lord. *She never told her love,  
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek: she pin'd in thought,  
And with a green and yellow melancholy,  
She sat like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?*'<sup>23</sup>

Here is a text apt for either male or female to sing, requiring an imaginative identification from the performer which should not present too many problems for interpretation: it is the tale of a girl languishing for love. In the play this is spoken by Viola, dressed as a boy, to the Duke, and though it is set in the third person, it is in fact a declaration of her love for the Duke himself. Now it becomes clear that these words should in fact be sung by a woman, and that the identification with the tale is personal. Furthermore, Anne Hunter chose them for Haydn so set, and her own feelings for the composer may be inferred from this text. A performer with this knowledge has the opportunity to create a more affecting and poignant song, while a listener with this knowledge has the opportunity to feel it more deeply.

Many of the lyrics found in Shakespeare's plays imitate a folksong or ballad style: 'Under the greenwood tree' and 'It was a lover and his lass' from *As you Like it* are two such; 'Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day' from *Hamlet* is another. 'Come away, come away, death' from *Twelfth-Night* is introduced by the Duke as an old ballad:

'O fellow! Come, the song we had last night.  
Mark it, Cesario; it is old and plain;  
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,  
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,  
Do use to chant it: it is silly sooth....'<sup>24</sup>

Desdemona's Willow Song, 'The poor soul sat sighing', is a genuine folk ballad which occurs in several forms, the earliest surviving being from Thomas Proctor's *A Gorgious*

<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth-Night*, Act 2, scene 4, lines 112-7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* Act 2, scene 1, lines 42-6.

[sic] *Gallery of Gallant Inventions* of 1578.<sup>25</sup> Aside from Ariel's, Desdemona's and Ophelia's songs, Shakespeare uses songs to point a moral, to entertain, or simply to pass the time, and like Dortchen's 'Erlkönig' they may have words of great drama or emotion, and yet be treated by the play's singer as things of little or no consequence.

### *Two settings of one of Ophelia's songs*

The development of settings of Goethe's 'Erlkönig' from Reichardt to Loewe showed a consistent interpretation of the roles of the songs' protagonists; Schröter's setting must be passed over here because it does not attempt an interpretation of the story in musical terms. Two settings of the same text which show very different interpretations are the Strauss and Maconchy versions of 'How should I your true love know',<sup>26</sup> one based on the immediate drama of the play, the other based on the song's original ballad context. Elizabeth Maconchy gives her setting the title 'Ophelia's Song' (ex. 7).<sup>27</sup>

The Dorian mode of this song is perhaps a device used in homage to her teacher, Vaughan Williams, and it does not shift from its opening affect of dignified grief – the genuine heartfelt quality offers no hint of madness. Had Maconchy avoided mention of Ophelia, the idea of madness would surely not occur to performer or listener, and at first sight it seems perverse to belie the known character of Ophelia with a setting so much at odds with it. Yet it may be telling that she avoids Shakespeare's name and describes these as 'Traditional words, taken from Hamlet', the implication being that although this text may have been sung by the mad Ophelia, it already existed as a text in its own right, that is, the medieval Walsingham Ballad.<sup>28</sup> Chapman writes that a woman making her pilgrimage, as in this ballad, showed a degree of independence which contrasted with her sisters from later historical times. She also argues that this is one of many references in the play to the contemporary struggle between Catholics and Protestants.<sup>29</sup> The

<sup>25</sup> Simpson, Claude. *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1966, 788-91.

<sup>26</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 4, scene 5, lines 23-6, 29-32, 36, 38-40.

<sup>27</sup> Maconchy, Elizabeth. *Ophelia's Song*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965, 2.

<sup>28</sup> There are various versions of the ballad, the first verse of which is quoted by Old Merrythought in Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1613) Act II, lines 481-4: 'As you came from Walsingham,/From that holy land,/There met you not with my true love./By the way as you came?' Ophelia starts with the first two lines of the second verse, but then deviates from the original by describing the garments of a pilgrim, the 'cockle-hat and shoon'. The full text appears in Child, Francis, ed. *English and Scottish Ballads*, vol. 4, Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1857, 191-4.

<sup>29</sup> Chapman, Alison. 'Ophelia's "Old lauds": Madness and hagiography in Hamlet', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 20 (2007), 111-135.



independence which she describes is given a darker edge by Child, who comments that: 'pilgrimages undertaken on pretence of religion were often productive of affairs of gallantry, and led the votaries to no other shrine than that of Venus'.<sup>30</sup> The implication is that the potent mix of religion and sex has combined with Hamlet's treatment of her to unhinge Ophelia's mind.

Ex. 7. Maconchy, *Ophelia's Song*, bars 1-14.

*Moderato*

How should I your true-love know From an-o-ther one? —

By his coc-kle hat and staff, And his san-dal shoon, — And his san-dal shoon. —

Though it is only the first two lines of the song which are 'traditional words', the rest being Shakespeare's, the salient point with Maconchy's setting is that she treats this as a folk text. It may indeed be sung by a certain character in a play, but here it has been reclaimed and reinstated as a ballad. By contrast, the first three songs from Richard Strauss' *Sechs Lieder* op. 67 of 1918, entitled *Lieder der Ophelia* (Songs of Ophelia), are written in a style which clearly indicates derangement of some kind, and in a reference to operatic convention, perhaps emphasising the fact that the song is from a stage work, he has the superscript 'Ophelia (im Wahnsinn)' – Ophelia (in madness) – at her first entry.<sup>31</sup> There is none of the lushness of most of his Lieder settings, but a strange wandering chromaticism: during the course of her first two phrases the singer has eleven of the twelve notes of the scale.

<sup>30</sup> Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*, vol. 4, 194.

<sup>31</sup> Strauss, Richard. *Lieder – Complete Edition*, vol. 2, London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1985, 63.

Ex. 8. Strauss, *Wie erkenn ich mein Treulieb vor andern nun?* bars 1-25.

*Leicht bewegt* *Ophelia (im Wahnsinn)*

Wie - er - kenn ich mein Treu - lieb vor

8  
an - dern nun? An dem Mu - schel - hut und

13  
Stab und den San - dal - schuhn. Er ist

19  
tot und lan - ge hin, tot und hin, Fräu - lein! Ihm zu

*p* *p* *mf* *pp* *sfr* *sfr* *sfr* *sfr*

The obsessive, claustrophobic nature of this music challenges the singer to understand Ophelia's role and why she should have chosen to sing these words.

*The interpretation of folksong*

Ophelia's half-remembered version of the Walsingham Ballad raises the issue of the performance of folksong in the context of a song recital. As an example of the type, we shall consider the fourth song of Ravel's *Cinq Mélodies Populaires Grecques*, entitled 'Chanson des Cueilleuses de Lentisques' (Song of the Mastic Gatherers),<sup>32</sup> which has a haunting melody and a passionate text, with perhaps an ironic twist at the end:

O joy of my soul, joy of my heart,  
 treasure so dear to me;  
 joy of the soul, and of the heart,  
 you whom I ardently love,  
 you are more beautiful than an angel.  
 O when you appear, angel so sweet,  
 Before our eyes,  
 Like a lovely, blond angel  
 Under the bright sun,  
 Alas, all our poor hearts sigh! (trans. Winifred Radford)<sup>33</sup>

But Pierre Bernac writes: '[it] should be sung with no particular expression, as if sung by women at their work'.<sup>34</sup> He wanted the passion in the text to be set aside in favour of a kind of negligent recitation, artless and unsentimental (cf Goethe's *Die Fischerin*). The singer is helped in this by a very simple melody with a compass of only a fifth, repeated three times with small variations of pitch and duration.

The first song of the set, 'Chanson de la Mariée' (The Awakening of the Bride)<sup>35</sup> has another passionate text:

Wake up, dear partridge,  
 open your wings in the morning.  
 Three beauty spots  
 have set my heart aflame.  
 See the gold ribbon that I bring you  
 to tie around your hair.

<sup>32</sup> Ravel, Maurice. *Cinq Mélodies Populaires Grecques*, Paris: Durand et Cie., 1909, 10-12.

<sup>33</sup> Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song*, 262.

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

<sup>35</sup> Ravel, *Cinq Mélodies Populaires Grecques*, 1-5.

If you wish, my beauty, come let us be married!

In our two families we are all related. (trans. Winifred Radford)<sup>36</sup>

Bernac once more emphasises the folk derivation of the song, writing that ‘over-refined vocal effects are obviously out of place’, but this time he calls for ‘cheerfulness and virile pride’.<sup>37</sup> The origin of these songs is clearly of such central importance to Bernac’s interpretation that without knowledge of that origin a listener might well be baffled, particularly in ‘Chanson des Cueilleuses de Lentisques’, that such passion was being ignored by the performer. The title of the song, and more especially the title of the set – *Five Greek Folksongs* – is part of the evidence that the singer is not simply failing to perform appropriately.

Some of the interest attached to the folksong arrangements made by Percy Grainger centres on his own instructions concerning their performance. Typically they were published in various different formats, either with piano accompaniment or orchestra or small instrumental ensemble. The ensemble for ‘Bold William Taylor’, for example, has clarinets, strings, and either harmonium, reed-organ, concertina or accordion; in his introduction to the song he writes that these instruments ‘conjure up some suggestions of countryfied [sic] sounds’<sup>38</sup>. Grainger’s philosophy for arrangements such as this was to recreate as much as possible of the original performance as he had heard and recorded it, preserving the diction, the melodic and dynamic ebb and flow, and the melodic variations between each verse as faithfully as he could. The resulting scores can be difficult for a musician to interpret, certainly one trained in standard European Art-singing, in that almost every note has its own set of instructions for dynamic and attack, and every syllable has its strange dialect sound.<sup>39</sup> Grainger himself bemoaned the inadequacies of conventional notation to convey the flexible nature of the rhythm as originally recorded, and described the outcome as having a ‘regrettably disturbing picture to the eye’ (ex. 9).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song*, 260.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Grainger, Percy. Introduction to ‘Bold William Taylor’, *British Folk-music Settings* nr. 43, 1952.

<sup>39</sup> In 1906, after a concert in the Aeolian Hall, London, where Grainger had accompanied the famous tenor Gervase Elwes in several of his folksong arrangements, the *Guardian* said that: ‘He [Elwes] was an ideal interpreter, and that in two of them he used his native Lincolnshire dialect with irresistibly humorous effect.’ Elwes, Winefride and Richard Elwes. *Gervase Elwes – the story of his life*, London: Grayson & Grayson, 1935, 166. Performers without that knowledge of the dialect sounds are at a disadvantage.

<sup>40</sup> Preface to a selection of songs published in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society*, May 1908. Cited in Bird, John. *Percy Grainger*, London: P. Elek, 1976, 112.

Ex. 9. Grainger, 'Bold William Taylor', vocal line, bars 1-10.<sup>41</sup>

1 *pp* ————— *p*

I'll sing you a song a - bōut two lō - vers, O from Lich-feed-deld

6 *slight* ————— *3*

tōwn thā cāme; O the yōung mǎn's nāme was

8 *3* *sf*

Will - yum Tāy - lor, the mā - a - den's nāme was Sal - ly Grāy.

The score of 'Bold William Taylor' also has Grainger's quirky indications of mood: verses 3 and 4 have 'frolicsomenly', followed by 'boldly' in line 3; halfway through verse 6 there is 'clingingly' and 'plaintively', and 'still more plaintively'; verses 7 and 8 both start with 'feelinglessly', and verse 8 later has 'brightly, crisply'. The performer is likely to assume that these mood markings give more information about trying to recreate the original performance, especially when coupled with Grainger's statement that 'the interest taken by folksingers in the stories related in their songs shows how alive their minds are to the narrative element'<sup>42</sup>. Listening to copies of some of the original cylinder recordings made by Grainger himself of these old singers in 1906, and the disc recordings made two years later, suggests that he was exaggerating the dynamic contrasts actually present. The performances on these recordings possess much more of his description of George Gouldthorpe's singing: 'He gave out his tunes in all possible gauntness and plainness, for the most part in broad even notes.'<sup>43</sup> A L Lloyd, the eminent folklorist, and an admirer of Grainger's style of folk-song arrangement, suggests that expression was conveyed by the traditional singers not by grand, sweeping gesture, but by tiny nuances of tone, rhythmic alteration and ornament.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis for the modern performer should perhaps be on the 'tiny'.

For the academy-trained singer, much the most telling of Grainger's comments is this: 'The greatest crime against folksong is to "middle-class" it – to sing it with a "white collar" voice production and "other townified suggestions"'<sup>45</sup>. Given that the majority of those who would sing his folksong arrangements, either with instruments or with his

<sup>41</sup> Grainger, 'Bold William Taylor', no pagination.

<sup>42</sup> Grainger, introduction to 'Bold William Taylor'.

<sup>43</sup> Grainger, Percy. Introduction to 'Six Dukes went Afishin'', *British folk-music Settings* nr. 11, 1913. The direction at the start of the song is: 'Very simply and with a childlike unconscious pathos.'

<sup>44</sup> Lloyd, Albert. *Folk Song in England*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1967, 83.

<sup>45</sup> Grainger, introduction to 'Bold William Taylor'.

often challenging piano accompaniments, would themselves be ‘towniefied’ and trained in ‘white collar’ voice production, it seems as though Grainger was doomed to failure from the start if he truly wished to recreate something rather than make something new. A closer approximation to the spirit of the original performances would dispense with complex instructions about dynamic and mood, and take on the artless, almost negligent style proper to Schröter’s ‘Erlkönig’ or Ravel’s ‘Chanson des Cueilleuses de Lentisques’.

### *Summary*

Knowledge of a poem’s provenance may or may not be necessary depending upon the circumstances of its setting. It is crucial to understanding Britten’s ‘A Charm’ and Schröter’s ‘Erlkönig’, for example, but for later ‘Erlkönigs’ it would be a distraction. Most interpretations of Shakespeare’s song lyrics have little or nothing to do with the plays in which they appear, and they make perfect sense outside their original context: but there are exceptions, such as the songs of Ophelia in *Hamlet*. Folksong arrangements, though sometimes requiring Grainger’s ‘artless’ performance, often approach the style of Art song, in which case a more sophisticated manner of performance is indicated.

## Chapter five

### Meaning

The meaning referred to in this chapter has as its starting point the understanding of words in their denotative and connotative aspects. Other signifiers, such as visual signs, the emotional significance of vocal sound or the insights of musical analysis have been touched upon in chapters one and two. Detailed dissection of the meaning of poetry and song is clearly the province of semiotics, and Jakobson's chapter in Sebeok's *Style in Language*<sup>1</sup> and Monelle's *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*<sup>2</sup> provide useful introductions to semiotic science. But they also show that, just as the musical analysis attempted in this thesis has been that of a performer and not a musicologist, the wisest course for a non-semiotician is to provide something nearer to a layman's view of the subject.

A song may be open to a range of interpretative options, but it is a narrower range than that of the original poem since the composer has laid his own interpretation upon it. This chapter will show how meanings can be modified by their musical settings, and gives two examples where the composer's chosen interpretation challenges a straightforward first reading. It also gives examples of difficult texts whose original meaning is obscure, and which can be a problem for both the performer and the listener.

#### *Nuance of language*

Faithfulness to the text and the music are central to the idea of good performance, articulated here by Stein and Spillman:

The essence of song, especially of the Romantic *Lied*, is an equality of music and text, a synthesis of a new art form out of two disparate media. Those who fail to understand the meaning of the poem fail, as well, to understand the meaning of the music that sets it. Indeed, performers who

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<sup>1</sup> Jakobson, Roman. 'Linguistics and Poetics', in Sebeok, Thomas, ed. *Style in Language*, Cambridge MA: Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960, 350-377.

<sup>2</sup> Monelle, Raymond. *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*, Schur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992.

have not thoroughly studied the poetry cannot sing or play the *Lied* with the focus, the imagination, and the vitality that is essential for both the musicians and their audience.<sup>3</sup>

The performer's intention has in part to be guided by a precise notion of the text's meaning. Although this is easy to state, and something like it has appeared in nearly every treatise on singing, it can be far from easy to realise in practice.

Language is never precise, always nuanced: even a word as simple as 'chair' can be understood in many different ways, either because it has a variety of distinct meanings stemming from its original root – seat, professorship, office of chairman, device for fixing a rail to a railway sleeper – or because one person's experience of the object or idea differs from another's. A chair for sitting on has almost as many forms as there are people to sit on it.<sup>4</sup> Words are not only denotative and connotative, they resonate with past associations, with connections to other words and ideas, and these resonances vary from culture to culture and from one historical period to another.<sup>5</sup> And it is from the pandemonium of this resonance that literature develops.<sup>6</sup> Mere words become knitted together into a network of metaphor, and the metaphor controls our comprehension.<sup>7</sup> There is, for example, no direct connection between light and joy, or between their opposites, darkness and despair, and yet in English and German poetry they are almost seen as equivalent. It could be said that there is justification or confirmation of these normal connections through our cultural tradition of wearing white for weddings and black for funerals, yet in other cultures this is not necessarily the case – in Hindu tradition white is the colour of mourning.

If the meaning of each word depends upon metaphorical, cultural and personal issues, the complexity of a full poetic text is compounded to a bewildering degree. However, comprehension is aided, as Cone points out, echoing Hiller<sup>8</sup> and Quintilian<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>3</sup> Stein and Spillman, *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> Barzun, *Critical Questions*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ivey, Donald. *Song: Anatomy, Imagery and Styles*, New York: Macmillan, 1970, 95.

<sup>6</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard, Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972, 160.

<sup>7</sup> Bonds, Mark. *Wordless Rhetoric*, Cambridge MA & London: Harvard University Press, 1991, 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> 'The conventional sounds out of which is compounded a sentence in speech must be rather quickly connected in order to be assembled in memory and grasped by the understanding. But music grips the hearer from the first tone and carries him along, without allowing him the time or even the possibility to go back over what he has heard.' Hiller, Ferdinand. *Aus dem Tonleben unsere Zeit*, Leipzig: Neue Folge, 1871, 40, quoted in Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> 'Reading is independent; it does not pass over us with the speed of a performance, and you can go back over it again and again if you have any doubts or if you want to fix it firmly in your memory.' Quintilian, *The orator's education*, vol. IV, 261.



by the fact that the process of reading a written text allows for a continual reappraisal of the material in the light of each succeeding word, line and stanza. By contrast, when that text is sung, the listener is carried along by the moving sound, and any attempt to reappraise and assess will destroy the music.<sup>10</sup> It could justifiably be argued that a similar destruction occurs in reading a poem if the reader returns to previous material to confirm or deny his ongoing interpretation, thus breaking the rhythm and the 'music' of the verse. Reappraisal should perhaps take place with subsequent complete readings, much as Cone describes in his study 'Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story – Or a Brahms Intermezzo'.<sup>11</sup>

### *A song reduces its poem's interpretative options*

Out of the multiplicity of readings of the written poem, the song offers the singer a subset of possible readings. The singer then chooses his own single, personally definitive reading from that subset, which is then communicated to the listener. It must be admitted, however, that all musicians over time revise their concept of what might be their definitive reading of a work. Nonetheless, during the course of one particular performance they would expect to have a clear idea of their current reading while acknowledging that the next performance may present something quite different. It should further be admitted that unforeseen events may cause a sudden reappraisal during the course of a performance, such as some physical problem or a colleague's deviation from the rehearsed interpretation.

There is an implicit assumption being made here, which is that a song is designed to illustrate or heighten the meaning of the poem as understood by the composer. Certainly that is the standard view amongst commentators:

Ultimately there can be only one justification for the serious composition of a song: it must be an attempt to increase our understanding of the poem.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cone, Edward. *Music: A View from Delft*, ed. Robert Morgan, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 119.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 77-93.

<sup>12</sup> Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, 123.

... the proper task of music: to *compose* the words – to surround and envelop them in such a way that both their sound and their meaning become part of the musical texture itself.<sup>13</sup>

The perfect song occurs when the poetic rhythm is in itself interesting, and when the musician augments, illumines it, without breaking away from, or at least without going too far from, the dominant cadences and accents of the words.<sup>14</sup>

[re Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and *Frauenliebe und –leben*] Their sentences run from words to music and from music to words with such emotional truth that we cannot think of them apart ... We feel that [Schumann] read the words and, as he read them, sang them for us.<sup>15</sup>

It is clear that there are difficult issues to be resolved in the interpretation of a poetic text. In chapter four Kramer's dictum, that the music of a song can be made to interrogate the meaning of its text, was applied to six poems set by Wolf. The music can and should guide the performer's choice and reduce the number of potential readings available, but only for that particular song. Another setting of the same text, either by the same composer, for example Schubert's or Beethoven's multiple versions of 'Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt', or by a different composer, may result in a different reading. This chapter will explore such issues as well as looking at some difficult texts.

### *Poems and their translations*

Fauré's song 'Prison' is a well-known setting of a poem by Verlaine, the text of which is given on the left below, accompanied by a literal translation in the middle and a poetic translation by Mabel Dearmer on the right:

Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit,	The sky above the roof	The sky above the roof
Si bleu, si calme!	is so blue, so calm.	Is calm and sweet
Un arbre, par-dessus le toit,	A tree above the roof	A tree above the roof
Berce sa palme;	waves its branches.	Bends in the heat.

<sup>13</sup> Cone, *Music: A View from Delft*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Ezra Pound writing in *The New Age*, November 7, 1918, from Pound, *Ezra Pound and Music*, 136.

<sup>15</sup> Greene, *Interpretation in Song*, 123.

La cloche, dans le ciel qu'on voit, Douxement tinte, Un oiseau sur l'arbre qu'on voit Chante sa plainte.	The bell in the sky that one sees sweetly rings. A bird on the tree that one sees sings its lament.	A bell from out the blue Drowsily rings: A bird from out the blue Plaintively sings.
---	--	---

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu! la vie est là, Simple et tranquille. Cette paisible rumeur-là Vient de la ville.	My God, life is there, simple and tranquil. That peaceful sound comes from the town.	Ah God! a life is here, [sic] Simple and fair, Murmurs of strife are here Lost in the air.
---	---	---

Qu'as-tu fais, ô toi que voilà Pleurant sans cesse, Dis, qu'as-tu fais, toi que voilà, De ta jeunesse?	What have you done, you, weeping without cease, say, what have you done, you, with your youth?	Why dost thou weep, O heart, Poured out in tears? What hast thou done, O heart, With thy spent years?
	trans. Stephen Varcoe	trans. Mabel Dearmer

Verlaine was imprisoned for the attempted murder of the poet Rimbaud, and this poem refers to his experience in prison, looking out of the high window of his cell at the sky, the tree and the roof. He contrasts the 'là' out there, where peace and tranquillity are to be found, with the 'ici' of his cell, where he weeps with remorse for his wasted youth. The title of Fauré's setting, 'Prison', draws attention from the outset to a salient feature of the poem's meaning, and the song builds in intensity through progressive semitone rises on 'Mon Dieu', 'Cette paisible', and finally on 'Qu'as-tu fait' (ex. 1), yielding a splendidly telling climax, while retaining an unchanging *quasi adagio* pulse. Delius also makes a strong climax at this point in his setting (ex. 2), and though the intensity may not be as great as that of Fauré's, the contrast between peace without and turmoil within is quite plain to grasp.

Ex. 1. Fauré, *Prison*, bars 21-25.

21

*f* *dim*

Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voi - là, Pleu-rant sans ces - se, Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi

*f* *p*

Ex. 2. Delius, *Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit*, bars 17-22.

17 *f* *mp*

Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voi-là, Pleu-rant sans ces-se, Dis, qu'as-tu fait,

*f* *dim* *mf* *p*

Any attempt to translate a poet such as Verlaine is bound to fail to a certain extent because of his desire to find the music and meaning in the very sound of the language, a desire he shared with Mallarmé.<sup>16</sup> Allowing that this aspect of the language must be lost or seriously compromised, the Dearmer translation (above) further compromises the original by making the opposition between the outer life and the inner much less clear. Crucially, the third stanza twice has the word 'here', the equivalent of 'ici', where Verlaine uses 'là' – 'there': the poet now seems to be a part of this world of peace rather than separated from it. 'Qu'as-tu fait?' is rhetorical, and all the more heart-rending because of the poet's knowledge of the answer, that his alienation from the world out there is a consequence of his own actions. Dearmer's 'why dost thou weep' has none of the force of the original, since the alienation is no longer present, except possibly in a weak version with 'murmurs of strife'. Instead, it seems to spring from genuine puzzlement, or perhaps it is akin to a poem like Rückert's 'Lachen und Weinen', where the lover weeps without apparent reason. 'What hast thou done?' carries more consciousness with it, but by now the potential force has been dissipated, and the poem ends without reaching the anguished climax of the original.

Vaughan Williams made a setting of this poem in response to a request from the translator, though according to the story of its creation his attitude to it seems to have been rather half-hearted.<sup>17</sup> Certainly the song has none of the intensity of the Fauré or the Delius settings (see ex. 3), and its modal A minor-centered key and *lento* movement give

<sup>16</sup> Winn, James. *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music*, Yale: Yale University Press, 1981, 326-7.

<sup>17</sup> 'He was still writing songs, among them a setting of Mrs Dearmer's translation of 'Le ciel est pardessus le toit'. She wanted to use it in a play and had sent her MS to Ralph asking for a tune. He said he did not feel much like doing it, Verlaine was not a poet he particularly liked; but going up to his study one afternoon he saw how hideously untidy it was and realized that he must either tidy up or write the song, so he wrote the song.' Vaughan Williams, Ursula. *R.V.W.: a biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, London: Oxford University Press, 1964, 78.

it an underlying sense of melancholy and regret, lacking the passion of the original poem or the two other settings.

Ex. 3. Vaughan Williams, 'The sky above the roof', bar 33-end.

33 *f* *pp* *Più lento*

What hast thou done, O heart, with thy spent years?

*f* *colla voce* *pp* *pp* *ppp*

2do.

Another translation that gives a different interpretation from the original is Gerhard's German version of Burns' 'The Captain's lady', which was used by Schumann for his op. 25 no. 19, 'Hauptmanns Weib'.<sup>18</sup> Here is Burns' first stanza:

O, mount and go,  
 Mount and make you ready;  
 O, mount and go,  
 And be the Captain's lady.

This is Gerhard's translation:

Hoch zu Pferd!  
 Stahl auf zartem Leibe,  
 Helm und Schwert  
 ziemen Hauptmanns Weibe.

When translated back into English, this becomes:

Mount your horse!  
 Steel on slender body,  
 Helmet and sword  
 are befitting a captain's lady.

She is now herself dressed as a mounted knight, and though she does not appear to take part in the fighting, she cuts an even more exciting and romantic figure than her prototype, and Schumann clearly responds to that excitement (ex. 4). Here, however, in contrast with the Vaughan Williams song, the (mis)translation does not materially alter

<sup>18</sup> Sams, Eric. *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Eulenberg, 1975, 69-70.

the affect of the poem except perhaps to intensify the mood, even if the mind's eye might conjure a different picture.

Ex. 4. Schumann, 'Hauptmanns Weib', bars 1-8.

1 *Keck*  
 Hoch zu Pferd! Stahl auf zar-tem Lei-be, Heim und Schwert zie-men Haupt-manns Wei-be.

*Singing songs in translation*

Four of the translations of Mörike's 'Verborgenheit', given in the following chapter, are singing editions which, like Dearmer's 'The sky above the roof', offer an English-speaking audience a more direct experience of the song than if the original words are sung and a translation is simultaneously read. The musical ascendancy of German culture in the nineteenth century saw many English composers writing songs in the German language with a view, certainly, to achieving increased sales, but also, perhaps, to being taken more seriously than if they confined themselves to English. Pierson (né Pearson) emigrated and took German citizenship: Sterndale Bennett delayed publication of his songs (some by nearly twenty years) until he had found suitable German translations. Of his *Six Songs* Op. 23, four were translations into German by Gerhard (qv), one may either be originally English or German, but the second of the set, 'Maienthau'/'May-Dew', was first composed in German, and the English translation by Pierson was fitted to it subsequently.<sup>19</sup> There is one infelicity in the English which might suggest that German was the original language: the last line of the first stanza (Würz und Duft, ist seine Kraft) is translated as 'May-dews ever with them bring', creating an unfortunately heavy stress on 'with'.

'Maienthau' was probably composed in 1836/7: in 1874 Parry, steeped at the time in German music generally, and the Lieder of Schumann and Brahms particularly, set

<sup>19</sup> Temperley, Nicholas. 'Sterndale Bennett and the Lied: 1', *The Musical Times*, 116/1593 (Nov. 1975), 959-60.

Shakespeare's Sonnet 29 in the recent German translation by Bodenstedt. He admitted that he 'could get along better with the German than the English words', and as Dibble has pointed out, this is evident in the resultant vocal lines, which sometimes diverge quite markedly.<sup>20</sup> This is especially noticeable where the German has two-syllable feminine endings and the English has only one syllable: *scheine* – 'state'; *weine* – 'fate'; *koren* – 'least'. The German version is in each case more effective.

At least German and English share much in terms of intrinsic rhythm, but certain languages possess such a distinctive rhythm and accentuation that a sung translation will sound stilted and un-English. Plunket Greene cites the Hungarian language in this regard.<sup>21</sup> My own experience in singing Dvořák's *Biblické písně* in both Czech and English is that not only does the word-stress differ, but that the very sound of the original language is an intrinsic part of the music: in translation the English word-stress and the sound of the English language put me in mind of the sentimental Victorian banality of a parlour song.

### *Irony in two settings of a Heine poem*

The poetry of Heinrich Heine often presents the reader with the problem of interpreting irony. Romantic irony and specifically the ironic nature of much of Heine's verse has been the subject of countless articles and books, not only in the field of literature but in music also.<sup>22</sup> It is not the purpose here to return to this topic in terms already explored, but to look at the role of the interpreter when faced with songs having ironic content. Critics have disagreed over whether or not an individual composer has understood the irony in Heine's poetry, but they have considered the works without singing them; they have ignored the presence of the singer and the repertoire of expressive devices which he calls upon in response to the text and the music. In whatever manner the composer has chosen to interpret the text, the singer needs to find a response which satisfies his own understanding of that text in the light of what seems to be the composer's understanding: if he cannot do so, then it is perhaps better that he leaves the song alone. Two settings of the poem 'Die Wellen blinken' will be studied to see how the

<sup>20</sup> Dibble, *C. Hubert H. Parry*, 115-118.

<sup>21</sup> Greene, *Interpretation in Song*, 140.

<sup>22</sup> Brauner counts ninety-four such articles published in the three years between April 1974 and March 1977. Brauner, Charles. 'Irony in the Heine Lieder of Schubert and Schumann', *Musical Quarterly* 67/2 (1981), 261.

composers have viewed the ironic content and how the performer might deal with it. One setting is by Stanford,<sup>23</sup> the other by Brahms,<sup>24</sup> and the music of both will be found in Appendix B.

Die Wellen blinken und fließen dahin,  
 es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze!  
 Am Flusse sitzt die Schäferin  
 und windet die zärtlichen Kränze.  
 Das knospet und quillt, mit duftender Lust  
 es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze!  
 Die Schäferin seufzt aus tiefer Brust:  
 'Wem geb' ich meine Kränze?'  
 Ein Reiter reitet den Fluss entlang,  
 er grüsst sie so blühenden Mutes,  
 die Schäferin schaut ihm nach so bang,  
 fern flattert die Feder des Hutes.  
 Sie weint und wirft in den gleitenden Fluss  
 die schönen Blumenkränze.  
 Die Nachtigall singt von Lieb' und Kuss,  
 es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze!

Heinrich Heine<sup>25</sup>

The waves glitter and flow by,  
 love is so lovely in the spring!  
 By the river sits the shepherdess  
 and weaves delicate garlands.  
 Budding and gushing with scented joy  
 love is so lovely in the spring!  
 The shepherdess sighs deeply:  
 'To whom shall I give my garlands?'  
 A horseman rides along the river,  
 he greets her with a flourish,  
 the shepherdess gazes anxiously after him,  
 far off flutters the feather in his cap.  
 Weeping she throws the pretty garlands  
 into the gliding river.  
 The nightingale sings of love and kissing,  
 love is so lovely in the spring!

trans. Stephen Varcoe

The shepherdess's frustrated throwing of her flowers into the river contrasts with the nightingale's song of love and kissing, and the poet's statement that love flourishes in the springtime: clearly in this poem love does not flourish. The reader has to make a choice over the tone of voice to use, especially in the last two lines. Does she maintain a normal style of delivery and trust that the listener will understand the irony, or does she assume a sarcastic tone to underline the contradiction?

Stanford's song setting of 1874 seems to choose the first option. The rider appears in the new key of G major (the leading note of the opening A flat), with a change of speed and time signature. The girl's response is marked by a return to the original time signature and tempo, but in the tonic minor. For the final two lines of verse the key returns to the tonic major, and the melody is identical to the opening. The general

<sup>23</sup> Stanford, Charles. *Six Songs*, Op. 4, London: Stanley Lucas, 1876, 8-12.

<sup>24</sup> Brahms, Johannes. *Lieder, Band. I*, Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, n/d, 67-70.

<sup>25</sup> Heine, Heinrich. *Neue Gedichte*, Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1844, 191. The version used by Brahms has 'sitzt' (line 3), 'zärtlichsten' (line 4), 'das knospet und quillt und duftet und blüht' (line5), and 'er grüset' (line10).



dynamic hovers around *piano*, consistent with the delicacy of a nightingale's song, and everything appears calm and settled, without a hint of the girl's emotional outburst. The *volkstümlich* nature of the repeated 'es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze' has an insouciant, throwaway quality to it, consistent with Stanford's setting overall.

Brahms (1877) likewise has a rhythmic elaboration at the entrance of the rider, and an increase in tempo marked *animato*: the key becomes F sharp (the mediant). For the girl throwing her garland he returns to the tonic major with an additional *animato* marking and a triplet/duplet elaboration in the accompaniment. The nightingale sings briefly in G (the subdominant), and the final line of verse, sung twice, is in the tonic major to the same melody as at the opening, though this time it is *poco forte* as against *piano*, and the accompaniment has undergone a further rhythmic elaboration from triplet quaver to semiquaver. The piano has a short postlude which winds down almost two octaves in terms of pitch, but otherwise hardly at all from the *forte* which has been established. The ending of this song, then, seems perversely to proclaim the loving nature of spring in renewed and emphatic terms with more of a sense of excitement, quite opposite to what might be expected from the girl's frustration and disappointment.

In these two songs, in order to maintain her integrity as a creative and responsible performer, and not just a reciter of suitably modulated sounds, the singer must find two different approaches to the same poem. The Stanford suggests something like a wry smile, acknowledging the ironic contrast between the girl's feelings and the nightingale's 'everything's lovely in spring', but without any heavy-handed nudging and winking at it. The Brahms seems to require a more active engagement, where the loud, confident *dénouement* has a certain sarcastic weight to it.

Both composers used different editions of the text, as noted above. The first edition of the poem has the line 5 that Brahms uses ('das knospet und quillt und duftet und blüht'), but this edition also has 'vollem Gemüt' at the end of line 7, which follows the rhyme-scheme: Brahms' hybrid version with 'tiefer Brust' in place of 'vollem Gemüt' destroys the rhyme. It may be that line 5 suggested to Brahms something laboured and ludicrous, with its catalogue of four verbs in succession. Perhaps this led to his choosing the song's triumphant close, deliberately inappropriate in its roughshod ride over the silly girl's feelings.

Where the composer seems to have ignored the ironic significance of a text, the singer is nonetheless presented with a choice of interpretations. Schumann's setting of Heine's 'Wenn ich in deine Augen she' seems unaware of the falseness of the girl's 'I

love you', and is all sweetness.<sup>26</sup> Brauner (1981) suggests that for the irony of the text to be understood by the listener, the composer should do more than just present the surface meaning in his song: ignoring the irony obliterates it from the song.<sup>27</sup> Yet an insightful performance, perhaps offering a sarcastic edge to those words, would satisfy the singer's need to be psychologically truthful as well as being faithful to the music. Indeed, such a performance would raise a question mark against Schumann's apparent naivety, for if ironic words can be used to say one thing and mean another, ironic music can be used in the same way, and the fault, if any, in not identifying the fact would lie not with the composer but with the performer.

### *Two settings of a Mörike text*

A comparison of two more settings, this time of Mörike's 'In dem Schatten meiner Locken', one by Brahms, the other by Wolf, will serve to show a pair of quite different protagonists.<sup>28</sup> The music will be found in Appendix A.

1	In dem Schatten meiner Locken Schief mir mein Geliebter ein. Weck ich ihn nun auf? - Ach nein!	In the shadow of my tresses My beloved has fallen asleep. Do I wake him now? Ah no!
5	Sorglich strahlt ich meine krausen Locken täglich in der Frühe, Doch umsonst ist meine Mühe, Weil der Winde sie zerzausen. Lockenschatten, Windessausen Schlieferten den Liebsten ein.	Carefully I comb my curling Locks early each day, But in vain is my labour, As the winds dishevel them. Tresses' shadow, wind's bluster Lulled my beloved to sleep.
10	Weck ich ihn nun auf?- Ach nein!	Do I wake him now? Ah no!
15	Hören muss ich, wie ihn gräme, Dass er schmachtet schon so lange, Dass ihm Leben geb' und nehme Diese meine braune Wange. Und er nennt mich seine Schlange, Und doch schlief er bei mir ein. Weck ich ihn nun auf? - Ach nein!	I have to listen as he complains That he has already pined so long, That for him life is given and taken By this my brown cheek. And he calls me his serpent, And yet he fell asleep by my side. Do I wake him now? Ah no!
	Eduard Mörike	trans. Stephen Varcoe

<sup>26</sup> Sams, *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, 111.

<sup>27</sup> Brauner, 'Irony in the Heine Lieder of Schubert and Schumann', 261-281.

<sup>28</sup> Brahms' 'Spanisches Lied', Op. 6 No. 1, 1853; Wolf's *Spanisches Liederbuch: Weltliche Lieder*, No. 2, WWiv, Mainz, 1891 (orchestrated & included in *Der Corregidor*, 1895).

Both settings are in 3/4 time, using a similar underlying rhythmic pulse for the continuously reiterated figure, and with similar tempo markings: *Allegretto* for the Brahms, and *Leicht, zart, nicht schnell* for the Wolf. Wolf rarely set poems which had been used by other composers unless he felt he could improve upon them, and it is tempting to imagine that he was applying a corrective to the arch-enemy Brahms, using a similar rhythmic *motif* and even making his song the same length (58 bars).

The Brahms has a strict ABABA form, with two bars of introduction and small melodic modifications in bars 27, 39/40, 49. The A sections start in A minor, and bars 5 and 7, and their later equivalents, in the relative C major seem to point the way towards the dominant E, but instead there is a return to A minor (bars 6 and 8) frustrating the listener's expectation. The question: 'Weck ich ihn nun auf?' elicits two bars of F major followed by a progression not back to A minor but A major for four bars as she sings: 'Ach nein! Ach nein! Ach nein!'. Although bar 12 seems to be leading to the dominant, the listener's expectation is once again frustrated by staying in A major. Having frustrated us three times, Brahms at last gives us a triumphant dominant for the B sections, with *forte* two-part horn calls for four bars (lines 4 and 5, 11 and 12), followed by six *piano* bars of the earlier *motif* mingled with the new horn calls, leading back to the A section again.

The harmonically static bars (1-8, 25-30, 47-52) occur on lines 1 and 2, 8 and 9, 15 and 16 of the poem, illustrating the motionless, sleeping presence of the lover. Here and throughout most of the song the piano maintains a semiquaver figure, suggesting the playing of the breeze: its rather gentle quality belying the translation of 'Windessausen' as 'wind's bluster', indicating that perhaps 'soughing' would be more appropriate. The rising third on the word 'auf', with its accompanying *crescendo*, indicates the question, and it is followed by an emphatic *forte* answer: 'Ach nein!' She says 'no', but is in danger of waking him anyway. The two subsequent 'Ach nein's' become progressively quieter, while the rhythm broadens to a standstill.

The Wolf song has a looser structure than the Brahms, with the line 'Weck ich ihn nun auf? Ach nein!' acting as a kind of refrain, almost identical rhythmically each time, and melodically similar. The rhythm of the main *motif* is lighter than that of the Brahms, concurring with the marking *Leicht, zart*, with the semiquaver rest after the opening quaver contrasting with the Brahms' *legato* dotted quaver/semiquaver. As Sams says, she may be physically still, but her mind is dancing; and he also points out that

delicate variations in tempo and harmony reflect her changing mood.<sup>29</sup> On ‘Weck ich ihn nun auf?’ in the mediant D, the voice rises in a question, a question which is repeated twice by the piano before the voice answers with a downward interval on ‘Ach nein!’. And yet this downward interval is accompanied by another harmonic ‘rise’ from D to its mediant G flat, as if to underline the rightness of her decision. The piano echoes the question once more on a further rise to the next mediant B flat, the home key, a satisfying outcome to a series of three heart-lifting progressions, progressions associated in Wolf’s music, according to Sams, with increasing brightness. The piano’s continuing use of the ‘playful’ *motif* through this passage hints that she is on the verge of waking him with a tickle or a kiss, and only just manages to stop herself in time.

From bar 34: ‘Hören muss ich...’ Wolf emphasises the lover’s whining tones with the insistent repetition of E flat for a whole bar three times over indecisive shifting from F7 to D. Though Sams characterises this as more ‘tender musing’, it seems more apt to describe it as her exasperation at his foolish harping on about how much he suffers on account of her. The move to F sharp major on ‘braune Wange’, another mediant modulation, perhaps briefly shows her gloating over the effect she has on him as she strings him along. And she is surely taking pride in her own appearance; this time it is her ‘dusky cheek’ rather than her flowing locks. The tenderness appears at ‘und doch schlief er bei mir ein’ (bars 46/47), echoing the similar ‘schlief mir mein Geliebter ein’ of bars 3/4. Here, the playful piano *motif* is confined to the right hand with a *molto ritenuto*: the girl’s true feelings show through the mask.

Where Wolf’s ‘Ach nein!’ falls by a minor third each time, a tender response to the girl’s own question, Brahms’ first of all rises by a fifth, is in the major key, and is sung *forte* to indicate not just her assured sense of it being the correct response, but her pleasure at being in the here and now with someone she loves. By repeating the words twice on a *diminuendo* and *ritenuto* Brahms subsequently achieves tenderness. There is something rather grand about this passage, an impression reinforced by the dominant key for the B section, whereas the equivalent passage in Wolf’s setting emphasises the playfulness of the girl.

The Brahms setting suggests a girl tenderly contemplating her lover (bars 1-8, 25-28, 47-50)), wondering whether to wake him (bars 9/10, 31/32, 53/54), and confidently deciding to let him be (bars 11-14, 33-36, 55-58). She is proud of her own body (bars 15-

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<sup>29</sup> Sams, Eric. *The Songs of Hugo Wolf* (1961), rev. ed. London: Faber & Faber, 1992, 264-5.

18) and of the effect she has on him (bars 37-40), and amused when her hair becomes disordered (bars 19-22) and at his complaints about her (bars 41-44).

Wolf seems to have in mind a girl who also tenderly contemplates her lover (bars 1-4), but as she almost whispers her question – shall I wake him? – her playfulness seems to tempt her to do so anyway (accompaniment in bars 5-11). There is some irritation as she sings *forte* of the wind messing her hair (bars 12-20), but it quickly passes as she turns to the sleeping lover (bars 23-26). After her question and answer, much as before (bars 27-32), her irritation returns with a mocking tone (bars 34-38) before turning into a warm feeling for the compliment he pays her (bars 39-41). This is followed by amused tenderness (bars 44-47), and the final *pp* question and answer is rounded off with a coda that is first playful (bars 55/56), and then a final echo of the question and answer (bars 57/58).

Much else could be said with regard to the fine detail of both these settings, but there is enough here to show the very different character of the girl as portrayed by the two composers. In the first place, Brahms, as we would expect, has written a more ‘classical’ song which follows a clear structure; and he has drawn a picture of a more ‘classical’ girl than Wolf’s capricious, playful flirt, who nonetheless feels genuine tenderness for her lover. Brahms’ girl owes more to northern Europe than Wolf’s, with larger features and grander visions, taking life altogether more seriously.

### *Two problematic English texts*

It will be seen in the following chapter on ‘Verborgenheit’ that translating a text from a foreign language is by no means a simple matter, even when no attempt is made to create a poetic, singing version like the Dearmer or Gerhard above. Quite apart from actual misreadings, the many possible interpretations put into perspective the injunction on the singer to find out precisely what the text might mean. If it is poetic language, it cannot be defined and determined as if it were prose. Poetry often needs elucidation even in one’s own language, particularly when it is archaic (‘The Bayly berith the bell away’), in dialect, or idiosyncratic (‘Nuvoletta’).

'The Bayly berith the bell away'<sup>30</sup>

The maidens came  
 When I was in my mothers bower  
 I had all that I wolde  
 the bayly berith the bell away  
 the lylle the rose the rose I lay  
 the sylver is whit rede is the golde  
 the robes thay lay in fold  
 the baylly berith the bell away  
 the lyly the rose the rose I lay  
 and through the glasse window  
 shines the sone  
 how shuld I love and I so young  
 the bayly berith the bell away  
 the lyly the rose the rose I lay  
 the bayly berith the bell away

Colgrave and Wright offer a translation of the whole poem, of which 'The Bayly' is a fragment, suggesting that it is a description of the St Cuthbert's Day Fair or Market in Durham, and of the various characters, songs and occurrences seen and heard there. There are processions through the street, and after the lads have sung about Robin Hood, the maidens come and sing the following:

"When I was in my mother's bower  
 I had all I desired.  
 The Bailey bears the bell away (i.e., takes first place).  
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
 Silver is white and gold is red.  
 (My) robes (wedding robes?) lie folded away.  
 The Bailey bears the bell away.  
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
 And through the glass window shines the sun.  
 How should I love and I so young, etc."

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<sup>30</sup> Colgrave, Bertram and Cyril Wright. 'An Elizabethan poem about Durham', *Durham University Journal*, 32/3 (New Series vol. 1) (1940), 164-5.

Early English Lyrics has the following version, which was the provenance of the text which Warlock used.<sup>31</sup>

The maidens came  
     When I was in my mother's bower;  
 I had all that I would.  
     The bailey beareth the bell away;  
     The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
 The silver is white, red is the gold;  
 The robes they lay in fold.  
     The bailey beareth the bell away;  
     The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
 And through the glass window shines the sun.  
 How should I love, and I so young?  
     The bailey beareth the bell away;  
     The lily, the lily, the rose I lay.<sup>32</sup>

The song by Warlock, in the edition by Winthrop Rogers of 1920, shows how it differs in detail from the text above. The poem is not laid out as stand-alone text, so it is unclear precisely where line breaks might be. Using punctuation and upper and lower case letters according to the song, the following is a suggested version:

The maidens came when I was in my mother's bower.  
 I had all that I would.  
 The bayly berith the bell away,  
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.  
  
 The silver is white,  
 Red is the gold  
 The robes they lay in fold.  
 The bayly berith the bell away,  
 The lily, the rose, the rose I lay.

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<sup>31</sup> Warlock, Peter. *New Peter Warlock Critical Edition*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Pilkington, London: Thames, 2004, [5].

<sup>32</sup> Chambers, Edmund and Frank Sidgwick, eds. *Early English Lyrics* (1907), London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1921, 82.

And through the glass window shines the sun.

How should I love and I so young?

The bayly berith the bell away –

The lily the lily the rose I lay.

Quiller-Couch in an earlier version<sup>33</sup> gives the poem the title ‘Bridal Morning’, and apart from variations in the punctuation, the major difference is the use of ‘lull’ in place of ‘bell’ for the second and third stanzas.

In a letter to Jane Vowles of 28 November 1928, Warlock wrote:

The Bayly ... is completely incomprehensible. For me the charm of the fragment lies precisely in the fact that it means nothing, but suggests the loveliest images with a verbal music ... Many old ballads and songs have refrains, and even whole verses, which *mean* nothing that can be translated into prose, and are yet of the greatest poetical beauty.<sup>34</sup>

Other commentators have written of it as ‘very difficult’,<sup>35</sup> ‘somewhat puzzling’,<sup>36</sup> ‘difficult to grasp any concrete meaning’,<sup>37</sup> ‘the magic here is the magic of obscurity.’<sup>38</sup> Pilkington offers helpful suggestions for performers, while admitting various problems and inconsistencies.<sup>39</sup> Milsom makes the important, but usually overlooked, point that the poem only survives in the treble voice part-book of a polyphonic musical piece, and that there are long rests between entries which would have been filled by missing text sung by other voices. It is hardly surprising then that it is resistant to attempts to unravel its meaning: the surprise is more that it should have survived at all as other than a curious literary footnote. Milsom makes a convincing case for this being a song for a group of young women to sing, with the theme of ‘youth, virginity and awakening libido’.<sup>40</sup> Reeves maintains that the line ‘Through the glass window shines the sun’ is a symbolic reference to the loss of virginity,<sup>41</sup> supported by

<sup>33</sup> Quiller-Couch, Arthur. *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (1901), rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939, 42.

<sup>34</sup> Kaye, Ernest. ‘Witches and Warlock’, *Peter Warlock Society Newsletter* (1977) 21, no pagination.

<sup>35</sup> Colgrave and Wright, ‘An Elizabethan Poem about Durham’, 168.

<sup>36</sup> Greene, Richard, ed. *The Early English Carols* (1935), rev. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, 304.

<sup>37</sup> Milsom, John. ‘Cries of Durham’, *Early Music* 17/2 (1989), 147.

<sup>38</sup> Huxley, Aldous. *Texts and Pretexts, an Anthology with Commentaries* (1932) rev. ed. London: Chatto & Windus, 1974, 229. Huxley also writes: ‘If one really knew what this fragment was about, one might come to like it less. Uncomprehended, it is lovely, and mysteriously haunts the imagination with its peculiar magic. Let us leave well alone and be thankful for it.’ *Ibid.* 230.

<sup>39</sup> Warlock, *New Peter Warlock Critical Edition*, ed. Michael Pilkington, [5].

<sup>40</sup> Milsom, ‘Cries of Durham’, 156.

<sup>41</sup> Reeves, James, ed. *The Cassell Book of English Poetry*, no. 24, London: Cassell, 1965, no pagination.



Mazzarella who writes that the Virgin Mary's hymen is compared to an unbroken pane of glass.<sup>42</sup>

Ernest Kaye presents the argument that this poem was concerned with the celebration of the Black Mass. Kaye is convinced that Warlock's known interest in the occult means that he must have been aware of the poem's deeper significance, but chose to set it in a naïve style, with 'the more innocent appeal of the apparent beauty of the words', and that he 'relegated to the back of his mind what he must have known to be the true meaning'. Otherwise, he suggests, a very different setting would have resulted. But a song about the Black Mass is *not* what Warlock's setting became – a different setting did *not* in fact result – in which case Kaye's theory is perhaps interesting, but certainly irrelevant to a sensitive interpretation of this particular piece.<sup>43</sup>

Quiller-Couch's title for the poem, 'Bridal Morning', acts as a useful interpretative pointer if it is taken as a song of awakening libido. One reason why this may present a problem for the song in question is indicated by another quote from Warlock: 'The Bayly should be sung meaninglessly, as a child (but not as a grown-up!) sings a nursery rhyme.'<sup>44</sup> This suggestion seems to run counter to so much of what a singer is trained to do, and indeed to some of the underlying assumptions of this thesis, especially if the dawning of sexual awareness is to be a touchstone. A simple reading of the poem might find such a simple interpretation, but given the moments of richness in Warlock's treatment (ex. 5 a, b, c), it is difficult for the singer to withhold her expressive instincts and maintain a childish naivety.

Ex. 5. Warlock, 'The bayly berith the bell away'.

(a) bars 11-15.

The musical score for 'The bayly berith the bell away' (bars 11-15) is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is for the voice, and the bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8. The tempo marking is 'pochiss ritenuto'. The lyrics are: 'The bay - ly be - rith the bell a - way,'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and single notes, with some melodic lines in the right hand and bass lines in the left hand.

<sup>42</sup> Mazzarella, Sylvester. 'The Baily Berith the Bell away', *Peter Warlock Society Newsletter* (2002) 70, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Kaye, 'Witches and Warlock', no pagination. Kaye's theory was attacked by David Cox in the subsequent edition of the Peter Warlock Society Newsletter, in an article entitled 'Unbewitched!'. Both articles can be found in Cox, David and John Bishop, *Peter Warlock: A Centenary Celebration*, London: Thames, 1994, 166-174.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* no pagination.

(b) bars 28-32.

28 *pochiss ritenuto*

The bay - ly be - rith the bell a - way,

*p*

(c) bars 37-42.

37 *a tempo*

And through the glass win - dow shines - - the sun.

*mf*

The next example is James Joyce's 'Nuvoletta', set to music by Samuel Barber:<sup>45</sup>

Nuvoletta in her light dress,  
 spunn of sisteen shimmers,  
 was looking down on them,  
 leaning over the bannistars  
 and listening all she childishly could. . . .

She was alone.

All her nubied companions  
 were asleeping with the squir'ls. . . .

She tried all the winsome wonsome ways  
 her four winds had taught her.

She tossed her sfumastelliacinous hair  
 like *la princesse de la Petite Bretagne*  
 and she rounded her mignons arms  
 like Missis Cornwallis-West

<sup>45</sup> Joyce, James. *Finnegan's Wake*, New York: The Viking Press, 1939, 157-159.

and she smiled over herself  
 like the image of the pose of a daughter  
 of the Emperour of Irelande  
 and she sighed after herself  
 as were she born to bride with Tristis  
 Tristior Tristissimus.  
 But, sweet madonine, she might fair as well  
 have carried her daisy's worth to Florida. . . .

Oh, how it was duusk!  
 From Vallee Maraia to Grasyaplaina,  
 dormimust echo!  
 Ah dew! Ah dew! It was so duusk  
 that the tears of night began to fall,  
 first by ones and twos,  
 then by threes and fours,  
 at last by fives and sixes of sevens,  
 for the tired ones were wecking;  
 as we weep now with them.  
*O! O! O! Par la pluie. . . .*

Then Nuvoletta reflected for the last time  
 in her little long life  
 and she made up all her myriads  
 of drifting minds in one.  
 She cancelled all her engauzements.  
 She climbed over the bannistars;  
 she gave a chily cloudy cry:  
*Nuée! Nuée!*  
 A light dress fluttered.  
 She was gone.

*Finnegan's Wake* is notorious for the impenetrability of its text, and this excerpt offers an illustration of the difficulties encountered throughout the book. Perhaps the first thing the

aspiring performer should know is that this is a pen-portrait of Joyce's schizoid daughter, Lucia. In 1922, at the age of fifteen, she had become obsessed with dancing, and starting at the Dalcroze Institute in Paris, she attended a succession of dance schools and academies over the following seven years. At twenty-two she enrolled in the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, to study ballet, but was already too old to make the grade. Her increasingly erratic behaviour led to years of intermittent medical treatment, and she was eventually hospitalised in 1939, spending the rest of her life in institutions till her death in 1982.<sup>46</sup>

We can picture the girl showing off the poses she learnt in class, and perhaps her schizophrenia explains the reference to 'she made up all her myriads of drifting minds in one'. Joyce's obsession with *Tristan* is in evidence with '*la princesse de la Petite Bretagne*' and 'Tristis Tristor Tristissimus', which is accompanied in Barber's song by a suitable quote from Wagner. The whole is shot through with puns and double meanings, and with words which nobody could possibly interpret simply by hearing them: bannistars, sfumastelliacious, engauzements. Barber made this selection from a longer passage which has a much higher proportion of incomprehensible words, and the singer can be thankful for his practical good sense as an editor. But if ever there were a case for having words printed in a programme, this song makes it. Moreover, the audience could be asked to follow the words as they are read to them, possibly more than once, before being asked to put their programmes aside and pay full attention to the song.

### *Comparing interpretations: reading versus singing*

It will be seen with the discussion of Schumann's 'Waldesgespräch' in chapter seven that a tension can arise between an interpretation arrived at through reading a poem and the interpretation imposed by a composer in his setting of that poem. Such a tension occurs in Armstrong Gibbs' 'Why do I love?', a straight, un-ironic setting of a poem by Ephelia (1679):

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<sup>46</sup> Andreasen, Nancy. 'James Joyce – A portrait of the artist as schizoid', *Journal of the American Medical Association* 224 (1973), 67-77. Also Schloss, Carol. *Lucia Joyce: to dance in the wake*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003. 'Dancing in the wake' in this context is a nicely turned Joycean pun.

'Why do I love?

"To one that asked me why I lov'd J.G."

1       Why do I love? Go, ask the Glorious Sun  
           Why every day it round the world doth Run:  
           Ask *Thames and Tyber*, why they ebb and flow:  
           Ask Damask Roses why in *June* they blow:  
 5       Ask Ice and Hail, the reason, why they're Cold:  
           Decaying Beauties, why they will grow Old:  
           They'll tell thee, Fate, that every thing doth move,  
           Inforces them to this, and me to Love.  
           There is no Reason for our Love or Hate,  
 10       'Tis irresistible, as Death or Fate;  
  
           'Tis not his Face; I've sense enough to see,  
           That is not good, though doated on by me:  
           Nor is't his Tongue, that has this Conquest won;  
           For that at least is equall'd by my own:  
 15       His carriage can to none obliging be,  
           'Tis Rude, Affected, full of Vanity:  
           Strangely Ill natur'd, Peevish and Unkind,  
           Unconstant, False, to Jealousie inclin'd;  
           His Temper cou'd not have so great a Pow'r,  
 20       'Tis mutable, and changes every hour:  
           Those vigorous Years that Women so Adore  
           Are past in him: he's twice my age and more;  
           And yet I love this false, this worthless Man,  
           With all the Passion that a Woman can;  
 25       [Doat on his Imperfections, though I spy  
           Nothing to Love; I Love, and know not why.] (omitted by Gibbs)

Sure 'tis Decreed in the dark Book of Fate,  
 That I shou'd Love, and he shou'd be ingrate.

Mulvihill finds that this text ‘evokes a mood of sad, sentimental resignation; and it closes on a note of wistful surrender’. She then asserts that Armstrong Gibbs in his setting of the poem fundamentally alters the mood of the piece, and certainly his song is angry and aggressive, though to whom or to what this anger is directed is unclear. Perhaps the protagonist is angry with herself for loving this wretched man in spite of her knowledge of his worthlessness. Given Gibbs’ opening markings: ‘March time: in angry mood’ and ‘*f feroce*’ it does not seem possible to create any nuance of ‘sad resignation’ while singing this song, at least until line 11, when he asks for *piano* from the singer. Here for a while something like sad resignation might be feasible, though from line 15 the catalogue of his defects builds in intensity and requires a gradually more emphatic delivery. From line 23 the ferocious opening returns, reaching a *fortissimo* climax on the final ‘Love’: the ‘wistful surrender’ that Mulvihill suggests for the poem’s close is entirely exploded. The ‘righteous feminist anger’ she sees in this setting must be at the root of any consistent performance, and a singer who could not reconcile her understanding of this poem with what would be required of her by this song should probably best avoid it.<sup>47</sup>

For a song which defies a normal reading of the poem but which may do so with ironic intent, consider Auden’s poem ‘Johnny’, the third of Britten’s four *Cabaret Songs*, in the version that Britten uses.<sup>48</sup> There are many detailed alterations from the text copyrighted by Auden’s estate, two of which are quite significant: by omitting the auxiliary verb ‘would’ before ‘walk’ in line 2, Britten incorrectly puts the verb in the present tense. A more obvious alteration is the shortened final line, which originally reads: ‘But you frowned like thunder and you went away’. However, neither of these changes nor any of the others materially alter the thrust of the poem.

### ‘Johnny’

O the valley in the summer when I and my John  
 Beside the deep river walk on and on  
 While the grass at our feet and the birds up above  
 Whispered so soft in reciprocal love,

<sup>47</sup> ‘Gibbs directs the singer and pianist to perform his composition with gusto (“*feroce*”) and in an aggressive “march tempo.” The setting’s time and Gibbs’s directions significantly alter, indeed reconstruct, the poem’s original ethos. Gibbs’s setting transmits a righteous feminist anger, a mood he skillfully achieves through tempo, time signature, and performance directions.’ Mulvihill, Maureen. ‘Thumbprints of Ephelia’, *ReSoundings* (2001) 2/3, 2001, chapter V.

<sup>48</sup> Auden, Wistan. *Another Time*, London: Faber & Faber, 1940, 88-9.

And I leaned on his shoulder, 'O Johnny, let's play':  
But he frowned like thunder, and he went away.

O the evening near Christmas as I well recall  
When we went to the Charity Matinee Ball,  
The floor was so smooth and the band was so loud  
And Johnny so handsome I felt so proud;  
'Squeeze me tighter, dear Johnny, let's dance till day':  
But he frowned like thunder and went away.

Shall I ever forget at the Grand Opera  
When music poured out of each wonderful star?  
Diamonds and pearls hung like ivy down  
Over each gold and silver gown;  
'O Johnny I'm in heaven,' I whispered to say:  
But he frowned like thunder and went away.

O, o but he was as fair as a garden in flower,  
As slender and tall as the great Eiffel Tower,  
When the waltz throbbbed out down the long promenade  
O his eyes and his smile went straight to my heart;  
'O marry me, Johnny, I'll love and obey':  
But he frowned like thunder and he went away.

O last night I dreamed of you, Johnny, my lover;  
You'd the sun on one arm and the moon on the other,  
The sea it was blue and the grass it was green,  
Ev'ry star rattled a round tambourine;  
Ten thousand miles deep in a pit there I lay:  
But you went away.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Britten, Benjamin. *Cabaret Songs*, London: Faber Music, 1980, 12-19.

It is clear that the unnamed woman is devastated by Johnny's persistent rejection of her, with her subconscious finally throwing up a dream of dark significance. All her recollections of joy and excitement from the past are placed in stark contrast with his behaviour and her last night's dream, and they carry an added poignancy by being viewed through her disappointment. From the very beginning the reader would surely take on the woman's pain and modify the interpretation accordingly, colouring the past happiness with present despair. Certainly this is the opinion of the distinguished actress, director and teacher, Prunella Scales, who sees each re-lived episode as starting in a subdued manner, then growing in intensity and immediacy before coming down painfully to earth again at the last line of each stanza, but always with the knowledge of the present truth in the background.<sup>50</sup>

Britten, however, offers another view, or at least creates a tension between music and character. His protagonist relives each episode in a kind of cinematic flashback as if it were actually happening to her: the first stanza has a charming folk melody; the second has a rousing dance tune; the third is a parody of operatic conventions, even to the extent of a bizarre *fortissimo* 'O Johnny I'm in heaven,' which she *whispered* to say; the fourth is a waltz, and the fifth is a sonorous dirge. Not until that final stanza does the musical mood truly reflect her present state of mind, one of dark despair. The possibility is that her mind has in fact been overthrown, and she is now showing some sort of psychotic dissociation. Like Ophelia, she seems oblivious to her plight for a large part of the time, only finding sanity and a true appreciation of what has happened in the final stanza. Such an interpretation might perhaps be appropriate for a song by Britten, who had made arrangements of Purcell's 'Mad Bess' or 'Let the dreadful engines of eternal will', both of them Mad Songs.

Teaching this song to students, I have found that they first tend to sing it 'naively', stanza by stanza, carried along by the affect of the music each time. The bathos of each final line then comes entirely unprepared, which is an approximation of the 'mad song' style of interpretation, though they are usually unaware that what they are doing has any aspects of insanity, and nothing in their demeanour indicates it. After discussion of their performance and the protagonist's state of mind, the preferred course is generally to shun the insane option and adopt the Scales interpretation, allowing the music to rekindle their enthusiasm for each scene, but always letting it be coloured with the

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<sup>50</sup> Scales, Prunella. Interview by author, 14 November 2006.



knowledge of the despair in her heart and the final dream of death. Scales sees the musical persona in the piano as a kind of emotional pressure exerted by Johnny, or by the memory of him, and that this is the driver for the singer's recurring elation.

### *Summary*

It is this potential quality in song, the additional dimension that music brings to a poem, which can raise it from mere recitation with musical accompaniment to an exploration of inner motives and feelings. In a song like 'Johnny' we are also able to hear something of the circumstances which are being described. The aural scene is presented to us along with the protagonist's 'own' words, and the power and significance of that aural landscape is here magnified by the second and third stanzas being verbal portrayals of musical experiences. The words about music are underpinned by the music itself. In more general terms the song's musical setting represents the composer's response to the text, and the singer must reconcile this with his or her own response to that text. Without this, the performance will fail to be a true representation of the song.

## Chapter six

## Interpretation of a non-English text

Students are continually being asked by their teachers to give a prepared translation or a synopsis before they sing in a foreign language for their lessons, and it would be hard to argue against this. Without knowing what the poem means it is unlikely that the song will have any kind of insightful performance. But the questions arise how that translation should be made, and of the many possible renderings of words and phrases, which most nearly approach the tone of the original. A German text has been chosen to illustrate some of the problems which might flow from the process of translation.

## Verborgenheit

Eduard Mörike

Hugo Wolf

*Mässig und sehr innig*

Laß, o Welt, o laß mich sein!

lo - cket nicht mit Lie - bes - ga - ben, laßt dies Herz al - lei - ne ha - ben

9 *rit. a tempo*

sei - ne Won - ne, sei - ne Pein! Was ich trau - re, weiß ich nicht, —

*rit. a tempo mf*

13

es ist un - be - kann - tes We - he; im - mer - dar durch Trä - nen se - he

*f p*

17 *nach und nach belebter und*

ich der Son - ne lie - bes Licht. Oft bin ich mir

*pp pp*

21 *leidenschaftlicher*

kaum be - wusst, — und die hel - le Freu - de zü - cket durch die Schwe - re,

*f ff mf p*

25 *rit.* *Tempo I*

so mich drü-cket, won - nig-lich in mei-ner Brust. Laß, o Welt, o

29

laß mich sein! lo - cket nicht mit Lie - bes-ga - ben, laßt dies Herz al-

33 *rit.*

lei - ne ha - ben sei - ne Won - ne, sei - ne Pein!

### The Poem

The poem I have chosen to study for this chapter is Eduard Mörike's 'Verborgenheit' of 1832,<sup>1</sup> set to music by Hugo Wolf in 1888.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for choosing this rather than another are, firstly, that the poem and the setting are well-known, and there have thus been many translations into English; secondly, that both poem and song are quite short; thirdly, that Mörike's poem explores some complex psychological and

<sup>1</sup> Mörike, Eduard. *Gedichte*, Stuttgart: Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1838, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Wolf, *Gedichte von Eduard Mörike*, Bd. 1, 46-8.

emotional issues; and fourthly, that Wolf is the *Lieder* composer *par excellence* of poetic sensibility, and is therefore likely to be the most sensitive to nuance of meaning. For reasons of economy of space, Mörike's fourth stanza, identical to the first, has been omitted in the following texts:

*Verborgenheit*

Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!	Was ich traure, weiss ich nicht,	Oft bin ich mir kaum bewusst,
Locket nicht mit Liebesgaben,	Es ist unbekanntes Wehe;	Und die helle Freude zücket
Lasst dies Herz alleine haben	Immerdar durch Tränen sehe	Durch die Schwere, so mich drücket,
Seine Wonne, seine Pein!	Ich der Sonne liebes Licht.	Wonniglich in meine Brust.

trans. Bird & Stokes:<sup>3</sup>

*Obscurity*

Leave, O world, oh, leave me be!	Why I grieve, I do not know,	Often, scarce aware am I,
Tempt me not with gifts of love,	My grief is unknown grief,	pure joy flashes
leave this heart to have alone	All the time I see through tears	through the oppressing heaviness
its bliss, its agony!	The sun's delightful light.	- flashes blissful in my heart.

trans. Praver S. S.:<sup>4</sup>

*Withdrawal*

Let me be, O world!	I do not know what I mourn for,	Often (I am hardly conscious of it)
Do not tempt me with gifts of love,	it is an unknown grief;	bright joy flashes
Let this heart keep to itself	only through tears I see	through the gloom that oppresses me,
its joy and its sorrow.	the sun's dear light.	bringing rapture to my heart.

trans. Hindemith, P.:<sup>5</sup>

*Seclusion*

Oh, world, let me be!	What I mourn, I know not.	Often, I am scarcely conscious
Entice me not with gifts of love.	It is an unknown pain;	And the bright joys break
Let this heart in solitude have	Forever through tears shall I see	Through the pain, thus pressing
Your bliss, your pain!	The sun's love-light.	Delightfully into my breast.

<sup>3</sup> Fischer-Dieskau, *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*, 384-5.

<sup>4</sup> Praver, Siegbert, ed. & trans. *The Penguin Book of Lieder*, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1964, 108-9.

<sup>5</sup> Hindemith, Paul. <[http://www.recmusic.org/get\\_text.html?TextId=11738](http://www.recmusic.org/get_text.html?TextId=11738)> accessed 13 Sept 2004.

trans. Phillips, L. – word-by-word translation:<sup>6</sup>

*Seclusion*

Leave O world O let me be (alone)	What I mourn know I not	Often am I to me hardly conscious
tempt not with love's-gifts	it is unknown misery	and the clear joy quivers
leave this heart alone have	always through tears see	through the heaviness (that) so me
		weighs down
its rapture, its pain.	I of the sun dear light.	delightfully in my breast.

trans. Phillips, Lois – literary translation:<sup>7</sup>

*World Within*

Leave me in peace, O world –	I know not why I grieve. It is a	Often I am in a daze, and then
tempt me not with bribes of love!	strange new misery; only through	through the weight of my despair,
leave my heart alone with its own	tears do I see the sweet light of the	I feel pure joy and ecstasy
rapture, its own pain!	sun.	quivering within my breast.

trans. Sams, Eric:<sup>8</sup>

*Seclusion*

Let me be, O world, let me be!	I cannot tell why I grieve;	Often, when I am lost in thoughts,
tempt not with gifts of love,	it is unknown sorrow.	a bright joy flashes,
leave this heart to know alone	Through tears I still see	through the heaviness that
		oppresses me,
its own bliss, its own pain.	the sun's dear light.	blissfully in my breast.

trans. Lyman, Waldo:<sup>9</sup>

*Concealment*

Let, o world, o let me be!	I do not know the cause of this	Often I am barely conscious
	sadness,	
Tempt me not with charitable gifts,	It is indefinable pain;	When the bright joy breaks
Let this heart, in solitude, feel	Yet, constantly through my tears	Through the darkness, and
	I see	wondrously
Its joy, its pain!	The friendly rays of sunshine.	Lightens my heart.

<sup>6</sup> Phillips, Lois. *Lieder line by line*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 258.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 258.

<sup>8</sup> Sams, *The Songs of Hugo Wolf*, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *65 Songs*, ed. Sergius Kagen, New York: International Music Company, 1961, 19-21.

trans. Freer, Dawson – a singing edition:<sup>10</sup>

*Secrecy*

Let the world unheeded go,	Why this grieving, why these tears,	When the night-time brings me rest,
Seek I not love's gifts that perish,	Why in sorrow must I languish?	And my tears have ceased from flowing,
Let my heart in secret cherish	All my soul is filled with anguish	Light thro' darkness, brightly glowing,
Hidden rapture, hidden woe.	When the golden sun appears.	Floods with joy my aching breast.

trans. Boileau, Marie – a singing edition:<sup>11</sup>

*Secrecy*

Tempt me not, o world, again	Unknown grief consumes my days,	Only dreaming brings me rest
lure me not with joys that perish,	'tis with eyes all veiled by sorrow	only then a ray of gladness,
let my heart, unspoken, cherish	that, when dawns each hopeless	sent from Heaven, cheers my morrow, sadness
all its rapture, all its pain!	On the glorious sun I gaze.	Lights the gloom within my breast.

trans. Rücker, Elisabeth. – a singing edition:<sup>12</sup>

*Reserve*

Hence, oh world, oh cease thy claim!	Hidden is my fount of woe,	Oft I scarce can tell myself,
Charm me not with gifts of kindness,	woe concealed, yet never sleeping:	how the cheerful gladness presses
leave my heart e'en to its blindness,	always through a vale of weeping	through my sadness and confesses
with its gladness and its pain!	comes to me the sunshine's glow.	there's e'en joy for my sad heart.

trans. [unsigned] – a singing edition:<sup>13</sup>

*Secrecy*

Keep, o world, away thy chain,	What I grieve o'er, I don't know,	Nigh unconscious oft I rest,
Lure me not with loving treasure,	It is strange and unknown sorrow,	And a radiant pleasure flashing,
Let this heart alone be measure,	Evermore thro' tears I borrow	In the gloaming on me dashing,
Of its pleasure and its pain.	Of the sun's effulgent glow.	Lights the gloom within my breast.

<sup>10</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *Song Album*, London: Boosey & Co, 1957, 10-12.

<sup>11</sup> Wolf, *Ausgewählte Lieder*, 17-18.

<sup>12</sup> Franz, Robert. *Ausgewählte Lieder, Band II*, Leipzig: C.F. Peters, n/d, 88-90.

<sup>13</sup> Wolf, Hugo. *The Favorite Songs and Ballads of Hugo Wolf, with original text, and translations made especially for this edition*, Cincinnati: The John Church Company, 1905, 20-23.

Richard Wigmore writes: 'all translation is a more or less uncomfortable compromise; and the greater the poem, the greater the compromise.'<sup>14</sup> The task he is writing about is that of creating line-by-line versions of the texts used by Schubert, using a similar number of words to the German without any parenthetical glossing. Bird and Stokes refer specifically to avoiding any explanation of external factors which might clarify the context of a poem.<sup>15</sup> However, like Wigmore, they are concerned with creating simplified, stanza-type translations, and therefore much of the nuance of the original text must of necessity be lost.

It is the search for nuance of meaning which concerns us here, and this study will show some of the problems involved in that search. For the eleven versions printed here, the title has been given seven distinct translations – Obscurity, Withdrawal, Seclusion, World Within, Concealment, Secrecy and Reserve. The Cassell's German Dictionary of 1888, the year Wolf composed 'Verborgenheit', gives in addition Privacy and Retirement.<sup>16</sup> Muret-Sanders of 1901 includes Hiddenness, Sequestration and Reclusion,<sup>17</sup> while other, modern dictionaries give Darkness<sup>18</sup> and Clandestineness.<sup>19</sup> The ability of a singer to deliver the text with precision, if that singer is not a native German speaker nor a scholar in the language, is immediately put under question: is he to understand that Mörike thought of the meaning of the poem's title as an amalgam of all these elements, merely a few, just one, or something in addition? Seelig's comments cast light on this question:

The ambivalence and importance of 'Verborgenheit' for its time – 1832, the year of Goethe's death – can be seen in the difficulty of translating its title: the translation by Bird and Stokes as 'Obscurity' insufficiently renders the pleasurable withdrawal from society practised by mid-nineteenth-century poets in the wake of Goethe's very public aesthetic

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<sup>14</sup> Wigmore, *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Fischer-Dieskau, *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Cassell's German Dictionary* (1888), rev. ed. London: Cassell, 1909, 645.

<sup>17</sup> *Muret-Sanders encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der englischen und deutschen Sprache*, Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1901, 2109.

<sup>18</sup> *The New English-German Dictionary*,

<<http://www.iee.et.tu-dresden.de/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/wernerr/search.sh>> accessed 12 Oct 2004.

<sup>19</sup> *Wörterbuch Deutsch-Englisch*, <<http://www.student-online.net/woerterbuch.shtml>> accessed 12 Oct 2004.



triumphs. Although many successors no doubt felt intimidated by the legacy of Goethe's lyric achievement, Mörike reacted with a degree of poetic introspection that represents a major step on the road toward late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century symbolist poetry.<sup>20</sup>

The key here is the word 'pleasurable': the poet hides himself from the world in order to experience fully the feelings in his heart. Seelig uses this notion of *Verborgenheit* not so much as it relates to this poem, but as it serves to explain the workings of the mid nineteenth-century mind, specifically here in relation to the magnificence of Goethe's achievement. Like Wolf with Wagner, Mörike has an oedipal conflict with the work of a towering genius,<sup>21</sup> whom he called 'Dichtervater' (father-poet),<sup>22</sup> and he expresses this conflict and his resolution of it in *Verborgenheit*. The unknown grief, the oppressive gloom, the pain (of love thwarted or denied?) are studied, brooded upon and perhaps exaggerated as trophies of a fully-functioning sensibility, providing the dark contrast for the joy, the bliss, the rapture which come unbidden to light up the poet's inner being. He demands to be able to find his own way to express his poetic soul, away from the overwhelming influence of the Dichtervater. According to this reading, not one of the above translations of the word 'Verborgenheit' conveys the true meaning of Mörike's title, not even a mixture of them all: the crucial missing constituent is the pleasure.

We need to look for support for this reading in the poem itself. Once more Seelig comes to our aid:

Mörike's plea for undisturbed *Verborgenheit* perceptively foresees the subconscious realm of the Freudian age – 'Oft bin ich mir kaum bewusst' (Often I am hardly aware, line 9) – even as it registers the 'unbekanntes Weh' (unknown grief) that this seductive probing of the extremes of the human psyche will entail (line 6).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Seelig, Harry. 'The Literary Context: Goethe as Source and Catalyst' in Hallmark, *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Kramer, Lawrence. 'Hugo Wolf: Subjectivity in the Fin-de-Siecle Lied', in Hallmark, *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, 186-195; and Glauert, *Hugo Wolf and the Wagnerian Inheritance*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Mörike, Eduard. *Eduard Mörike Poems*, ed. Lionel Thomas, Oxford: Blackwell, 1960, xi.

<sup>23</sup> Hallmark, *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, 16.

The poet, meditating in his secluded retreat, reaches the core of human experience; finds himself in an altered state of consciousness where archetypal forces dwell, either oppressing him with darkness or transporting him with light. Only by being shut off from the world can this state be found, this place where grief and rapture coexist, where darkness will be suffused with light, where, according to Hermann Burger, opposites coalesce and fuse.<sup>24</sup> But contrary to Burger's assertion, this place which the poet finds retains its duality and remains part of this world of opposites where life happens in the tension between the One and the Other. The fusion spoken of by Burger is the mystical union which is beyond man's comprehension, whereas the poet speaks of what can be reached and comprehended, even if the contradictory emotions which he feels are indeed 'miteinander und ineinander'.

In the second stanza the rapture is not yet fully realised: it is only the light of the sun that the poet sees, not the inner light of quasi-mystical knowing. That state is not reached until the third stanza when 'helle Freude zücket ... wonniglich in meine Brust' (bright joy flashes blissfully in my breast): the joy has been experienced directly by the heart rather than indirectly and metaphorically by the senses. The fourth stanza then repeats word for word the first, offering the reader a choice – either the feelings and experiences disclosed in the second and third stanzas have altered the poet's outlook, offering a new meaning to the repeated words, or the poet's outlook was present from the beginning and he returns to his first statement to show how it is the reader's outlook that has been altered, and that the poet's meaning remains as it was, but not at first understood by the reader. Wolf's song might have offered a resolution of that choice, but since the music of the fourth stanza is identical to that of the first, the onus of choice remains with the reader, that reader being in the song's case the performer.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Burger, Hermann. 'Eduard Mörike', in Reich-Ranicki, Marcel, ed. *1000 Deutsche Gedichte und ihre Interpretationen* (Vierter Band), Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1994, 213-4.

<sup>25</sup> Fischer-Dieskau suggests a particular choice: 'über ein kurzes *ritardando* führt das Klavier in der zweiten Hälfte eines zwischentaktes zum noch ruhiger als anfangs empfundenen Grundtempo zurück, zutiefst verinnerlicht und durchwegs *piano* gesungen.' (With a short *ritardando* the piano part leads, in the second half of an interlude, back to the basic tempo – calmer than the first time, deeply internalized, and sung *piano* throughout. – trans. Stephen Varcoe) Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich. *Der Nacht ins Ohr: Gedichte von Eduard Mörike, Vertonungen von Hugo Wolf. Ein Lesebuch von Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau*, München und Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1998, 50.

If we accept that the above reading may have come near to the heart of Mörike's poem, it could be argued that this exposition of its meaning does not in fact give us the precision which we have been looking for. The precision we are encouraged to seek by writers on singing is to be found in individual words and phrases as opposed to the general direction of the poet's argument. The analytical inquiry is expected to start with the smallest units, and though this inquiry started with the word 'Verborgtheit' and a discussion of its true meaning, it soon escalated into a more generalised exploration.

Because the language of this thesis is English, the meanings of words and phrases will not only be discussed in English, they will be the meanings of the translations of the original German words and phrases. It cannot be otherwise unless the discussion is to take place in German, offering German explanations for the meaning of the German words. Significant nuances and resonances may be missed by someone who is not a native or a fluent foreign speaker of the language. The fact of translation compromises the search for precision, and suggests that a foreign singer can never achieve a truly authentic performance. Nevertheless the attempt will be made to uncover as much as possible of both the patent and the latent sense of this poem, and it may be that after detailed study the foreigner will outstrip the native in certain aspects of understanding.

'Lass, o Welt, o lass mich sein!' translates simply as 'Leave, o world, o leave me be' which we might understand colloquially as 'leave me alone' (the exclamation mark is a conventional sign denoting an imperative). The repetition of 'lass' implies added emphasis, reinforcing the poet's desire for retirement or solitude. The word 'lass' also has the meaning of tired or weary, and although the reader scanning ahead in the normal way may be clear from the outset that this is the imperative of the verb 'lassen', the listener may not immediately know which word is intended. There is the possibility that Mörike chose this word for its ambiguous potential, leading the reader/listener to comprehend the phrase with both senses in mind. The singer, in that case, would be justified in colouring the voice with the feeling of weariness by dulling its timbre.

'Lass mich sein', literally 'leave me be', may have developed into 'leave me alone', but here it may be better interpreted in the literal sense: 'in the hurly-burly of daily life I cannot truly be myself – I am not fully alive. Only by withdrawing from society can I find my inner reality.' Although the need for solitude is expressed ('alleine'

– alone), the need is more complex than that: it is a need to be released from the chains of ordinary existence in order to experience the life of the soul.

‘Locket’ (line 2) and ‘lasst’ (line 3) are also imperatives, but they differ from ‘lass’ by being the familiar plural form rather than the singular. The poet’s mode of address has changed from the world in general to – whom? Presumably to those individuals who would prevent him from achieving his goal. Two women had disturbed Mörike’s romantic equilibrium, Maria Meyer from his student days in Ludwigsburg, and his fiancée Luise Rau, the daughter of the Pastor under whom he had worked for four years as deacon when ‘Verborgenheit’ was written. He ‘escaped’ this situation by moving to another parish not with a wife but with his mother and sister.<sup>26</sup>

‘Tempt me not with gifts of love’ seems to be the favoured rendering of the second line, and certainly the root ‘lieb’- (love-) is full of resonance for German and English alike. The poet is renouncing even love and friendship in pursuit of his dream, turning his back on the things most likely to distract him. There is, however, some ambiguity attached to the meaning of ‘Liebesgaben’, and there seem to be two classes of definition, one related to gifts from the beloved, the other to gifts of charity. Grimm (1885) gives for Liebesgabe: ‘Gabe der Liebe, Gabe mitleidiger Menschen’ (gift of love, gift from compassionate people);<sup>27</sup> Cassell (1888/1909) gives only the plural: ‘(Im Kriege) presents to soldiers in the field, comforts for the soldiers.’ No other meaning is given;<sup>28</sup> Muret-Sanders (1901) again gives only the plural: ‘Alms, charitable gifts, pittance; (an die Geliebte – to the beloved) – presents, love-gifts.’ This is followed by an unattributed example: ‘Liebesgaben an die im Kriege befindlichen Soldaten – presents (cigars etc.) to soldiers in the field’;<sup>29</sup> Akademie-Verlag (1969) gives: ‘Spende aus Barmherzigkeit, Mildtätigkeit’ (charity out of compassion, liberality). This is followed by a quote: ‘Liebesgaben verteilen, ausgeben, erhalten; alles Liebesgaben für das

<sup>26</sup> ‘Die rätselhafte Wilde, Maria Meyer, die Eduard Mörike in seiner Tübinger Studentenzeit heimsuchte, ist der eine Pol für das Verständnis des Gedichts, denn es ist nicht zu überlesen, daß das Sich-Entzünden den Tod bringen kann, die bürgerliche Affäre mit Luise Rau der andere. ...Der Plural *locket* nach dem Singular *laß, o Welt, o laß mich sein!* Ist durchaus konkret als Anrede an die Frauen zu verstehen. Mörike hat denn auch als Pfarrer in Cleversulzbach nicht mit einer Lebensgefährtin, sondern mit seiner Mutter und seiner Schwester gelebt, also im engsten familiären Kreis, der ihn vor den tödlichen Pfeilen Amors schützen sollte.’ Burger, ‘Eduard Mörike’, in Reich-Ranicki, *1000 Deutsche Gedichte und ihre Interpretationen*, 213.

<sup>27</sup> Grimm, *J. Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1854), Leipzig: Hirzel, 1885, Bd. 6, 946.

<sup>28</sup> *Cassell’s German Dictionary*, 378.

<sup>29</sup> *Muret-Sanders encyclopädisches Wörterbuch*, 1339.

Gefangenenlager’<sup>30</sup> (to distribute, to issue, to obtain L.; all L. for the prison camp);<sup>31</sup> Cassell (1978): ‘gift parcel. (pl) comforts (for troops)’;<sup>32</sup> Brockhaus (1982): ‘Geschenk, Spende aus Barmherzigkeit, Mildtätigkeit’ (present, charity out of compassion, liberality);<sup>33</sup> Duden (1999): ‘Aus Mildtätigkeit gegebene Spende an Notleidende’ (charity given out of beneficence to the needy) – there follows a quote using the word Liebesgabenpaket: ‘Personen seiner Generation sind daran gewöhnt, dass man Liebesgabenpakete an die Front verschickt.’<sup>34</sup> (people of his generation were accustomed thereby, that one should send L.-parcels to the Front).<sup>35</sup> Though none of these definitions reaches as far back as Mörike’s poem, written more than fifty years earlier in 1832, (Grimm was first published in 1854), they do cover the period of Wolf’s song (1888). The interpreter is therefore faced with three choices of meaning: 1) a gift from the beloved, 2) a gift of charity or compassion, or more specifically, 3) a gift to a soldier or prisoner of war. Alternatively, Mörike may have intended a mixture of two or three of these meanings: the song may resolve the question, which will remain open for now.

‘Lasst dies Herz alleine haben seine Wonne, seine Pein’ rejects any involvement with others and the joy or pain which that may bring, wishing instead to experience a more intense, more personal and even self-generated joy and pain. ‘Wonne’ and ‘Pein’ are here used antithetically, and our translation should take that into account. The published translations given above have bliss/agonny, joy/sorrow, bliss/pain (twice), rapture/pain (three times), joy/pain, rapture/woe and gladness/pain. If bliss is chosen, then this suggests a heavenly aspect to the feeling, the joy of paradise,<sup>36</sup> and when we consider the third stanza where the same root is found (wonniglich), the poet has indeed slipped out of normal consciousness (kaum bewusst) and has perhaps entered a heavenly state. Rapture, while not approaching heaven, implies being carried away with joy,<sup>37</sup> which again fits the slipping away of consciousness. Joy and gladness may be the two

<sup>30</sup> Welk, Ehm. *Der hohe Befehl*, Berlin: Im Deutschen Verlag, 1939, 173.

<sup>31</sup> *Wörterbuch der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1969, Bd. 3, 2370.

<sup>32</sup> *German-English Dictionary*, London: Cassell, 1978, 394.

<sup>33</sup> *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1982, Bd. 4, 480.

<sup>34</sup> Pohrt, Wolfgang. *Endstation: über die Wiedergeburt der Nation: Pamphlete und Essays*, Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1982, 91.

<sup>35</sup> *Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, Mannheim: Duden, 1999, Bd. 6, 2426-7.

<sup>36</sup> *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, 231.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 2417.

words amongst this group which are not sufficiently strong to convey the mind-altered condition in the third stanza, besides which, in the six non-singing translations, joy is given as the equivalent of 'Freude'. Ecstasy is another possible translation, suggesting a further displacement in consciousness<sup>38</sup> almost to a pathological degree, and it is the one favoured by Thomas,<sup>39</sup> though his work does not appear above because he does not give a complete rendering of the poem into English.

With the choice before us for 'Wonne' between bliss, rapture and ecstasy, a suitable antithesis must be found to stand for 'Pein'. Pain is the obvious English word for this purpose since it shares the same derivation, and seven out of the ten translations use it: but it is perhaps rather too weak to be set against the Wonne words; sorrow and woe are if anything less suitable still. Bird and Stokes have 'agony' which the OED defines as 'anguish of mind, sore distress, paroxysm of grief' as well as giving definitions connected with physical suffering.<sup>40</sup> Therefore an appropriate pair of words might be *agony* and *ecstasy*.

'Traure' is an unusual form of the verb, probably a contraction of 'trauere' – I grieve or mourn: but this is normally an intransitive verb, and here it seems to be used transitively – 'Was' is the relative pronoun as the object of 'traure', and it relates to 'unbekanntes Wehe'. An alternative would be a construction similar to 'Was steht er da?' (Why is he standing there?), where 'was' stands for 'warum': 'Why do I grieve?' But in consequence 'unbekanntes Wehe' would be cut adrift from agreeing with anything. On balance, a transitive verb is indicated, which at least agrees with two of the translations: 'what I lament I know not: it is unknown misery'. 'Weh' is the usual form, though Mörike has 'Wehe' for rhythm and rhyme with 'sehe'. Sound-association with the verb 'wehen' (to blow) may perhaps be beside the point, but the notion that what grieves the poet has drifted on the breeze to him from an unknown source, cannot be dismissed out of hand. The 'unbekanntes Wehe' possesses more power to overwhelm the poet than any specific sorrow attached to an individual such as Maria Meyer or Luise Rau.

'Immerdar durch Tränen sehe ich der Sonne liebes Licht' (always through tears I see the sun's dear/beloved light) maintains a connection through 'liebes' with the rejected

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 831.

<sup>39</sup> Mörike, *Eduard Mörike Poems*, ed. Lionel Thomas, 92.

<sup>40</sup> *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 47.

‘Liebesgaben’, and by extension with ‘Liebe’ itself. The sun’s light may be part of that rejection, a rejection which encompasses so much of what the poet loves or has loved.

‘Oft bin ich mir kaum bewusst’ (often I am hardly aware of myself) can express a banal idea to a modern reader, as a description, for instance, of what happens to a car driver on a long journey, or of a person’s usual reaction when gripped by an exciting book or film. Theories about consciousness have become topics of everyday conversation, and the ideas developed by Freud and his followers, along with many of the words used to define those ideas, are familiar to most. This was not so at the time of Mörike’s poems, and even fifty years later at the time of Wolf’s song, Freud’s revolutionary work had hardly started: he published translations of Charcot & Bernheim in the 1880s, while his first original work appeared in 1891. For Mörike this line signifies something strange and possibly frightening: he has already written ‘unbekanntes Wehe’, perhaps a sign to him of impending insanity. His desire for withdrawal from the world represents an alienation from his fellow beings, and ‘alienation’ had for centuries been a term for the derangement of mental faculties.<sup>41</sup> But he is able immediately to record that at these moments of mental displacement he is overwhelmed by the sudden onset of ‘die helle Freude’ (bright joy), and this onset is described by the word ‘zücket’ as ‘to draw quickly’, as in drawing a sword.<sup>42</sup> None of the song translations given above have this meaning for zücket, instead they seem to have equated zücken with ‘zucken’ (flash), found in the phrase: ‘der Blitz zuckte durch die Luft’ (lightning flashed through the air); or ‘quiver, thrill’.<sup>43</sup>

Grimm has an instructive entry on ‘zücken’, suggesting that though both forms (zücken and zucken) were found in the past, ‘zücken’ disappeared during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries except in literature, when it was used where the rhyme required it: the relevant lines from ‘Verborgenheit’ are quoted. Either word could mean a lightning flash or the drawing of a sword.<sup>44</sup> Later dictionaries maintain a separation of meaning between lightning flash (zucken) and drawing of a sword from its sheath, or producing an

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 43.

<sup>42</sup> *Cassell’s German Dictionary*, 750.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 750.

<sup>44</sup> Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Bd. 16, 283-293.

object like a pencil from a place of concealment (zücken).<sup>45</sup> It would seem that the form 'zücken' re-emerged after Mörike's time with a specific meaning, but that he was using it as a *Literaturwort*, a variant which gave him a rhyme for 'drücken'.

The association of the word in one of its possible meanings with the drawing of a sword confirms the earlier reference to war found in one of the definitions of the word 'Liebesgaben'. Bright joy appears as a sword to assist in the struggle against the world and pierces the oppressing heaviness (die Schwere, so mich drücket), and we may conjecture that the similar sounds of Schwere (heaviness) and Schwert (sword) further emphasise the connection: this may be confirmed or denied when the song itself is studied.

'Wonniglich in meiner Brust', if we accept 'ecstasy' for Wonne, becomes 'ecstatically in my breast', and once more in the word 'breast' we can find evidence of struggle, of defiance and defence in German as in English: 'Brustwehr' is 'breastwork' or 'rampart'. Joy appears ecstatically in the poet's breast where beats the heart which has its ecstasy, and the circle is completed with an exact reiteration of the first stanza. But this repeated material now carries with it the weight of significance described in the intervening stanzas, which suggests that the reader alter his response with a deeper penetration into the poet's mind, and if he were to recite it he might do so with a changed style of delivery to reflect this new understanding. Alternatively, he might consider an unchanged delivery, allowing the listener's response to the middle stanzas to colour his own perception of the new depth of meaning to be found in the repeat.<sup>46</sup>

There is a problem encountered at the end of line three in the third stanza calling into question the above interpretation, which is that the enjambment found at the end of this line in the first, second (and fourth) stanzas, does not occur in the third stanza of Mörike's handwritten copy for the printer – there is a comma. The clear implication is that 'die helle Freude zücket durch die Schwere ... wonniglich in meine Brust' (bright joy appears through the heaviness ecstatically in my breast), and this is confirmed by

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<sup>45</sup> Muret-Sanders *encyclopädisches Wörterbuch*, 1861; *Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, Bd. 10, 4654; *Wörterbuch der deutschen Gegenwartssprache*, Bd. 6, 4474; *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Bd. 6, 857.

<sup>46</sup> 'A repetition is never the same twice, even if the material is delivered unchanged, as the audience's reception of the idea will automatically be different on the initial hearing from the repetition, when they will already be familiar with it and so be able to anticipate its affects.' Tarling, Judy. *The Weapons of Rhetoric*, St Albans: Corda Music, 2004, 236.



Thomas.<sup>47</sup> Yet an alternative reading is proposed in the first edition of 1838 and in the sixth edition of 1876, the one which Wolf used, where the comma at this point is missing. The enjambment which now seems to be indicated offers a different interpretation: 'die helle Freude zücket durch die Schwere' (bright joy appears through the heaviness), 'so mich drücket wonniglich in meiner Brust' (which oppresses me ecstatically in my breast): joy breaks through, but the poet achieves ecstasy by means of the oppression which heaviness creates. This may seem strange to a balanced, modern sensibility, but support for this interpretation is found in the literal *Lieder line by line* translation given earlier:

Oft am I to me hardly conscious  
 And the clear joy quivers  
 Through the heaviness (that) so me weighs down  
 Delightfully in my breast.

Without punctuation of any sort it would seem that the 'weighing down' is what is 'delightful'. Whether we can say whether or not Wolf saw it this way remains to be seen.

Some consideration now needs to be given to the sound of the text, an essential factor in any writing intended for declamation, whether poetry, drama or oration. The first stanza uses the letter L for alliteration (otherwise found only twice in each of the other stanzas): *Lass*, (*Welt*), *lass*, *locket*, *Liebesgaben*, *lasst* and *alleine*. This liquid sound has the effect of slowing the declamation, particularly in comparison with the shorter sounds of '... ich nicht, es ist unbekanntes ...' in stanza two, and 'Oft bin ich mir ... zücket ... so mich drücket wonniglich in ...' in stanza three. 'Lasst dies ...' needs precise enunciation to underline the plural form of the verb, and this too slows the delivery. There are in the first stanza four instances of the sound '-ei-', another lengthened sound (otherwise found only once in each of the other stanzas): *sein*, *alleine*, *seine* and *seine* again. This is the defining syllable of the first of Goethe's Harfenspieler Lieder, 'Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt':

Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt,	Who gives himself to loneliness,
Ach! der ist bald allein;	Ah, he is soon alone;
Ein jeder lebt, ein jeder liebt	Others – they live, they love
Und lässt ihn seiner Pein.	And leave him to his pain.

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<sup>47</sup> '...wonniglich in meiner Brust: this line refers to "Freude zücket".' Mörike, *Eduard Mörike Poems*, ed. Lionel Thomas, 92.

Ja! lasst mich meiner Qual!  
 Und kann ich nur einmal  
 Recht einsam sein,  
 Dann bin ich nicht allein.

Yes! To my torment leave me!  
 And can I but once  
 Truly lonely be,  
 Then I'll not be alone.

Es schleicht ein liebender lauschend sacht,  
 Ob seine Freundin allein?  
 So überschleicht bei Tag und Nacht  
 Mich einsamen die Pein,  
 Mich einsamen die Qual.  
 Ach, werd' ich erst einmal  
 Einsam im Grabe sein,  
 Da lässt sie mich allein!

A lover softly spying steals -  
 His loved one, is she alone?  
 So, by day and night, steals  
 Upon me who am lonely, the pain,  
 Upon me who am lonely, the torment.  
 Ah, when I shall be at last  
 Lonely in my grave,  
 Then will it leave me alone!

trans. Bird & Stokes<sup>48</sup>

'Ein' in German is quintessentially the sound of loneliness.

### *The writing of the song*

So far no reference has been made to Wolf's setting of the poem and how his music might help to clarify, reinforce or contradict the insights developed by the study of the text alone. Mörike's poem was written in 1832 when he was twenty eight years old, and it should therefore be read as expressing a relatively young man's sentiments, a positive desire for the opportunity to explore, without the distraction of a female presence, the inner world inhabited by his mind. This is in contrast with the possible feelings of an older man, whose desire to renounce the world might be taken as a prelude to his own death. Wolf wrote his song on 11 March 1888, his own twenty-eighth birthday, but the inspiration for his setting does not seem to have involved the disturbance created by women. It sprang instead from his need for withdrawal from the distractions of society in general in order to concentrate on composition.

In November 1887 his friend Friedrich Eckstein arranged for Wetzler of Vienna to publish twelve of Wolf's songs in two volumes, and this had a profound effect upon

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<sup>48</sup> Fischer-Dieskau, *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*, 230.

his self-confidence. The excitement he felt produced an irresistible wish to compose more songs, and for this purpose he left the house of the Lang family where he had been living since the summer, and moved into a deserted house belonging to other friends in the small town of Perchtoldsdorf: here he found the solitude he required for composing, in quiet surroundings and Spartan conditions. February 16<sup>th</sup> saw the completion of his first Mörike setting, 'Der Tambour', and by May 18<sup>th</sup> he had written a further forty two. From the letters he wrote at this time it is clear that he was astonished by this outpouring of creativity and that he regarded himself as a man possessed.<sup>49</sup> What poem could more clearly express his own condition than *Verborgenheit* – the desire for solitude coupled with a divine revelation welling up from within?

Sams suggests that performers of this song should be careful not to descend into 'drawing-room ballad cosiness' as a result of the music's un-Wolfian 'touches of overt sentiment', and he attributes this quality of the music to Wolf's identification with the poem's subject matter. Both he and Mörike are described as possessing 'cyclic temperaments', a condition presumably akin to manic depression.<sup>50</sup> The cyclic nature of the poem with its reiterated first stanza is mirrored in microcosm by the *abba* rhyme scheme. Franz's opus 28 setting (c.1870) uses the *abba* form for the music of the four stanzas, modifying the very ending, whereas Wolf chooses to develop *a-b-c* before returning to an unmodified *a*.<sup>51</sup> Sams draws attention to similarities between Wolf's song and 'Du Ring an meinem Finger' from *Frauenliebe und -leben* by Schumann, another composer with just such a cyclic temperament.<sup>52</sup>

### *The song*

Bars 1 and 2 of 'Verborgenheit' consist of a phrase played four times, a phrase which Wolf uses to accompany 'alleine' in bar 8. Its repetition suggests a hypnotic effect to induce the shift in consciousness which we encounter later in the poem or, when it is restated in the fourth stanza, the shift which we have already encountered. And this

<sup>49</sup> Walker, Frank. *Hugo Wolf: a Biography* (1951), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 199-208.

<sup>50</sup> Sams, *The Songs of Hugo Wolf*, 82-3.

<sup>51</sup> Franz, *Ausgewählte Lieder*, Bd. 2, 88-90.

<sup>52</sup> Schumann, Robert. *Sämtliche Lieder*, Bd. 1, Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, n/d, 92-3.

repeated phrase oscillates between major and minor as the poet oscillates between *Wonne* and *Pein*. Bars 3 and 4, 7 and 8 present a different oscillation, alternating between E flat and B flat<sup>7</sup> with a 'false' bass of E flat insisting on the tonic resolution. Bars 5 and 6, 9 and 10 offer standard diatonic progressions, but although Sams writes that 'the image of contented self-communion is graphically vivid',<sup>53</sup> a rider could be added that this contented self-communion is coloured by perplexity.

Throughout the second stanza the emotional tension is reflected by more complicated harmonies. The voice builds up this tension through two lines of poetry, increasing in volume, a procedure of necessity in spite of there being no dynamic markings in the vocal line, and leaning on the *appoggiaturas* on 'traure', 'nicht' and 'Wehe'. But as the vocal tension then disperses, so the accompaniment continues its rising, anguished search for the sunlight, receding to *pp* as it goes, only to find the key of G flat (in the guise of D flat<sup>7</sup>). Once more the tension builds up through the first three lines of the third stanza, under Wolf's instruction 'nach und nach belebter und leidenschaftlicher' (gradually more animated and impassioned). The octaves in the piano, which in stanza 3 rose in a noble countermelody to the voice, here have a downward, threatening character. The crescendo is not continuous but comes in surges, each surge followed by a sudden suppression before the next surge, culminating in the *fortissimo* climax at 'wonniglich'. The voice, having risen to G flat three times, finally blossoms on a G natural, and the tonic is at last re-established after being absent for fifteen tension-filled bars, though here it is in its second inversion, suggesting that the tension has not been entirely dissipated until the root position is reached at the return of 'Lass, o Welt'.

The musical phrase for 'die Schwere' (bar 24), A natural, C flat and B flat, has a close, insinuating quality to it, signifying not so much the heaviness implied by the word 'Schwere', but the oppression indicated by 'drücket' in the next bar – after all, it is heaviness which oppresses rather than the verb 'oppress' itself. Sams points out that the lowest note in the piano part, the F quaver in bar 27, occurs under 'Brust', showing 'how deeply yet unwittingly the heart is suddenly and briefly filled with joy'. He also identifies a motif of falling sixths on 'Wonne, seine Pein', which he associates in Wolf's songs

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 82.

with the act of singing itself, and here he calls it ‘the inward singing of the solitary mind’.<sup>54</sup>

There remains the question of whether or not Wolf expects an enjambment at the end of line three in stanza three, and therefore whether the joy breaks through ecstatically or whether the heaviness oppresses ecstatically. The crescendo in the piano part through the second half of bar 25 leading to *fortissimo* on ‘wonniglich’ suggests that he does expect the enjambment, leading us to conclude that Wolf thought that it is heaviness which oppresses ecstatically. There is at least the possibility that he wanted no break between ‘drücket’ and ‘wonniglich’, and this is the position that Graham Johnson takes, believing that the pianist, with a judicious quickening of the tempo, should assist the singer to take the whole phrase from ‘so’ to ‘Brust’ in one breath.<sup>55</sup> Performed in this manner, the text retains the punctuation of the early editions and thereby also offers the listener the choice of two alternative interpretations.

The above brief analysis of the music suggests that Wolf’s setting corresponds very closely to the poetic insights developed earlier except in one obvious way – the music gives no hint of any martial connection. ‘Liebesgaben’ as relating to soldiers, and ‘Schwere/Schwert’ seem to have no justification at all, and if that is so, then ‘drücket’ should be likened to the drawing of a sword only as a descriptive analogy for something which appears suddenly, and perhaps the ‘flash’ which some translations offer, does give an appropriate mixture of ‘sudden appearance’ with ‘light’, which refers back to the earlier mention of the sun. Similarly, the knightly breastplate should probably be rejected.

If martial connotations of the word *Liebesgaben* are discarded, there is still a choice between the gift of personal love and the gift of impersonal, charitable love, or perhaps a conflation of the two. A gift which purports to be from a loved one may be rejected because it smacks of charity, and if the giver’s motives are suspect anyway, the thought that the gift may be a patronising gesture compounds the suspicion and leads to a more vehement rejection. Mörike’s injunction against offering gifts to tempt him back into the world and its distractions may be coloured with a sense of bitterness that the givers, plural in this poem, may be acting more through pity than love. Such bitter

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 83.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, Graham. Interview by author, 12 September, 2006.

feelings can be expressed in this song, provided they are understated, with a hint of a sneer on the syllable 'Lie-' perhaps achieving the desired result. The singer may well think that the tinge of bitterness on that syllable in the first stanza will have dissolved by the time of its repetition in the fourth, leaving only a loving memory. These are not put forward as recommendations, but simply statements of what might be possible interpretations.

There remains an unresolved dilemma when comparing the poem with its setting, namely Wolf's insistence on *fortissimo* for the accompaniment to 'wonniglich'. It would be a strange style of recitation indeed which reached such a volume of sound when spoken, more particularly one which deals with solitude, seclusion and withdrawal, yet *fortissimo* often appears in Wolf's songs. He establishes it in the very first of his Mörike settings, 'Der Genesene an die Hoffnung' (The convalescent's ode to Hope), at the end of the first stanza:<sup>56</sup>

Tödlich graute mir der Morgen:	Fatal dawned the day for me:
Doch schon lag mein Haupt, wie süß!	yet my head lay, how sweetly
Hoffnung, dir im Schoss verborgen,	hidden, Hope, in your lap,
Bis der Sieg gewonnen hiess,	till victory was reckoned won,
Bis der Sieg gewonnen hiess.	till victory was reckoned won.

trans. Bird and Stokes<sup>57</sup>

The *fortissimo* occurs in the piano part on the second 'Sieg' (victory), in one of Wolf's rare line repetitions. 'Jägerlied' (Huntsman's song), the fourth Mörike setting, has *ff* for the accompaniment to 'Tausendmal so hoch und so geschwind/die Gedanken treuer Liebe sind' (A thousand times higher and more swift/are the thoughts of true love).<sup>58</sup> The sixth song, 'Er ist's' (It is Spring), goes one step further to *fff* for the piano under the final 'du bist's!' (it is you), the end of an even rarer double line repetition.<sup>59</sup>

At those moments when Wolf is at his most enthusiastic he therefore considers *fortissimo* to be an appropriate marking for these songs of 1888, as he does throughout his song-writing career. Song, according to convention, goes beyond simply being heightened declamation, but has the potential to reach much greater extremes of

<sup>56</sup> Wolf, *Gedichte von Eduard Mörike, Bd. 1, 4-7.*

<sup>57</sup> Fischer-Dieskau, *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*, 114.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 16-7.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 22-5.

emotional intensity, and much greater extremes of dynamic range. Extremes of dynamic are to be found less in the voice than in the piano, the more ‘musical’ of the two media: the piano carries much more musical information, and through it can express underlying mood and intensity to a greater degree. Wolf gives quite detailed dynamic instructions to the pianist, but is sparing of them in the vocal line, usually leaving such matters to the singer: ‘Verborgenheit’, for example, has no vocal dynamic markings at all. ‘Er ist’s’ has four separate *forte* markings for the voice: the first when the piano also has *f*, the second when the piano has *piu f*, the third above *ff*, and the fourth above *molto cresc.*, *ff*, *fff*. The singer’s experience, taste and common sense have to be engaged in making decisions on how to deal with these extreme instances, and most would choose not to utter their loudest possible note at the climax of ‘Verborgenheit’.

### *Summary of observations*

Now that this process of research and analysis is essentially complete, the salient features can be given in the following brief summary.

#### 1. Generalised conclusions about the poem:

- a). The withdrawal is pleasurable.
- b). There are implications from a Freudian perspective.
- c). There is deepening intensification through stanzas 2 and 3.
- d). Stanza 4 may be a simple reiteration, or its delivery may take account of the developments through 2 and 3.

#### 2. Observations about the text:

- a). The confusion inherent in eleven different translations
- b). The change of number between *lass* and *locket/lasst*.
- c). Refining the meaning of *Wonne/Pein*.
- d). The implications for sanity of *unbekanntes Wehe*.
- e). The possible rejection of the sun’s light.
- f). Exploring the meaning of *drücket*.
- g). Ecstasy found in oppression.

- h). The implications of the cyclic nature of both the rhyme scheme and the overall structure of the poem.
  - i). The martial associations of several words.
  - j). The rejection of charity and pity as well as love.
  - k). Discussion of the poet's motives.
3. Observations about the music:
- a). Discussion of the composer's motives.
  - b). The hypnotic opening.
  - c). Oscillation between extremes.
  - d). The build-up and resolution of tension.
  - e). Discussion of the purpose of *ff*.
  - f). Confirmation that ecstasy is found in oppression.
  - g). Rejection of the martial associations.

The singer is now in a position to make performance decisions on the basis of this analysis and to attempt to create an interpretation which may be true to Wolf's original intention.

It could be argued that Wolf is a special case, with his music's 'unique quality of intimate inter-relationship with words, with language, and with poetry'.<sup>60</sup> Glauert is more specific:

Wolf had reorientated the main links between music and poetry from immediate matters of mood and motif, to a longer-term play of form and structure. His songs unfolded as a series of questions about the nature of musico-poetic links, rather than as statements or assertions. The 'answer', the settling of the poetic interpretation, had to be found within musical means, even if the questions were raised through responses to poetry.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, the changes that had occurred in the performance-style of song during the nineteenth century put Wolf in a different place from, say, Schubert. Wagner's demand for a style of singing which was based on the German language rather than the Italian production universally taught, had created a specifically German school of singing

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<sup>60</sup> Sams, *The Songs of Hugo Wolf*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Glauert, *Hugo Wolf and the Wagnerian Inheritance*, 52.



founded by Schmitt and developed by Hey. Sonnleithner, a friend of Schubert, wrote that Schubert did not want his songs declaimed but sung with sustained cantilena: the song is lyrical, not dramatic. The new German naturalism aimed to sweep this away, and Wolf is the composer most closely associated with the modern style of declamation: analysis of the speech-tones used by actors at the end of the nineteenth century shows a close correspondence with the melodic inflections of Wolf's songs.<sup>62</sup> Wolf, in the *Wiener Salonblatt*, March 30, 1884, writes amusingly, but with obvious passion, about what he saw as the silliness of Italian opera with its ridiculous vocal conventions.<sup>63</sup>

### *Summary*

In respect of the works of composers before Wolf, such long-winded analysis of the poetry and the music's relationship with it as found in this study might be seen as supererogatory and unjustified. But without a well-informed insight into the literary pretensions of each composer, a performer would be unwise to reject at least a simplified version of this kind of investigation unless he or she is happy to peddle a generalised, hand-me-down interpretation taught by a vocal coach. As to the translation of text alone, language resonates for a native speaker with layers of significance which cannot necessarily be identified by a non-native using a cursory translation: the thoughtful singer would be wise to uncover as much as possible of those layers.

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<sup>62</sup> Kravitt, *The Lied, Mirror of Late Romanticism*, chapter 4: *Declamation*, 51-74. Wagner's quoted statement on the subject of just diction and tone-production reads very much like an earlier version of Barthes' definition of the grain of the voice. See Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, vol. 4, 453-4.

<sup>63</sup> Wolf, *The Music Criticism of Hugo Wolf*, 32.

## Chapter seven

### The thought behind the utterance

If we start with the assumption that the protagonist of a song is a thinking, feeling human being, it follows that he or she is engaging in thought before giving voice to it. Such thoughts may be single-pointed, like ‘Why did you leave me?’ or ‘I am in love’, or they may be more complex or involve memories of past events which become relevant as the song unfolds. The singer, therefore, who wishes to represent that protagonist faithfully, must explore these thoughts and memories, and express them clearly. Crucially, the singer must identify the moment when the thought occurs by reference to both the text and the music.

#### *Moments of thought*

A song which contains a narrative or dialogue, or which follows several consecutive lines of thought, requires clear changes of mood or character, or what Caccini termed ‘variety of affect’.<sup>1</sup> The singer, to be true to the dramatic impulse, needs to be precise about where these changes should occur, either to delineate the characters or to trace the thoughts as they arise. The first examples, recitatives by Monteverdi and Bach, have been chosen for the clarity with which they move from one thought to another.

Consider Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*, Act 5, (ex. 1), when Orfeo finds himself alone after losing Euridice for the second and final time:<sup>2</sup>

Ex. 1. Monteverdi, *Orfeo*, Act 5, bars 5-28.

<sup>1</sup> Caccini, Giulio. *Nuove musiche e nuova maniera di scriverle* (1614), ed. & trans. H. Wiley Hitchcock, Madison: A-R Editions, 1978, xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Monteverdi, Claudio. *Orfeo* (1607), ed. Clifford Bartlett, Huntingdon: King's Music, 1993, 108-9.

8  
 som - m'il co - re Per l'a - ma - ra no - vel - lai mio do - lo - re. Poi - che non

11  
 ho più spe - me Di ri - co - vrar pre - gan - do Pian - gen - do e so - spi - ran - do

13  
 Il per - du - to mio be - ne, Che pos - soio più? se non vol - ger - mià vo - i Sel - ve so - a - viun

6

16  
 tem - po Con - for - toa miei mar - tir, men - tr'al ciel piac - que, Per far - vi per pie - tà me -

# b

19  
 - co lan - gui - re Al mio lan - gui - re. Voi vi do - le - ste o

# # 4 # # # 7 #

22  
 Mon - ti, e la - gri - ma - ste Voi sas - si al di - par - tir del no - stro so - le, Et io con vo -

# # 7 # 6 7 b # # 7

25  
 i la - gri - me - rò mai sem - pre, E mai sem - pre dor -

# 4 # #

27  
 rom - mi, ahi do - glia, ahi pian - to.

6 # 4 #

Each of the first three sentences marks a new thought:

1. I am grieving here in Thrace (bars 5-10);
2. Since I have lost her, I return for comfort to these woods (bars 10-21);
3. I shall weep with the mountains and stones (bars 21-28).

With each new sentence comes a change of key, a clear indication of a shift of mood. The following sentences, at bars 28, 39, 43, 45 and 48, retain the key signature of C major as he maintains his dialogue with Echo. Only at bar 50 does this alter to F major when Orfeo starts to address his 'anima mia', the ghost of his lost Euridice.

These changes of key provide a skeleton for the singer's interpretation: within each of these periods, the complex harmonic flux, rhythm and melodic line indicate in finer detail how individual words and phrases are given their own colour and intensity. In addition, bar 15 finds a change of key in the middle of a sentence, at the moment when he intones the word 'Selvi' (woods). These are the 'sweet woods' which used to comfort him in his grief, and which he hopes will do so again: they are introduced with a 'sweet' modulation.

### *Changes of thought in Bach cantatas*

The recitatives in Bach's cantatas also offer indicators of where new thoughts occur. The simplest form has each sentence completed by a perfect cadence, as in the bass recitative of *Cantata 65* (ex. 2):<sup>3</sup>

Ex. 2. J. S. Bach, *Cantata 65*, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, bars 1-3.

Was dort Je-sa - i - as vor-her-ge- sehn, das ist zu Beth-le-hem ge- sehn.

(That which was foretold by Isaiah, has come to pass in Bethlehem).

The following three sentences of the recitative maintain the same pattern:

*Hier stellen sich die Weisen bei Jesu Krippe ein, und wollen ihn als ihren König preisen.*

(Here the wise men appear by Jesus' crib, and wish to glorify him as their king).

<sup>3</sup> Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Cantata BWV 65*, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1972, 14-15.

*Gold, Weihrauch, Myrrhen sind die köstlichen Geschenke, womit sie dieses Jesuskind zu Bethlehem im Stall beehren.* (Gold, frankincense and myrrh are the precious gifts with which they honour this Christchild in the stable).

*Mein Jesu, wenn ich jetzt an meine Pflicht gedenke, muss ich mich auch zu deiner Krippe kehren, und gleichfalls dankbar sein: denn dieser Tag ist mir der Tag der Freuden, da du, o Lebensfürst, das Licht der Heiden, und ihr Erlöser wirst.* (My Jesus, when I now think on my duty, I must also turn to your crib and be equally thankful: for this day is to me the day of joy, when you, o prince of life, shall be a light to the heathen and their redeemer).

The fifth passage of text does not quite fit this pattern (ex. 3):<sup>4</sup>

Ex. 3. J. S. Bach, *Cantata 65*, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, bars 21-26.

22

Bass

Was a - ber bring'ich wohl, du Him - mels - kö - nig? Ist dir mein Her - ze nicht zu we - nig, so

24

B.

nimm es gnä - dig an, weil ich nichts Ed - lers brin - gen kann.

(But what can I bring, o heavenly king? If my heart is not too small for you, then take it in mercy because I can bring nothing more noble).

Here are two sentences, a question and its answer, and not only is there no perfect cadence between them, the harmonic tension insists that the singer does not come to any caesura in bar 22, but must link them and continue the musical idea to the end. Additionally, the answer is in two parts – if A, then B – and B is here a dedication from the faithful disciple: Bach highlights this statement of faith with a short passage of *arioso* which requires of the singer a more *cantabile* treatment.

This omission of a caesura between sentences occurs to a greater extent in other cantatas, where Bach eschews the cadence in order to maintain the sense of the statement that is being made, as in the bass recitative of *Cantata 72*, where there are five sentences but only two perfect cadences:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Cantata BWV 72*, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1931, 25.

1. *So glaube nun! 2. Dein Heiland saget: ich will's tun!* (So believe! The saviour says: I will do it!) – Cadence;

3. *Er pflegt die Gnadenhand noch willigst auszustrekken, wenn Kreuz und Leiden dich erschrecken. 4. Er kennet deine Not, und lost dein Kreuzesband! 5. Er stärkt was schwach! und will das nied're Dach der armen Herzen nicht verschmähen, darunter gnädig einzugehen.* (He offers his merciful hand willingly to help you, when cross and suffering terrify you. He knows your need, and looses the bonds of the cross. He strengthens what is weak, and will not disdain mercifully to enter the humble dwelling of a poor heart). Here is a fivefold list, in three sentences, of what the Saviour will do for us: the list may have five terms, but they are unified by a single thought.

In other cases a change of thought is shown by a change from recitative to arioso or vice versa. The tenor recitative in *Cantata 61*, for example, can be divided into three parts:<sup>6</sup>

1. *Der Heiland ist gekommen, hat unser armes Fleisch und Blut an sich genommen, und nimmet uns zu Blutsverwandten an.* (The saviour is come, has taken our poor flesh and blood, and taken us as blood-kinsmen).

2. *Oh! allerhöchstes Gut was hast du nicht an uns getan? 3. Was tust du nicht noch täglich an den Deinen?* (Oh, supreme goodness, what have you not done for us? What do you not do daily for your own?).

4. *Du kommst und lässt dein Licht mit vollem Segen scheinen.* (You come and let your blessing-filled light shine.)

The first part is a statement of faith in one sentence, concluded by a perfect cadence: the second is an expression of thanks, couched in two rhetorical questions, which is concluded by a change from recitative to arioso, and this accompanies the third part stating what it is that God does.

An example where the new thought, or change of affect, occurs during a sentence, and which is indicated by a change of movement (here at 2a – *so kehrst du* – ex. 4), is the bass recitative of *Cantata 78*:<sup>7</sup>

1. *Die Wunden, Nägel, Kron' und Grab, die Schläge so man dort dem Heiland gab, sind ihm nunmehr Siegeszeichen und können mir erneute Kräfte reichen.* (The wounds, nails, crown and grave, the blows given there to the saviour, are for him henceforth trophies of victory, and can give me renewed strength).

<sup>6</sup> Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Cantata BWV 61*, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1970, 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Cantata BWV 78*, 5<sup>th</sup> movement, Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1933, 28-29.

2. Wenn ein erschreckliches Gericht den Fluch vor die Verdammten spricht: (When a terrible judgment pronounces the curse on the damned:)

2a. so kehrst du ihn in Segen. 3. Mich kann kein Schmerz und keine Pein bewegen, weil sie mein Heiland kennt, und da dein Herz vor mich in Liebe brennt, so lege ich hinwieder das meine vor dir nieder. (you change it to a blessing. No grief or pain can disturb me, for my saviour knows them, and as your heart burns with love for me, so I would lay whatever is mine before you).

4. Dies, mein Herz, mit Leid vermengt, so dein teures Blut besprenget, so am Kreuz vergossen ist, geb' ich dir, Herr Jesu Christ. (This my heart, with grief confused and sprinkled with your dear blood shed upon the cross, I give to you, Lord Jesus Christ).

Ex. 4. J. S. Bach, *Cantata 78*, 5<sup>th</sup> movement, bars 7-18.

7 *Vivace*

Wenn ein erschreckliches Gericht den Fluch vor die Verdammten spricht: so

10 *Lento*

kehrst du ihn in Segen. Mich kann kein Schmerz und keine Pein bewegen, weil sie mein Heiland

13

kennt, und da dein Herz vor mich in Liebe brennt, so lege ich hinwieder das

16 *tr* *Andante* *tr*  
 mei - ne vor dir nie - der. Dies, mein Herz,

Sentence 2 is marked *Vivace*; the second part (2a) *Lento*, which serves for 3 also. The text talks of change (2a), and in 3 tells how that change works on the soul, thus maintaining the same thought until the perfect cadence into 4, an arioso section marked *Andante*.

### *Unprepared changes of affect in Purcell's Mad Songs*

The Mad Songs of Purcell exhibit changes of thought in a more extreme way than those of the Monteverdi and Bach examples above. Part of the quality of their madness comes from sudden shifts of mood, which are most effective in performance when they are unprepared. A good example is Bess of Bedlam's 'From silent shades, and the Elizium groves', a single song from 1683.<sup>8</sup> She is suffering from 'lovesick melancholy', a standard complaint for this genre, and her text makes bizarre conjunctions of ideas.

Ex. 5.

(a)

18  
 And O - be-ron did sit in state, When Mars at Ve-nus ran his lance. In

23  
 yon - der cow - slip lies my dear, En-tombed in li - quid gems of dew;

<sup>8</sup> Roberts, Timothy. *Thirteen Mad Songs*, Book 1, 25-29.



(b)

53

Shall war - ble\_ forth\_ my e - le - gy. Did you not see my love as he passed

58

by you? His two fla-ming eyes, if he come nigh you, they will scorch up your hearts. La - dies be - ware ye,

63

Lest he should dart a glance that may en - snare ye. Hark! hark! I hear old Cha-ron bawl,

In ex. 5a the jaunty gavotte movement suddenly gives way to a slow triple time in bar 22 at Bess' change of thought, while later in the song (ex. 5b) the changes of thought and movement become even more condensed and strange.

### *New thoughts in Schubert's 'Die Erwartung'*

Schubert's ballads or song-cantatas, such as 'Hermann und Thusnelda', 'Szene aus Faust', 'Orpheus' or 'Der Taucher', (mostly written in his teenage years) follow in the tradition of Zumsteeg, being in general terms narrative miniatures. They use recitative and lyrical arioso to carry the listener through the various episodes of the stories, with the piano taking a leading role in illustrating scene and mood. Some, like 'Szene aus Faust' and 'Die Bürgschaft', started life as sketches for operas which never materialised. It is questionable whether this genre of song is entirely successful, but it does provide useful material for studying the protagonists' thought-processes.

'Die Erwartung' (Expectation), D 159, was the second version of this song, written in May 1816 and published in 1829.<sup>9</sup> Schiller's poem describes his feelings as he awaits his beloved, in reality his future bride, Charlotte. Every time he hears a noise he asks himself whether it is she: five times he asks, and each time it turns out to be nothing but the wind in the poplars, a startled bird, a swan on the lake and so on. Between each of

<sup>9</sup> Schubert, Franz. *Gesänge*, Bd. 3, Frankfurt: C. F. Peters, n/d, 84-93.

these episodes he muses on the beauties of nature as they reflect the quality of his love. When she finally appears, he has fallen asleep.

Ex. 6. Schubert, 'Die Erwartung', bars 4-9.

4 *Recit.*  
Hör'ich das Pfort chen nicht ge hen? Hat nicht der Rie-gel ge-klirrt?

7  
Nein, es war des Win-des We-hen, der durch die Pap - peln schwirrt.

(Didn't I hear the garden gate? Did the catch clink? No, it was the wind sighing as it whistled through the poplars)

In ex. 6, the answer, 'Nein, es war ...' clearly calls for an indication from the singer of the character's disappointment: without this he would justly be criticised for failing to understand the text. But if he is to create a truly convincing performance which appears to spring from the character's experience, he must also indicate when the answer to the question becomes clear. There are two obvious kinds of reaction to consider: the sudden realisation or the slower dawning of the truth. It will be seen in this example that there is no harmonic, rhythmic or articulatory indication of a new thought in bar 6. There is, however, a crescendo during the fourth beat, and this could be used as the gradual realisation of the negative answer, reinforced, perhaps, by *rallentando* in the piano.

## Ex. 7. Schubert, 'Die Erwartung', bars 30-40.

30

Stil-le! was

33

schlüpft durch die Heck-en rasch-elnd mit ei-len-dem Lauf?

36

Nein, es scheuch-te nur der Schre-cken aus dem Busch den Vo-gel

38

auf.

(Quiet! what was that, darting through the hedge, rustling in its haste? No, it was only a frightened bird surprised from the bush)

In ex. 7, if it were agreed that the singer's cue for when the answer should appear is the *fp* in bar 36 coming immediately after the *pp* tremolandos, then his reaction could be more sudden than in ex. 6 because of the nature of the articulation: here a *fp*, there a gradual crescendo.

## Ex. 8. Schubert, 'Die Erwartung', bars 62-70.

62 *Etwas bewegt* *Recit.*

Rief es von fer-ne nicht lei se, flü stern-den Stim-men gleich?

66

Nein, der Schwan ist's, der die

68 *im Takte.*

Krei - se zieht durch den Sil - ber - teich.

(Wasn't that a faint, distant call, like whispering voices? No, it is the swan, making circles in the silver pool)

This time (ex. 8) there is no indication in bars 66 or 67 of any precise moment of change: the progression to C minor from Bb major is hardly definite enough to constitute a signal. Now it is for the singer to decide on the timing, though the pianist could make his task a little easier by preparing for the answer with a slight *allargando* into bar 67 perhaps, and some extra weight on the C minor chord. Even if the performers felt justified in doing this, the quality of the character's reaction would probably be slow, not sudden.

## Ex. 9. Schubert, 'Die Erwartung', bars 92-105.

92 *Etwas geschwind*



96 Hör'ich nicht Trit-te er-schal-len? Rauscht's nicht den Laub-gang da-

99 her? Die

102 Frucht ist dort ge-fal-len, von der eig'-nen Fül-le schwer.

(Don't I hear footsteps, rustling on the leafy path? A fruit has fallen there, heavy with ripeness)

In ex. 9, the downward passage in bars 100/101 with crescendo and *fp* suggests the fruit falling and hitting the ground. The *fp* moment could be a suitable point for the singer to react. If that were his choice, then he should be careful not to anticipate the moment: that would cloud the clarity of his presentation. Another choice might be as if

the character were watching the fruit fall, in which case the gradual understanding comes before the *fp*.

Ex. 10. Schubert, 'Die Erwartung', bars 133-148.

133 *Mässig geschwind.*

Sch'ich nicht Weis-ses dort

137

schim- mern? Glänzt's nicht wie seid' nes Ge wand?

142

Nein, es ist der Säule Flim- mern an der

145

dun - keln Ta - xus wand.

(Don't I see something white shimmering? Doesn't it gleam like a silken garment? No, it is the glistening of the pillar against the dark yew hedge)

In ex. 10 there is a change of harmony at bar 142, which could be a subtle indication that a change has occurred. Other than this there is no indication of any particular moment which might cause a reaction. It is therefore unlikely that the singer would choose to respond suddenly: there is nothing specific enough to cause such a response.

### *Moment of appearance of new characters*

The changes of thought studied so far have been those of a single individual. The narrative song or ballad, of which 'Erlkönig' is an example, often involves the singer in portraying more than one character. Here the problem is not only distinguishing between the various characters, but finding the moment at which a new character should appear. Consider Loewe's 'Erlkönig' of 1818:<sup>10</sup>

Ex. 11. Loewe, *Erlkönig*, bars 12-19.

12

si - cher, er hält ihn warm.

*mf*

14

*mf* *p assai*

"Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Ge - sicht?" "Sichst

<sup>10</sup> Loewe, *Balladen und Lieder*, Bd. 1, 50-56.

17

Va - ter du den Erl - kö - nig nicht? den Er - len - kö - nig mit

(... safe, he keeps him warm. “My son, why are you hiding your face in fear?” “Father, don’t you see the Erlking?”).

In ex. 11 the singer first portrays the narrator, then the father, and then the child (and later, the erlking). The piano part shows a new character (the father) at the beginning of bar 13, but at this moment the singer is still the narrator. What may seem clear to the pianist is not necessarily appropriate for the singer, who must choose during bars 13 and 14 the moment and the means for switching roles. The position is clearer in bar 16 for the change to the child, when the moment is probably the tremolando on the second beat. Whatever the performers choose, they must be certain how the transitions are made: only clarity of decision will truly convince the audience.

Schubert’s ‘Der Tod und das Mädchen’ demands choice of a similar kind.<sup>11</sup>

Ex. 12. Schubert, ‘Der Tod und das Mädchen’, bars 1-24.

1 *Mäßig*

8 *Das Mädchen Etwas geschwinder*

Vor - ü - ber! ach, vor - ü - ber! geh, wil - der Kno - chen mann! Ich

<sup>11</sup> Schubert, *Gesänge*, Bd. 1, 221.



13  
bin noch jung, geh, Lie - ber! und rüh - re mich nicht an, und

18  
rüh - re mich nicht an. Gib dei - ne Hand, du schön und zart Ge -

*Das erste Zeitmaß*  
Der Tod

*pp* *dim* *pp*

(“Pass me by, ah, pass me by! Go, fierce skeleton! I am still young – go, beloved, and do not disturb me.” “ Give me your hand, you lovely and gentle creature ...”)

Here (ex. 12) the transition from the slow, portentous piano introduction to the *Etwas geschwinder* entry of the girl, happens during the rest in bar 8. The simplest solution for the singer is to wait for Death’s music (the introduction) to finish, and then to assume the girl’s character in the short silence: a similar solution would fit for Death’s entry during the pause in bar 21. Alternatively, the singer may feel that the introduction represents the approach of Death, and that the girl watches and grows in agitation. In this case she might be in character from the opening of the song. She might then anticipate her vocal entry by her demeanour, plainly showing her agitation before the piano has finished its opening funeral march. In this case, Talma’s words would be appropriate:

There are... situations in which a person strongly moved feels too acutely to await the slow combinations of words. The sentiment that overpowers him escapes in mute action before the voice is able to give it utterance.<sup>12</sup>

Death’s entry could still be contrived in the same way as before, or she might consider gradually changing roles during the final phrase of the *etwas geschwinder* passage in bars 20 and 21, at the same time as the pianist makes the stylistically necessary, though unmarked, *rallentando*. Once more, the success of the interpretation relies upon clarity of imagination.

<sup>12</sup> Talma, François Joseph. *Talma on the Actor’s Art*, London: Bickers, 1883, 23.

In the two Schubert examples above it has been clear from the text when one character or another is speaking. In Verlaine's 'Sur l'herbe', set by Ravel, though different characters speak, it is not clear who is speaking at any one time. The text in the left column is from the Durand edition of the song (1907),<sup>13</sup> that on the right is from the collection *Fêtes galantes*.<sup>14</sup> Note that there are more quotation-dashes in the poem as published than there are in the song text.

L'abbé divague: – Et toi, marquis,	L'abbé divague: – Et toi, marquis,
Tu mets de travers ta perruque.	Tu mets de travers ta perruque.
– Ce vieux vin de Chypre est exquis;	– Ce vieux vin de Chypre est exquis;
Moins, Camargo, que votre nuque.	Moins, Camargo, que votre nuque.
– Ma flamme... Do, mi, sol, la, si.	– Ma flamme... – Do, mi, sol, la, si.
– L'abbé, ta noirceur se dévoile.	– L'abbé, ta noirceur se dévoile.
– Que je meure, Mesdames, si	– Que je meure, Mesdames, si
Je ne vous décroche une étoile.	Je ne vous décroche une étoile.
– Je voudrais être petit chien!	– Je voudrais être petit chien!
Embrassons nos bergères, l'une	– Embrassons nos bergères, l'une
Après l'autre, Messieurs, eh bien?	Après l'autre. – Messieurs, eh bien?
Do, mi, sol, Hé! bonsoir la Lune!	– Do, mi, sol. – Hé! bonsoir la lune!

Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes* poems describe scenes in a Watteau-like landscape.<sup>15</sup> Here is a group of ladies and their beaux in a park, revealed to us through snippets of conversation. We know that the abbot speaks – 'Et toi, marquis, tu mets de travers ta perruque' (Marquis, you've put your wig on crooked) – but from then on we cannot tell: it is all flirtatious chatter. Perhaps the marquis responds, and maybe Camargo,<sup>16</sup> one of the ladies, tells the abbot: 'L'abbé, ta noirceur se dévoile' (Abbot, your wickedness is exposed). It will be seen from the parallel texts above that Verlaine's original is broken

<sup>13</sup> Ravel, Maurice. *Douze Chants*, Paris: Durand et Cie., 1909, 45-48.

<sup>14</sup> Verlaine, Paul. *Fêtes galantes* (1869), Paris: Léon Vanier, 1886, 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> The term *Fêtes galantes* had been coined for the genre of painting epitomised by Watteau, Fragonard and Boucher after Watteau first exhibited his *L'embarquement pour Cythère* in 1717. Hallam Walker points out that in 'Sur l'herbe' there is no description of the background to the scene, and that the poem has no connection with any specific painting. Walker, Hallam. 'Visual & Spatial Imagery in Verlaine's *Fêtes Galantes*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 87/5 (Oct 1972), 1010.

<sup>16</sup> Marie Anne Cupis de Camargo (1710-1770) was a dancer who became one of the most celebrated women of her time. Nicolas Lancret painted *La Camargo dansant* (c. 1730) in the style of a *fête galante*.

up into more little snatches than the version used by Ravel. It is a matter for debate whether the published song text should be corrected or left alone, but seeing the original makes it clear that no precise delineation of particular characters is required, simply a general differentiation one from another.

*Moment of realisation in two settings of 'Waldesgespräch'*

When a singer wishes to find the moment when a character experiences a thought (rather than when he or she expresses that thought), there can be a conflict between his own understanding of the written text and the text as understood and interpreted by the composer. As with the Verlaine text above, the problem can be compounded by variations in punctuation. An example of such a conflict is 'Waldesgespräch', a poem by Eichendorff, here studied in settings by Schumann (Op. 39, no. 3) and Jensen (Op. 5, no. 4).<sup>17</sup>

1	<p>"Es ist schon spät, es wird schon kalt, Was reit'st du einsam durch den Wald? Der Wald ist lang, du bist allein, Du schöne Braut! Ich führ' dich heim!"</p>	<p>It is late, it will be cold, Why do you ride alone through the forest? The forest is long, you are alone, You beautiful bride, I will lead you home.</p>
5	<p>"Gross ist der Männer Trug und List, Vor schmerz mein Herz gebrochen ist, Wohl irrt das Waldhorn her und hin, O flieh'! Du weisst nicht wer ich bin."</p>	<p>"Great is the deceit and cunning of men, With grief my heart is broken, The hunting horn sounds now here, now there. O fly! You know not who I am!"</p>
9	<p>"So reich geschmückt ist Ross und Weib, So wunderschön der junge Leib, Jetzt kenn' ich dich, Gott steh' mir bei! Du bist die Hexe Loreley!"</p>	<p>"So richly dressed are horse and woman, So exquisite her young body, Now I know you, God protect me! You are the witch Lorelei!"</p>
13	<p>"Du kennst mich wohl, von hohem Stein Schaut still mein Schloss tief in den Rhein. Es ist schon spät, es wird schon kalt, Kommst nimmermehr aus diesem Wald."</p>	<p>"You know me well, from the high crag My castle looks silently down into the Rhine. It is late, it will be cold, You will never escape from this forest!"</p>
	Eichendorff	trans. Stephen Varcoe

<sup>17</sup> Schumann, *Sämtliche Lieder*, Bd. 1, 62-65; Jensen, Adolf. *Ausgewählte Lieder und Gesänge*, Leipzig: C. F. Peters, n/d, 21-23. Schumann makes several repetitions of the text in his setting; Jensen makes none. The Schumann edition by F. Whistling, Leipzig (1848) has 'Fels' for 'Stein' in the fourth stanza, but this was corrected to 'Stein' by Friedlaender for the Heinze edition of 1855.

This poem originally appeared in the novel *Ahnung und Gegenwart* (Premonition and Present Time) of 1815, second book, fifteenth chapter.<sup>18</sup> The first and third stanzas are sung by one character, Leontin, the second and fourth by another, 'Der Jäger', who is actually the character Romana in disguise. The song is described as 'ein am Rheine bekanntes Märchen' (a fable well known on the Rhine). Eichendorff gave it the title 'Waldesgespräch' for his collected poems, and the text is substantially unaltered from the novel:<sup>19</sup> it is this text which Jensen uses. The version which Schumann sets differs significantly in two points: lines 1 and 15 read 'Es ist schon spät, es *ist* schon kalt' (It is indeed late, it *is* cold); line 10 has a semicolon after 'Leib' instead of a comma.

The singer looking to interpret this text might proceed as follows: the man sees a beautiful young woman riding alone in the woods, and given the lateness of the hour he chivalrously offers to escort her home, and perhaps not so chivalrously plans a seduction on the way. Her reply suggests first that she suspects his motives ('Trug und List'), and second that he is in some kind of danger by being near her at all. Her warning sets him thinking about who she might be: 'So reich geschmückt ...' is in the third person, as if he is speaking to himself. It gradually dawns on him who she is, and with only a comma after 'Leib', as in Eichendorff's original version, the exclamation 'Jetzt kenn' ich dich', now once more in the second person, springs from that process of realisation: the revelation could either be instantaneous, preceded maybe by a musing tone during the previous two phrases, or it could be spread over those two phrases. Now the Lorelei's menace becomes more overt as she admits who she is, and mocks him with his own words – 'Es ist schon spät, es wird schon kalt' – 'It is indeed late (too late for you, she might have added), and it will certainly be cold for you when I am done'.

'Waldesgespräch' is in the guise of a folk-ballad, conjuring a world of knights, princesses and wicked fairies, a world by which Eichendorff's characters in *Ahnung und Gegenwart* are themselves obsessed. It is therefore possible that our singer's modern, logical sensibility may miss the original intention of the author, especially without Schumann's interpretation as a guide. Schumann's song sees the poem from a simpler standpoint, or one of 'naivety' as Sams has it,<sup>20</sup> and for our putative 'modern' reader it presents some dilemmas. The opening piano figure with its flowing horn-call duet and alternating tonic/dominant harmony suggests manly confidence, right through to 'heim'.

<sup>18</sup> Eichendorff, Joseph von. *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Christiane Brieglab und Clemens Rauschenberg, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984, 201.

<sup>19</sup> Eichendorff, Joseph von. *Gedichte*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1837, 423.

<sup>20</sup> Sams, *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, 95.

On this word, however (ex. 13a), the E for the voice is not the expected tonic, but the third of the flattened submediant.<sup>21</sup>

Ex. 13. Schumann, *Waldesgespräch*.

(a) bars 13-16.

(b) bars 39-44.

The note, and therefore the word, is a fulcrum between the man speaking and the Lorelei replying, and herein lies the first dilemma: whether the singer should acknowledge the change of harmony and mood with a change in vocal tone, or whether he should complete the first thought, with either chivalrous or seductive intent, and allow the piano to bring in a new idea independently at that moment. In my experience the former solution is the most frequent choice, possibly because it signals to the listeners that they are hearing a singer who is 'sensitive to the music', but my own preference is to complete the thought through 'heim' and allow the piano to introduce the new colour. This dilemma does not exist in Eichendorff's original, since he gives the second stanza to

<sup>21</sup> 'Heim at the end of the first verse strikes an odd note in the poem, because the unexpected assonance with the word 'allein' deceives and confuses the ear. In the result, what should have been an everyday word of reassurance is made to convey mystery and magic. Schumann makes the same effect in song. There are two sources of harmonic power, the home key of everyday, and the key a major third lower, for eeriness. The word 'Heim' impatiently connects the two terminals, and the music fuses.' *Ibid.* 96.

another speaker, and even in *Gedichte* the stanza break would be enough to separate the two protagonists.

In her reply, the Lorelei, singing a melody akin to Schubert's 'Du bist die Ruh', an almost blasphemously inappropriate reference intended by Schumann for the discerning listener, moves from gentle lyricism quite suddenly to anguished *forte* chromaticism on 'Wohl irrt das Waldhorn', moving from C major eventually to the distant key of B major, paving the way for the man's response in E major again for the third stanza. In the 'modern' reading her tone of voice during this stanza has many possibilities, from quiet grief and warning to shrill indignation throughout. Schumann's setting clarifies the nature of her reply, first showing the quiet grief of a broken-hearted girl, without any apparent menace in the music, then transforming her with a *subito forte*, creating the opportunity for the singer to introduce a note of warning and threat.

The man's response in the third stanza returns to an exact repeat of the melodic and harmonic material of the song's opening, showing once again his manly confidence. Out of the blue, at bar 40 (ex. 13b), comes 'Jetzt kenn' ich dich', in the flattened mediant of G via the tonic minor: an abrupt and unprepared realisation by the man of the woman's true identity. Herein lies the second, more problematical dilemma: how can it be that the man is unaware until that moment? He clearly cannot have been paying attention to what she has been saying to him, in spite of her *forte* outburst: oblivious to her words, it can only be that he is completely besotted by her, and unable to distinguish anything apart from her spell-binding presence. We are in a place of magic and witchcraft after all, where anything is possible, and not in a place governed by logic. Lotte Lehmann's description of how to sing this song fleshes out the 'biographies' of both protagonists, and uses just this image of the man as an over-confident seducer who has been ensnared by fatal enchantment, and she suggests that the 'o flieh' is designed to be not so much a warning as to be paradoxically a come-on, appealing to his adventurous nature. For Lehmann the truth dawns at the very moment of 'Jetzt', when the man's hitherto enchanted eyes see the Lorelei for the witch she really is, perhaps magically revealing herself at this moment, and he knows that he is doomed.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Ferris suggests that his doom comes from within himself: that it is his desire which will hold him forever prisoner in the Lorelei's realm, and that his exclamation 'Gott steh mir bei'

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<sup>22</sup> Lehmann, Lotte. *More than Singing*, 38-40.

shows that he knows it.<sup>23</sup> Lehmann has solved the dilemma of the apparently deaf seducer, and has found a psychologically 'true' explanation of Schumann's version of events.

Sams, however, states that there is a 'mild suggestion of dismay' here, and that the revelation is 'even perhaps expected'.<sup>24</sup> In this case the man is suddenly aware of the Lorelei's identity, as with Lehmann, but his reaction is rather muted in comparison: 'she may indeed be the sorceress, but she's never before had to deal with someone like me, a match for any mere woman, and surely with God's help I can overcome her'. Schumann's piano postlude, where the man's music fades away to almost nothing, presents the listener with an image of the wretched man being himself overcome and reduced to some pitiful condition.

Whether Sams or Lehmann has the more effective key to performing the song, it probably cannot be performed with the singer's 'modern' reading suggested above while still adhering to the detail of Schumann's setting. The modern reading would require a different accompaniment from the one Schumann gives for 'so reich ... junge Leib', with its unaltered return to the confident music of the song's opening: the musing tone or the dawning realisation cannot be fitted in to this song. Support for Schumann's version is found in the punctuation after the word 'Leib': Eichendorff's comma suggests a continuation of thought with minimal breakage before 'Jetzt'; Schumann's semicolon, however, creates sufficient space for a new idea to enter, allowing for a *subito forte* on 'Jetzt'. It therefore looks as though the first dilemma, whether 'Heim' is to be treated independently by piano and voice, can be resolved either way, but the second dilemma of the approach to 'Jetzt' makes the modern reading untenable.

Jensen's setting of 1861 contrasts with the Schumann in several ways. Firstly, on the title page he quotes a couplet from an unnamed source: 'Der Mitternachtswind heult rauh und duster,/Gleich der Verstorb'nen Grabgeflüster.' (The midnight wind howls roughly and dismally,/Like grave-whispering of the dead.) Then he refers to this couplet by giving the instruction 'rauh und düster' for the piano, and proceeds with an impetuous musical evocation of the wind, an idea that is not implicit in the poem except insofar as highly-charged, elemental forces are involved. The man speaks 'flüsternd, etwas frivol' (whispering, a little frivolously), implying that he is very close to the Lorelei and making

<sup>23</sup> Ferris, David. *Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis and the genre of the Romantic Cycle*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 219-220.

<sup>24</sup> Sams, *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, 96.

his seductive intentions quite obvious (cf. Schumann). She replies *schmerzlich* (sorrowfully), then *warnend* (warning) for 'wohl irrt das Waldhorn', and *dringend* (pressing) for 'o flieh'. There is no dynamic marking for the voice at 'o flieh', in contrast with elsewhere in the song, but it seems likely that *forte* is required, to complement the *sf* and *wild* in the piano. The third stanza (ex. 14) opens with exactly the same music as the first, with an outburst in the unprepared subdominant F minor halfway through on 'jetzt kenn' ich dich'. In this respect it mirrors Schumann's version, but with a significant divergence: instead of immediately crying out, the voice waits for three beats of the piano's 'wind' figure before entering *entsetzt auffahrend* (horrorstruck and vehement).

Ex. 14. Jensen, 'Waldesgespräch', bars 28-35.

The musical score for Ex. 14 consists of two systems. The first system (bars 28-31) shows the vocal line starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The lyrics are: "So reich ge-schmückt ist Ross und Weib, - so wun-der-schön der jun-ge Leib,". The piano accompaniment features a 'wind' figure in the bass line, marked *pp*. The second system (bars 32-35) shows the vocal line with the lyrics: "jetzt kenn' ich dich Gott steh' mir beil". The piano accompaniment continues with the 'wind' figure, marked *f*. The vocal line begins with a dynamic marking of *entsetzt auffahrend* and *ff*. The piano part includes performance markings: *Ped.* with asterisks under bars 32, 33, 34, and 35.

The most obvious interpretation of this is that Jensen indicates the moment of discovery at the beginning of bar 32, with the singer's horror building up to the *forte* exclamation on the fourth beat. There is another divergence from Schumann's setting, which is the use of Eichendorff's original comma after 'Leib'. This comma suggests that the traveller makes his discovery while he describes the Lorelei's figure and appearance: the discovery is a culmination of a series of observations. This would be consistent with the 'modern' interpretation already given. Yet Jensen, like Schumann, maintains the even tenor of his description until that comma, and therefore also refutes that interpretation.



The 'wind' figure as a recurring theme only appears in the piano part, and the instruction 'rauh und düster' also applies to the piano alone. By contrast, the vocal protagonists each have their own very specific sets of instructions. The blustery accompaniment offers the listener not only an illustration of the wind, 'howling like grave-whispering of the dead', but also an intimation of the power and threat of the Lorelei: it is Jensen saying 'here is a tale of mystery and magic which will make you shiver with fright'. The sudden reappearance of the wind theme in bar 32 suggests the Lorelei revealing herself to the traveller, either directly or because he finally makes the connection between what he sees and what he knows of the local legend about the beautiful woman who lures men to their doom. The singer can here take time to react to what he hears, and the listener is encouraged to envisage what the character sees as he too reacts to the musical signal.

Jensen's final stanza (ex. 15) has the Lorelei singing *pp* with the instructions *sehr zart* and *schaurig* and *ganz leise verschwindend* (very sweetly, scarily, softly disappearing): their roles are now truly reversed,<sup>25</sup> and she not only throws his words back at him, she even uses his whispering tone in ironic mockery. And though she says 'you know who I am', her music is harmonically ambiguous – F minor; D flat seventh chord pointing towards G flat but actually finding A flat; tension between G major and C minor – she is implying that he doesn't really know her at all, as she fades away like the disembodied spirit she truly is, *ganz leise verschwindend*.

Ex. 15. Jensen, 'Waldesgespräch', bars 41-48.

41 *pp* *sehr zart*

"Du kennst mich wohl von hoh-em Stein schaut still mein Schloss tief in den Rhein.

*pp* *sehr zart*

<sup>25</sup> Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis and the genre of the Romantic Cycle*, 220.

45 *schaurig* *pp* *ganz leise verschwindend*

Es ist schon spät, es wird schon kalt, kommst nimmer mehr aus diesem Wald!

### *The protagonist's reality and memory*

The moments of thought discussed in this chapter so far have occurred once the song is under way: there is another kind of thought mentioned by several commentators, which is that the song has begun before the pianist has even started to play or the singer to sing. Brendel writes that he thinks in these terms when beginning Schubert's B flat Piano Sonata.<sup>26</sup> Stanislavski, coaching a vigorous ballad with a galloping rhythm, urges that the singer has to feel the pulse and prepare the feelings before the song begins.<sup>27</sup> Lilli Lehmann advises something similar, though she seems concerned with the singer's attitude once the piano has started.<sup>28</sup> Certainly the opera singer must be in character from the moment he is visible on stage, if not beforehand, and there is no reason to suppose that the recitalist should be any different. The corollary is that the singer remain engaged in the song up to and beyond the last notes of the piano, choosing when to relax and come out of the role.

The singer impersonates a protagonist, who is deemed to have an existence before and after the song, and this introduces the issue of memory. The protagonist has a memory of what has gone before in his personal biography, and in song cycles especially the memory acts as the work progresses. Understanding a narrative as it unfolds involves reaching backwards in memory to previous statements in the narrative and making connections with it.<sup>29</sup> This is akin to what happens in music, and is one of the aspects of music which makes it inherently satisfying: the return of thematic material which can elucidate what has gone before. One called it 'suspended saturation', and it is dependent

<sup>26</sup> Brendel, Alfred. *Music Sounded Out*, London: Robson Books, 1990, 227.

<sup>27</sup> Stanislavski, *Stanislavski on Opera*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Lehmann, Lilli, *How to Sing*, 133.

<sup>29</sup> Bower, Gordon. 'Experiments in story understanding and recall', *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 28/4 (November 1976), 533.

on time and memory to confirm its real significance.<sup>30</sup> Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, a song cycle in six continuous movements, begins with the poet gazing longingly into the distance where his beloved has gone. In the fourth stanza of the first movement he asks whether there may be any way of reaching her with a message of love: he answers his own question with 'Singen will ich, Lieder singen,/Die dir klagen meine Pein!' (I will sing, sing songs,/Which shall bewail my pain to you).<sup>31</sup> Moving ahead to the sixth song, we find the poet dedicating to his beloved the songs he has made, and at the final stanza the opening melody returns with these words: 'Dann vor diesen Liedern weichet,/was geschieden uns so weit,/Und ein liebend Herz erreichet/was ein liebend Herz geweiht.' (Then, before these songs, recedes/ What parts us so far,/And a loving heart shall be reached/By what a loving heart has consecrated).<sup>32</sup> His answer is in his songs, and the music tells us that he truly believes that they will fulfil his desire.

Another example of reaching back in time through the aid of music occurs in the ninth song of Somervell's cycle *A Shropshire Lad* of 1904. By this date Housman's poems of 1896 had not yet been seized upon by composers as a useful source of song lyrics, and Somervell's set is the first which survives. It is not as celebrated as Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge* of 1909, nor Butterworth's two sets of 1911/1912: like Butterworth's *Six Songs* it begins with 'Loveliest of Trees',<sup>33</sup> but instead of the spare, through-composed song of the younger man, we have from Somervell a charming strophic ditty – beautiful and appropriate, no doubt, but somehow disappointingly bland by comparison. But this ditty takes on an altogether deeper significance as the melody of the ninth song of the set, 'Into my Heart an Air that Kills'.<sup>34</sup> Here the piano takes up the melody, transposed down by a semitone from the earlier song, as the voice intones on a single note: 'Into my heart an air that kills/From yon far country blows:/What are those blue remember'd hills,/What spires, what farms are those?' The piano melody is 'the air that kills' which has become not a scent borne on the breeze but a musical air, a song from far off, the same song which was heard at the start of the cycle, but in the subdued tones of the downward transposition. The earlier song has in a sense been justified by its new role in the memory, and gains a new poignancy.

<sup>30</sup> Cone, *Music: A View from Delft*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Beethoven, Ludwig van. *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98, New York: G. Schirmer, 1902, 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>33</sup> Somervell, Arthur. *A Shropshire Lad*, London: Boosey & Co, 1904, 2-4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 34-5.

Beethoven anticipated Somervell's use of monotone for a kind of memory in the second movement of *An die ferne Geliebte*. Here the reference is within the same song rather than back to a previous one. The poet sings: 'Wo die Berge so blau/aus dem nebligen Grau/schauen herein,/wo die Sonne verglüht,/wo die Wolke umzieht,/möchte ich sein!' (Where the blue mountains look down out of the misty grey, where the sunset dies, where the clouds hang, I want to be!). This longing becomes more specific in the second stanza: 'Dort im ruhigen Thal/schweigen Schmerzen und Qual./Wo im Gestein/still die Primel dort sinnt,/weht so leise der Wind,/möchte ich sein!' (There in the peaceful valley grief and pain are silent. Where amongst the rocks the primrose muses, where the wind wafts so gently, I want to be!).<sup>35</sup> While the singer reflects upon the place he loves so well in a chanted monotone, the piano emphasises the distance in time and space by playing the original melody, representing the place in memory, but a fourth higher: as the lovers are separated so the singer and melody are separated.<sup>36</sup> It can be said in these examples that the significance of an earlier musical statement has been clarified by a later one.

### *The protagonist's knowledge of the poem's outcome*

Another possibility that may concern the singer is reaching forward in time, ie beginning a song with knowledge of what is to come. Hemsley cautions against this if it means sacrificing a song's true present affect: *Dichterliebe*'s tears of joy can be distorted into becoming tears of tragedy if the lover's later rejection is factored in to the earlier songs.<sup>37</sup> However, this will very much depend upon the composer's perceived intention, as was discussed in chapter five with 'Why do I love?' and 'Johnny'. Consider, for instance, Shakespeare's Sonnet 29:

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possessed,

<sup>35</sup> Beethoven, *An die ferne Geliebte*, 6-7.

<sup>36</sup> Rosen, Charles. *The Romantic Generation*, London: Harper Collins, 1996, 169.

<sup>37</sup> Hemsley, *Singing and Imagination*, 122.

Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,  
 With what I most enjoy contented least;  
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
 Haply I think on thee, - and then my state  
 (like to the lark at break of day arising  
 From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
     For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings,  
     That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

From the very beginning the poet knows the joy of remembering sweet love – his recollection of the darkness of accursed fate is shot through with the healing recollection of sweet love. Coroniti, writing about his own musical setting of these words, identifies the word 'yet' as the pivot between the two states of mind, one the remembered suffering, the other the remembered joy.<sup>38</sup> It would probably be truer to suggest that the pivot is represented by the whole phrase: 'yet in these thoughts myself almost despising'. This is the view which Parry takes:<sup>39</sup>

Ex. 16. Parry, 'When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes'.

(a) bars 3-7.

<sup>38</sup> Coroniti, Joseph. *Poetry as Text in Twentieth-century Vocal Music: From Stravinsky to Reich*, Lewiston NY & Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992, 84-5.

<sup>39</sup> Parry, Hubert. *Songs*, ed. Geoffrey Bush, London: Stainer & Bell, 1982, 1-4.

(b) bars 35-41.

35 *meno mosso*  
Yet in these thoughts my - self al - most des -

38 *rit.* *Allegro*  
pi - sing, Hap - ly I think on thee,

The agitated right-hand syncopations of the opening accompaniment (ex. 16a) have given way at the beginning of the sestet (bar 35) to plain semi-breves (ex. 16b), and the opening tempo marking of *agitato* has been modified by *meno mosso*, suggesting an alteration of mood. Otherwise Parry has a variation of the same vocal melody, connecting this passage with the first lines: the listener has been prepared for the true change which occurs at bar 39 with the new key, tempo, melody and movement.

Another example of forward thinking occurs in Housman's 'Bredon Hill'.<sup>40</sup> In the first stanza the sound of the bells is described as 'a happy noise to hear', and the poet tells us how he and his beloved would hear them and make plans together for their wedding day. Then he tells us that at Christmas time she went to church without him, but to the sound of her own funeral bell. The bells ring again to summon the worshippers, but this time he cannot bear the sound: 'Oh, noisy bells, be dumb; I hear you, I will come.' Butterworth's and Somervell's settings both illustrate the joyful sound of the bells in the piano, while the voice has a sonorous, uplifting melody. Yet for the singer to act as if unaware of what the poet already knows would eventually be unconvincing. A hint of weight in the voice, a look of fondness remembered in grief, while at first slightly puzzling to the listener who does not know the poem, becomes fully justified as the tragedy unfolds.

<sup>40</sup> Housman, Alfred E. *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), London: Grant Richards, 1898, 57.

## *Summary*

We have argued that, in the performance of song, identifying and anticipating the timing of protagonists' thoughts is essential to a fully-rounded portrayal of a credible human being. The believability of the performance is further enhanced by considering whether or not the protagonist may have a history, a biographical background, which can help to flesh out the character and excite an empathic response from the listener. And not only must the words seem to appear as if newly minted, so also must the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic thrust of the music; all should be as if driven by the song's persona.

## Conclusion

Great song recitalists are consummate artists who usually excel in both opera and song, but they will have adapted their style of performance from that of the stage to that of the concert platform. Nevertheless, they will have encountered problems of performance which are common to recital singers, opera singers and actors alike. Chapter one has explored the training and use of the voice as a musical instrument, and has highlighted some of the dilemmas which face all singers, either in creating a sound suitable for the genre to be performed, or balancing the demands of vocalisation with the need to convey a text clearly. Furthermore, it has looked at some problems faced by both singers and actors in recreating believable roles which have been memorised but which need to appear spontaneous. Imagination has been identified as the essential key to solving these practical dilemmas.

Another set of problems faced by both singers and actors is concerned with the visual aspect of performance, and this is explored in chapter two. Many of the writings studied in this chapter deal largely with the demands of the stage, particularly those faced by the actor; but this material can be applied just as well to the opera singer. The recital singer, however, works under a different set of conventions and faces certain difficulties which are peculiar to the genre; the closeness of the recitalist in relation to the audience requires great care in the matter of visual display. Clear communication must involve not only the voice but the face and the eyes as well. A consensus has been sought amongst a large number of writers about the extent to which the body may be used in performance, but it has also been argued that gesture can be used very effectively in stimulating the imagination in the creation of a convincing portrayal – the work of Jane Davidson has been an important source of information in this area, though she covers a much wider range of instruments and musical styles.<sup>1</sup>

Definition of character for a recitalist is usually not as clear as it is in a stage work, where the singer's role is quite closely defined by its relationship to the plot and to the other characters. One of the recitalist's tasks is to determine who is being addressed in a song in order that a clear focus of attention can be found, and in chapter three some songs by Hugo Wolf have been used as examples of differing modes of address. The

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<sup>1</sup> Apart from her two works listed in the Bibliography, there is her chapter 'Bodily Communication in Musical Performance' in Miell, Dorothy, Raymond MacDonald and David J. Hargreaves. *Musical Communication*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 215-237.



singer of songs, unaided by surrounding circumstances, must study the text to determine the nature of the protagonist and the events and emotions by which he or she is beset. In addition, he or she must seek to find in the musical setting confirmation or denial of a suggested poetic interpretation. In this context E. T. Cone's concept of poetic and musical *personae* in a song is a useful guide to making performance decisions.<sup>2</sup> Another work with some important insights for the singer is Stein and Spillman's study of the *Lied* and its performance.<sup>3</sup>

We have seen that the study of a song's text may have many facets, and chapter four has looked at whether or not the original context may be germane. A poet may assert, as Goethe did for the songs of Mignon, that only a setting suited to the original protagonist can be justified; or a composer may assert, as did Grainger for his folksong settings, that only a performance modelled on the recollection of his own first hearing has validity. But new contexts can bring new opportunities for interpretation.

Chapter five has shown that the exhortation to 'understand the text' calls for a far more thorough process of investigation than most writers on singing have suggested. A 'straight' translation, such as those provided in Phillips' *Lieder line by line*, can be a very useful starting point for the singer, but the meaning may still be obscure and require further elaboration: a translation which preserves poetic nuance may be needed. Textual obscurity can be found in varying degrees in English texts, and even for a native speaker, elaboration and interpretation may be required. Chapter six has shown the process of translating one poem in relation to its setting by one composer in order to draw attention to some of the issues which may be involved.

A guiding principle of this thesis has been that understanding the text must be supplemented by an imaginative engagement in realising this understanding for the benefit of the listener and spectator. The singer who penetrates to the mind of the poet as protagonist will communicate mood and feeling by finding the appropriate quality of vocal colour, diction and physical presentation. The final chapter has suggested that entering the mind of the poet will also enable the singer to build a kind of reality for the protagonist which may involve a personal history as it develops through the course of a song, or more importantly through the course of a song cycle.

The final chapter of this thesis has also drawn attention to the crucially important issue of establishing the precise moment of the thought behind the utterance where the

<sup>2</sup> Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, especially 'Persona, Protagonist, and Characters', 20-40.

<sup>3</sup> Stein and Spillman, *Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder*.

poet and composer seem to have intended it, yet making it appear to be a direct consequence of the singer's own thought-processes. My work with students has shown how difficult this can be to achieve, but how remarkable the effect can be when this level of engagement is reached, and when the song is therefore at last truly owned by the performer. Suzanne Langer's words concerning actors can be applied with equal truth to singers:

Since every utterance is the end of a process which began inside the speaker's body, an enacted utterance is part of a virtual act, apparently springing at the moment from thought and feelings. So the actor has to create the illusion of an inward activity issuing in spontaneous speech.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 315-6.

## Appendix A

anon., trans. Heyse **In dem Schatten meiner Locken**

Wolf

*Leicht, zart, nicht schnell.* *p* *sehr zurückhaltend* *a tempo*

In dem Schat-ten mei-ner Lock-enschlief mir mein Ge- lieb-ter ein.

*pp* *immer ppp*

6 *pp*

Weck'ich ihn nun auf? Ach nein!

12 *f*

Sorg - lichstrahlt'ich mei-ne krau-sen Lock-en täg-lich in der Frö - he, Doch um

*mf* *f* *f*

17

sonst ist mei-ne Mü - he, weil die Win - de sie zer - zau - sen.

*sf p* *sf p* *sf p* *f*

22 *p* *poco rit.*

Lo-cken - schat - ten, Win-des sau - sen schlä-fer-ten den Lieb-sten ein.

*pp* *pp*

27 *p* *pp*

Weck'ich ihn nun auf? — Ach nein!

*a tempo* *p* *pp*

33 *f*

Hö - ren muss ich, wie ihn grä - me, dass er schmach - tet schon so lan - ge, dass ihm

*p* *mf*

38

Le-ben geb' und neh-me die semei-ne brau - ne Wan - ge.

*mf* *f*

42

Und er nennt mich sei - ne Schlan - ge,

*p*

46 *sehr zurückhaltend* *a tempo* *pp*

und doch schlief er bei mir ein. Weck' ich ihn nun auf?

*pp* *immer ppp*

52

Ach nein!

*p* *dim.* *pp*

*Red.*

# Spanisches Lied

anon., trans. Heyse

Brahms

*Allegretto*

*p* In dem Schat-ten mei-ner Lo-cken schief mir

*p* *leggiere*

5 *sost.* *dim.* *p*

mein Ge-lieb-ter ein;

*dim.* *p* *dim.*

9 *p* *sost.* *f* *p rit.*

weckich ihn nun auf? Ach nein! Ach nein! Ach

*p* *sost.* *p rit.*

13 *pp* *a tempo*

nein! Sorg-lich strahlt ich mei-ne krau-sen Lo-cken täg-lich in der

*pp* *f* *a tempo*

3 3 3

2 pedale

18

Frü - he, doch um-sonst ist mei-ne Mü - he, weil die Win-de sie Zer -

22

zau - sen;

25

Lo - cken-schat-ten, Win-des - sau - sen schlä-fer-ten den Lieb - sten ein;

29

weck ich ihn nun auf? — Ach

33

*p rit. pp*

nein! Ach nein! Ach nein!

*p rit. pp*

3 3 3

2 pedale

37

*a tempo*

Hö-ren muss ich, wie ihn grä-me, dass er schmach-tet schon so lan-ge, dass ihm Le-ben gäb und

*a tempo*

*f*

*p*

42

näh-me die-se mei-ne brau-ne Wan-ge.

*dim.*

46

Und er nennt mich sei-ne Schlan-ge, und doch schlief er bei mir

*sost. dim.*

*p*

*sost. dim.*



50

ein; *p* weck ich ihn nun

54 *sost.*

auf? Ach nein! Ach

56 *rit.* *pp*

nein! Ach nein!

*p* *rit.* *pp* 3 3 3

2 pedale

## Appendix B

## Frühling

Heine

Stanford

*Allegretto*  $\text{♩} = 96$  *mf* *p*

Die Wel - lenblin-ken und flie-ssen da- hin, \_\_\_\_\_ es

5  
liebt \_\_\_\_\_ sich so lieb - lich im Len - - ze, am

*pp*

9  
Flus - se sitzt die Schä - fe rin \_\_\_\_\_ und win - det die

13 *mf*  
zärt - lich - sten Krän - - ze. Das

17

knos-pet und quillt, mit duf-ten - der Lust, es liebt sich so

21

lieb - lich im Len - - ze die Schä - fe-rin seufzt aus

25

tie- fer Brust: wem geb' ich mei - ne

29

Krän - ze? Ein Rei-ter rei - tet den Fluss ent-

34

lang, er grüsst sie so blü-hen- den Mu - tes;

39 *f* die Schä-fe-rin schaut ihm nach so bang, fern *p dim.*

45 flat - tert die Fe - der des Hu - - tes.

50 *Tempo I* *p* Sie

54 weint und wirft in den glei - ten - den Fluss die

58 schö - nen Blu - men - krän - - ze.

62

Die

66

*rall. un poco*

Nach - ti-gall singt von Lieb' und Kuss, es liebt sich so

*colla voce*

71

lieb - lich im Len - ze.

*a tempo*

Heine

## Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze

Brahms

*Anmutig bewegt*

Die Wel - len blin - ken und flie - ssen da - hin, es

*p dolce*

5  
 liebt sich so lieb - lich im Len - zel Am Flu - sse sit - zet die Schö - fe - rin und

9  
 win - det die zärt - lich - sten, win - det die zärt - lich - sten Krän - ze.

13  
 Das knos - pet und quillt und duf - tet und blüht, es liebt sich so lieb - lich im

17

Len - ze! Die Schä - fe - rin seufzt aus tie - fer Brust: "Wem geb' ich mei - ne

21 *animato*

Krän - ze, wem geb' ich mei - ne Krän - ze?" Ein

25

Rei - ter rei - tet den Fluss ent - lang, er grü - sset so blü - hen - den

28

Mu - tes, so blü - hen - den, blü - hen - den Mu - tes! die

31

Schä - fe-rin schaut ihm nach so bang, fern flat - tert die Fe - der des

*p*

34

Hu - tes, die Fe - der des Hu - tes. Sie

*p*

38 *animato*

weint und wirft in den glei - ten-den Fluss die schö - nen Blu - men-

*animato*

41

krän - ze. Die Nach - ti-gall singt von Lieb' und Kuss,

*f* *p*



45

es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze, es

*poco f*

48

liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze

50

*Allegro*

Appendix C  
PhD Recital Programme

**Stephen Varcoe** *baritone*

**Peter Seymour** *piano*

**Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall**

**Wednesday 14 January 2009, 7.30pm**

The following programme was chosen to illustrate several of the performance issues raised in the main body of the foregoing thesis. We had chosen to wear coloured shirts and black trousers in order to reduce the separation in status between performers and audience which the more formal dinner jacket or evening tail suit would emphasise. Another means of reducing the formality of the occasion was to make some extemporised spoken introductions to supplement the written programme notes. In relation to the issue raised at the end of chapter one concerning the audience's visual response to songs with or without the distraction of printed material, texts were given in a variety of ways. Non-English texts were either printed in full with printed translations, printed in full with spoken translations, or printed in translation as a synopsis. English texts were all printed in full.

The most important thread running through the whole presentation of these songs on the evening of the recital was my wish as a singer to appear to be expressing thoughts as they might arise in the mind of the protagonist. Each of the groups of songs offered different challenges in achieving a convincing representation of thought and feeling.

Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* is a cycle of mood rather than of narrative, and he illustrates this in part by making the work resemble an instrumental suite rather than a set of individual songs. The continuous nature of the work requires the performer to find a suitable way of changing mood as the piano accompaniment starts a new movement, persuading the audience that the music is changing as a result of his own thought processes.

Somervell's *A Shropshire Lad*, by contrast, is a cycle of distinct songs in the manner of Schubert's great works – *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* – and it is my contention that like them it is in the form of a narrative. The story is of youth, the loss of the beloved, enlisting as a soldier, and dying on the battlefield. Now the performer must find the protagonist's thoughts and feelings in relation to a series of events which mostly happen outside the songs themselves.

The two settings of Eichendorff's 'Waldesgespräch' by Schumann and Jensen offer two very different interpretations of the poem, and also illustrate an issue raised in chapter seven: the importance of identifying and conveying moments of thought.

Dvorák's *Biblické Písně* were chosen to demonstrate a point made in chapter five, that there are songs which in my opinion require to be sung in their original language because of an incompatibility of prosody between that language and the language of translation. Time-constraints meant that we were unable to perform both the original and translated versions at the concert.

The three songs by Hugo Wolf illustrate part of the theme of chapter three, namely who is singing to whom, and how this can be made clear to an audience who may or may not be addressed directly. 'Abschied' is an example of a song which the performer gives directly to the audience, and it seemed appropriate in the circumstances to embellish it with some suitable gestures, a subject dealt with at some length in chapter two.

The six folksongs were chosen to reflect the final part of chapter four, which discussed suitable ways of performing this *genre*. The simplicity of the unaccompanied song becomes overlaid with the complexity of different harmonic styles when arranged with piano accompaniment. The performer is torn between maintaining the 'unsullied' quality of the original and acknowledging the sophistication added by the arranger. In this performance it was thought appropriate to illustrate the story told in 'Les garçons de Bordeaux' with an abundance of gestures.

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

**concerts**

October 2008-July 2009

**Stephen Varcoe**

*baritone*

&

**Peter Seymour**

*piano*

An die ferne Geliebte  
Waldesgespräch  
Biblické Písně  
Three Songs

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**  
**Robert Schumann (1810-56)**  
**Antonin Dvorák (1841-1904)**  
**Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)**

*interval*

A Shropshire Lad

**Arthur Somervell (1863-1937)**

Six Folksongs arrangements:

Bushes and Briars

**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

Chanson de la Mariée

**Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

L'Amour de Moy

**Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)**

Les garçons de Bordeaux

**Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894)**

Ye banks and braes

**Roger Quilter (1877-1953)**

British Waterside

**Percy Grainger (1882-1961)**

**Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall**

**Wednesday 14 January 2009, 7.30pm**

## An die ferne Geliebte – To the distant beloved Beethoven

Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the distant beloved) is a cycle of six songs written in 1816 to poems by an 21-year-old medical student, Alois Jeitteles. This is usually described as the first song-cycle, but there were precedents from the Italian madrigalists of the Baroque period, and in the late eighteenth century from the likes of Hook (*The Wreath*) and Dibdin in England. Even in Germany there had been examples of song cycles such as Eberwein's *Amor Proteus* (1811) and Weber's *Leyer und Schwert* (1815), and one by Beethoven's erstwhile pupil Ferdinand Ries: *Verschiedene Empfindungen an einem Platze* (1815). Be that as it may, Beethoven's cycle has a perfection of conception and execution which place it amongst the finest achievements of the great Lieder composers. The poetry of the young Jeitteles is Romantic through and through, telling of separation and longing, and saturated with the world of Nature. It does not develop in a narrative sense, unlike Schubert's *Winterreise* or *Die Schöne Müllerin*, but explores the poet's feelings as he tries to give expression to his yearning. The songs are effectively six movements in a continuous musical work, each of which has its own tempo marking and distinct affective colour. The challenge for the performer is to reproduce the fluctuations in intensity of the poet's feelings as if being felt at the very moment of utterance. *An die ferne Geliebte* is a true cycle in that it is completed by a return at last to both the poetic and the musical theme of its opening.

The text is given in translation in the form of a synopsis.

### 1. *Lento ed espressivo*.

I sit on the hill and gaze into the distance, towards those meadows where we first met. Now I am far away, and my sighs are lost in the space that divides us. But my songs will bring you my message of love and anguish, for a loving heart is touched by what another loving heart has blessed.

### 2. *Allegretto*.

Where the blue mountains appear out of the grey mists, that is where I long to be. In the silent valley, where pain and anguish are no more, that is where I long to be. Love's power drives me to the pensive wood – if only I could always be with you.

### 3. *Allegro assai*.

Clouds, look for her and show her my image in the sky. Birds in the leafless autumnal bushes, sing my lament. Breezes, waft my sighs to her. Stream, whisper my pleading and show her my tears.

4. *Allegro ma non troppo, dolce e con espressione.*

The clouds, the birds, the wind playing in your hair: if only I could share your delight in them. If the stream finds your image mirrored in its waters, may it flow back to me without delay.

5. *Vivace.*

May returns with its flowers, its warm breezes and babbling brooks: the swallows, divided by winter, are reunited as lovers. May returns, but I cannot: lovers are joined again, but our love has no springtime, only tears.

6. *Andante con moto, cantabile – lento – allegro con brio.*

Take these songs and sing them to your lute in the glow of evening beyond those mountains. Sing what I sang artlessly from my full heart, knowing only of my longing, and so the distance that divides us will dissolve: for a loving heart is touched by what another loving heart has blessed.

## Waldesgespräch – Dialogue in the woods

Schumann

Eichendorff's 'Waldesgespräch' appears first in his novel of 1815, *Ahnung und Gegenwart* (Premonition and Present Time), where it is described as 'a fable well known on the Rhine'. It seems that this 'fable' was in fact a creation of Clemens Brentano, appearing in his romance, *Godwi*, of 1802. In Eichendorff's novel verses one and three are sung by the hero, Leontin, while verses two and four are sung by 'a huntsman', who is really the heroine Romana in disguise: he later included it in his collected poems of 1837. Schumann's song appears in his *Liederkreis* (Song Cycle), op. 39, of 1840, while Jensen's was published as one of four songs op. 5 in 1861.

The opening accompaniments of these two settings could hardly be more different and yet still be true to the poem. Schumann shows us a confident young man attentive to the beautiful girl, whereas Jensen gives us in the piano part a shocking evocation of the power of the elements, with the words 'The midnight wind howls roughly and dismally, like grave-whispering of the dead' written at the top of the score. Both composers are quite specific in their dynamic markings, though Jensen is more extreme in his demands, and gives instructions to the singer such as, for example, 'whispering, a little frivolously' for the young man's first words, implying a degree of intimacy not found in Schumann's song: there is clear seductive intent.

There are two more subtle differences: one on the word 'heim' (home) at the end of the first stanza, which in harmonic terms Jensen treats plainly, but on which Schumann has an interrupted cadence into a new key (the flattened sub-mediante). The singer has the choice here of acknowledging the harmonic strangeness by colouring the voice appropriately, or of

maintaining the young man's confident delivery to the end of the word. The other subtle difference between the settings lies in the moment at which the Lorelei reveals herself, the moment the man sings *'jetzt kenn ich dich'* (now I know you): Schumann gives the singer no time at all to make the discovery whereas Jensen offers three beats of hammering tempest in the new key of F minor for the singer to prepare his horrified reaction. It is now Jensen's young man who cries out at the top of his voice, in contrast with Schumann, who gives the great outburst to the Lorelei. For Jensen, the tables are finally turned when she becomes the sweet-singing seductress.

Note that Jensen follows Eichendorff's original text in lines one and fifteen (*es wird schon kalt*), while Schumann changes it to *es ist schon kalt* (it is cold).

1

“Es ist schon spät, es wird schon kalt,  
Was reit'st du einsam durch den Wald?”

Der Wald ist lang, du bist allein,

Du schöne Braut! Ich führ' dich heim!”

It is late, it will be cold,  
Why do you ride alone through  
the forest?

The forest is long, you are  
alone,

You beautiful bride, I will lead  
you home.

5

“Gross ist der Männer Trug und List,

Vor schmerz mein Herz gebrochen ist,  
Wohl irrt das Waldhorn her und hin,

O flieh'! Du weisst nicht wer ich bin.”

“Great is the deceit and  
cunning of men,

With grief my heart is broken,  
The hunting horn sounds now  
here, now there.

O fly! You know not who I  
am!”

9

“So reich geschmückt ist Ross und Weib,

So wunderschön der junge Leib,  
Jetzt kenn' ich dich, Gott steh' mir bei!

Du bist die Hexe Loreley!”

“So richly dressed are horse  
and woman,

So exquisite her young body,  
Now I know you, God protect  
me!

You are the witch Lorelei!”

13

“Du kennst mich wohl, von hohem Stein

Schaut still mein Schloss tief in den Rhein.

Es ist schon spät, es wird schon kalt,  
Kommst nimmermehr aus diesem Wald.”

“You know me well, from the  
high crag

My castle looks silently down  
into the Rhine.

It is late, it will be cold,  
You will never escape from  
this forest!”

## Biblické Písně – Biblical Songs

Dvorák

Dvorák wrote his ten *Biblické Písně* op. 99 in 1894, the first five of which he subsequently orchestrated, and which form the present group. At this time he was living in New York, and during the period of composition he heard that his friend Hans von Bülow had died, and that his own father was on his death-bed. The texts are all selections from the Psalms as found in the sixteenth-century Bible of Kralice, and the passionate intensity of these simple settings may be Dvorák's response to his personal feelings at that particular time.

The first edition of these songs included German and English versions of the texts, but the results are mostly unsatisfactory. The Czech language has very different prosody from either German or English, with the stress most often given to the first syllable of a word or phrase. In order for a translation to be made to fit, there is a continual need for additional upbeats which destroy the rhythm and strength of the original. The fourth song, for example, a version of 'The Lord is my Shepherd', has twelve such additions in only thirteen lines, and much of the distinctive quality of Dvorák's musico-poetic synthesis is lost. The present performance will therefore be given in Czech, and translations will be declaimed before each song.

### 1. (*Psalm 97, vv. 2-6*)

Oblak a mrákota jest vůkol něho,  
 Spravedlnost a soud základ trůnu jeho.  
 Óheň předchází jej a zapaluje  
 vůkol nepřátele jeho.  
 Zasvěcujít' se po okršku světa blýskání jeho;  
 To vidouc země děsí se.  
 Hory jako vosk rozplývají  
 se před obličejem Hospodina,  
 Panovníka vší země.  
 A slávu jeho spatřují všichni národové.

### 2. (*Psalm 119, vv. 114, 115, 117, 120*)

Skrýše má a pavezá má Ty jsi,  
 Na slovo vzaté očekávám.  
 Odstuptež ode mne, nešlechetníci,  
 Abych ostříhal přikázání Boha svého.  
 Posiluj mne, bych zachován byl,  
 A patřil ku stanoveným Tvým ustavičně.  
 Děsí se strachem před Tebou tělo mé,  
 Nebo soudů Tvých bojím se náramně.



3. (*Psalm 55, vv. 1, 2, 4-8*)

Slyš o Bože! slyš modlitbu mou,  
 Neskrývej se před prosbou mou.  
 Pozoruj a vyslyš mne;  
 Nebot' naříkám v úpění svém,  
 A kormoutím se.  
 Srdce mé tesklí ve mně,  
 A strachové smrti přišli na mne,  
 A hrůza přikvačila mne.  
 I řekl jsem: Ó bych měl křídla  
 Jako holubice,  
 Zaletěl bych a poodpočinul.  
 Aj, daleko bych se vzdálil,  
 A přebýval bych na poušti.  
 Pospíšil bych ujíti větru  
 Prudkému a vichřici.

4. (*Psalm 23, vv. 1-4*)

Hospodin jest můj pastýř;  
 Nebudu míti nedostatku.  
 Na pastvách zelených pase mne,  
 K vodám tichým mne přivodí.  
 Duši mou občerstvuje;  
 Vodí mne po stezkách  
 Spravedlnosti pro jméno své.  
 Byť se mi dostalo jíti  
 Přes údolí stínu smrti:  
 Nebudut' se báti zlého,  
 Nebo Ty se mnou jsi;  
 A prut Tvůj a hůl Tvá,  
 Tot' mne potěšuje.

5. (*Psalm 144, v. 9, Psalm 145, vv. 2, 3, 5, 6*)

Bože! Bože! píseň novou  
 Zpívati budu Tobě na loutně,  
 A žalmy Tobě prozpěvovati.  
 Na každý den dobrořečiti budu Tobě  
 A chváliti jméno Tvé na věky věků.  
 Hospodin jistě veliký jest  
 A vší chvály hodný,  
 A velikost jeho  
 Nemůž vystižena býti.  
 O slávě a kráse a velebnosti Tvé,  
 I o věcech Tvých předivných mluvíti budu.  
 A moc přehrozných skutků Tvých

Všichni rozhlašovati budou;  
I já důstojnost Tvou  
Budu vypravovati.

### Three songs

Wolf

1840 was the year that Schumann became possessed with the desire to write songs, and most of the 150 he created in that time represent a high water mark in the art of *Lieder*. Wolf's main creative burst occurred between February 1888 and December 1891, during which time he wrote almost 200 songs to rival in quality anything that had been heard before. The earliest of these were the 53 Mörike settings, most of which were written between February and May. The Goethe settings, 51 in all, were published in 1890.

In order to give a convincing performance of a song, the singer needs to identify the mode of address of the poem, in other words, who is speaking to whom. For 'Fußreise' the first fourteen lines can be considered as the poet speaking to an audience. The next six lines then find him speaking to himself, and finally he returns to address his audience again.

#### 1. Fußreise

Am frischgeschnittenen Wanderstab,  
Wenn ich in der Frühe  
So durch Wälder ziehe,  
Hügel auf und ab:  
Dann, wie's Vöglein im Laube  
Singet und sich rührt,  
Oder wie die golden Traube  
Wonnegeister spürt  
In der ersten Morgensonne:  
So fühlt auch mein alter, lieber  
Adam Herbst- und Frühlingsfieber,  
Gottbeherzte,

Nie verscherzte  
Erstlings-Paradieseswonne.

#### Journey on Foot

With my fresh-cut walking-stick,  
When in the early morning  
I walk in the woods  
Up hill and down:  
Then, as the little bird in the foliage  
Sings and stirs,  
Or as the golden grape  
Senses blissful spirits  
In the sun's first rays,  
So my dear old Adam feels  
Autumn- and spring-fever,  
That rapture of the first ones in  
Paradise,  
God-inspired,  
Never foolishly renounced.

Also bist du nicht so schlimm, o alter Adam, wie die strengen Lehrer sagen;  
Liebst und lobst du immer doch,  
Singst und preisest immer noch,  
Wie an ewig neuen Schöpfungstagen,  
Deinen Lieben Schöpfer und Erhalter.

You are not so bad, old Adam,  
As the stern instructors say;  
You still love and praise,  
And sing and glorify -  
As if each day were a new Creation -  
Your dear Maker and Keeper.

Möcht es dieser geben,

Would that this be granted:

Und mein ganzes Leben	That my whole life
Wär im leichten Wanderschweiße	Might pass in the light sweat
Eine solche Morgenreise!	Of just such a morning journey!

Mörrike, trans. Stephen Varcoe

At the age of seventeen Goethe became passionately involved with Kätchen, an innkeeper's daughter: some of his most intense and erotic poetry, which he described as *anakreontics*, sprang from their relationship. This poem is much later, written when he was 36, and it lays aside the passion in favour of a tender homage to the Greek poet. 'Anakreons Grab' might be simply a soliloquy describing the discovery of the Poet's tomb, in which case there is no audience implied. More interesting (and more justified) is the notion that the singer is a guide knowing perfectly well whose grave this is, and, like a figure in a Renaissance painting, he is showing it to the observer. Wolf's homage to Wagner can clearly be heard in the piano as the voice sings '*das alle Götter mit Leben schön bepflanzt und geziert*'.

## 2. Anakreons Grab

Wo die Rose hier blüht, wo Reben  
Lorbeer sich schlingen,  
Wo das Turtelchen lockt, wo sich  
das Grillchen ergötzt,  
Welch ein Grab ist hier, das alle  
Götter mit Leben  
Schön bepflanzt und geziert?  
Es ist Anakreons Ruh.  
Frühling, Sommer und Herbst  
genoss der Glückliche Dichter;  
Vor dem Winter hat ihn endlich  
Hügel geschützt.

## Anakreons Grave

Here, where the rose blooms, um  
where the vine and laurel entwine,  
Where the turtle dove  
calls, where the cricket is glad,  
What grave is here,  
that all the gods with beautiful life  
Have planted and adorned?  
It is Anakreon's last rest.  
Spring, summer and autumn  
delighted the happy poet;  
From winter, finally, this mound der  
has shielded him.

Goethe, trans. Stephen Varcoe

'Abschied' is a comedy number, an entertaining tale about what any artist might wish to do to a carping critic. The humour of the story is brilliantly illustrated by Wolf, who makes several academic jokes along the way: the critic has a dry, chromatic 'melody' which contains every note of the scale except the tonic – this finally appears as the narrator exclaims 'gewiss!' (it's true!). Another chromatic 'full house' occurs as he falls down the stairs, at which point we are entertained to a triumphant Viennese waltz. The singer tells a story, and clearly must tell it directly to his listeners.

### 3 Abschied

Unangeklopft ein Herr tritt abends  
bei mir ein:

“Ich habe die Her’ Ihr Rezensent  
zu sein!”

Sofort nimmt er das Licht  
die Hand,

Besieht lang meinen Schatten  
die Wand, wall,

Rückt nah und fern: “Nun, lieber  
junger Mann,

Sehn Sie doch gefälligst ‘mal Ihre  
so von der Seite an!

Sie geben zu, dass das ein Auswuchs  
is.”

“Das? Alle Wetter – gewiss!  
Ei Hasen! Ich dachte nicht, all’  
mein Lebtag nicht,

Dass ich so eine Weltnase führt’  
Gesicht!!”

Der Mann sprach noch Verschied’nes  
hin und her,

Ich weiss, auf meine Ehre,  
mehr;

Meinte vielleicht, ich sollt’  
ihm beichten.

Zuletzt stand er auf; ich tat  
leuchten.

Wie wir nun an der Treppe sind,

Da geb’ ich ihm, ganz froh gesinnt,  
Einen kleinen Tritt,

Nur so von hinten aufs gesässe, mit -  
Alle Hagel! Ward das ein Gerumpel,  
Ein Gepurzel, ein Gehumpel!

Dergleichen hab’ ich nie gesehn,

All’ mein Lebtag nicht gesehn,  
Einen Menschen so rasch die Trepp’  
hinauf gehn!

### Farewell

Unannounced, a man comes to  
visit me;

“I have the honour to be your  
critic!”

Thereupon he takes a light in his in  
hand,

Studies at length my shadow on the an

Moves back and forth: “Now, my  
dear young man,

Look, if you please, at your nose Nas’  
from the side.

You must admit that it’s an  
excrescence.”

“What? Good gracious – it’s true!  
Well, I’ll be – I didn’t know, in all  
my born days,

That I carried such a world-beating im  
nose on my face!!”

The man then spoke about this and  
that,

Though I can’t in all honesty nicht  
remember what;

Perhaps he meant for me to confess  
to him.

At last he stood up; I brought a ihm  
light.

As we were now at the top of the  
stairs,

I gave him, in a jocular manner,  
A tiny kick,

Just from behind up the arse, with-  
My goodness, wasn’t that a rumble,  
A clatter, a tumble!

The like of which I’ve never seen  
before,

All my life long I’ve never seen  
A man go down the stairs so  
quickly!

Mörike, trans. Stephen Varcoe

## A Shropshire Lad

Somervell

Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, a volume of 63 poems, was published in 1896. The first two editions ran to only 500 copies each, and it took several years for the work to gain its eventual popularity. As far as composers were concerned, it was not until these songs of 1904 appeared that a great army of Shropshire Lads began to march. The poems seemed for the most part perfectly suited to musical treatment, being short lyrics very much akin to the works of Heine, who had been so useful to the great *Lieder* composers. The typically Romantic ideas that they present – nature, love, loss, betrayal, death – provided rich pickings for a generation of musicians who had benefited from the new confidence discovered in the English Renaissance led by Parry, Stanford and Elgar.

It is possible to interpret Somervell's work as a true cycle, which fashions from Housman's poems a collection of songs with a narrative thread such as Schubert found in Müller's poems. The story can be told thus: the youthful enthusiasm of the first song, which nonetheless contains undertones of death, turns to lovesick bitterness in the next two songs, reaching a climax of broken-hearted bereavement with 'In Summer-time on Bredon'. The Lad sees a troop of soldiers pass by and hears the sound of distant drums, at which he decides to join up, though he leaves home with a heavy heart ('White in the moon the long road lies'). He attempts to revive his spirits with a false, bitter jollity, before being fatally wounded and recalling his home as he dies ('Into my Heart an Air that kills'). In this penultimate song Somervell gives to the piano the lyrical melody of the first song (but a semitone lower), while the voice recites the first stanza on a monotone, a technique used by Beethoven in *An die ferne Geliebte*, second movement. The result is a powerful evocation of memory, as well as being a cyclic return recalling Beethoven's example. In Somervell's final song, a kind of post-mortem *envoi*, our soldier is described as one of those who would 'die in their glory and never be old' – the eternal Youth.

Each song is here given its original Roman number.

### II

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

## XIII

When I was one-and-twenty  
 I heard a wise man say,  
 'Give crowns and pounds and guineas  
 But not your heart away;  
 Give pearls away and rubies  
 But keep your fancy free.'  
 But I was one-and-twenty,  
 No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty  
 I heard him say again,  
 'The heart out of the bosom  
 Was never given in vain;  
 'Tis paid with sighs a plenty  
 And sold for endless rue.'  
 And I am two-and-twenty,  
 And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

## XIV

There pass the careless people  
 That call their souls their own:  
 Here by the road I loiter,  
 How idle and alone.

His folly has not fellow  
 Beneath the blue of day  
 That gives to man or woman  
 His heart and soul away.

## XXI – Bredon Hill

In summertime on Bredon  
 The bells they sound so clear;  
 Round both the shires they ring them  
 In steeples far and near,  
 A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning  
 My love and I would lie,  
 And see the coloured counties,  
 And hear the larks so high  
 About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her  
 In valleys miles away;  
 'Come all to church, good people;  
 Good people come and pray.'  
 But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer  
 Among the springing thyme,  
 'Oh, peal upon our wedding,  
 And we will hear the chime,  
 And come to church in time.'

But when the snows at Christmas  
 On Bredon top were strown,  
 My love rose up so early  
 And stole out unbeknown  
 And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,  
 Groom there was none to see,  
 The mourners followed after,  
 And so to church went she,  
 And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,  
 And still the steeples hum,  
 'Come all to church, good people,' -  
 O noisy bells, be dumb;  
 I hear you, I will come.

## XXII

The street sounds to the soldiers' tread,  
 And out we troop to see:  
 A single redcoat turns his head,  
 He turns and looks at me.  
 My man, from sky to sky's so far,  
 We never crossed before;  
 Such leagues apart the world's ends are,  
 We're like to meet no more.

What thoughts at heart have you and I  
 We cannot stop to tell;  
 But dead or living, drunk or dry,  
 Soldier, I wish you well.

## XXXV

On the idle hill of summer,  
 Sleepy with the flow of streams,  
 Far I hear the steady drummer  
 Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder,  
 On the roads of earth go by,  
 Dear to friends and food for powder,  
 Soldiers marching, all to die.

East and west on fields forgotten  
 Bleach the bones of comrades slain,  
 Lovely lads and dead and rotten;  
 None that go return again.

Far the calling bugles hollo,  
 High the screaming fife replies,  
 Gay the files of scarlet follow:  
 Woman bore me, I will rise.

### XXXVI

White in the moon the long road lies,  
 The moon stands blank above;  
 White in the moon the long road lies  
 That leads me from my love.

Still hangs the hedge without a gust,  
 Still, still the shadows stay:  
 My feet upon the moonlit dust  
 Pursue the ceaseless way.

The world is round, so travellers tell,  
 And straight though reach the track,  
 Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,  
 The way will guide one back.

But ere the circle homeward hies  
 Far, far must it remove:  
 White in the moon the long road lies  
 That leads me from my love.

### XLIX

Think no more, lad; laugh, be jolly:  
 Why should men make haste to die?  
 Empty heads and tongues a-talking  
 Make the rough road easy walking,  
 And the feather pate of folly bears the falling sky.

Oh, 'tis jesting, dancing, drinking  
 Spins the heavy world around.  
 If young hearts were not so clever,  
 Oh, they would be young forever:  
 Think no more; 'tis only thinking  
 Lays lads underground.

[Repeat first stanza]



## XL

Into my heart an air that kills  
 From yon far country blows:  
 What are those blue remembered hills,  
 What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,  
 I see it shining plain,  
 The happy highways where I went  
 And cannot come again.

## XXIII

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair,  
 There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,  
 The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,  
 And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.

There's chaps from the town and the field and the till and the cart,  
 And many to count are the stalwart, and many the brave,  
 And many the handsome of face and the handsome of heart,  
 And few that will carry their looks or their truth to the grave.

I wish one could know them, I wish there were tokens to tell  
 The fortunate fellows that now you can never discern;  
 And then one could talk with them friendly and wish them farewell  
 And watch them depart on the way that they will not return.

But now you may stare as you like and there's nothing to scan;  
 And brushing your elbow unguessed-at and not to be told  
 They carry back bright to the coiner the mintage of man,  
 The lads that will die in their glory and never be old.

## Six Folksongs

In December 1903 Vaughan Williams began collecting folksongs, and in the village of Ingrave in Essex he heard Mr Pottipher sing *Bushes and Briars*: from his transcription he made an arrangement for voice and piano. The present performance will be given unaccompanied, and will attempt to recreate the style of another folk singer of the era, George Gouldthorpe, whom Percy Grainger described as 'giving out his tunes in all possible gauntness and plainness'.

### Bushes and Briars

Through bushes and through briars I lately took my way;  
 All for to hear the small birds sing and the lambs to skip and play. [repeat line]  
 I overheard my own true love, her voice it was so clear;  
 "Long time I have been waiting for the coming of my dear. [repeat]  
 Sometimes I am uneasy and troubled in my mind,  
 Sometimes I think I'll go to my love and tell to him my mind. [repeat]  
 And if I should go to my love, my love he will say nay,  
 If I show to him my boldness, he'll ne'er love me again." [repeat]

Pierre Bernac, in his celebrated book *The Interpretation of French Song*, emphasises the folk derivation of Ravel's *Five Greek Folksongs*, writing that 'over-refined vocal effects are obviously out of place', but that the singing should be full of 'cheerfulness and virile pride'. This, then, calls for something a little more expressive than Gouldthorpe's 'gauntness and plainness', while still being artless and unsentimental.

### Chansòn de la Mariée

Réveille-toi, réveille-toi,  
 perdrix mignonne,  
 Ouvre au matin tes ailes.  
 Trois grains de beauté, mon coeur  
 en est brûlé!  
 Vois le ruban d'or que je t'apporte,  
 Pour le nouer autour de tes cheveux.  
 Si tu veux, ma belle, viens  
 nous marier!  
 Dans nos deux familles,  
 alliés!

### The Awakening of the Bride

Awake, awake, my darling  
 partridge,  
 Open your wings to the morning.  
 Three beauty spots have set my  
 heart on fire!  
 See the gold ribbon that I bring  
 To tie round your hair.  
 If you want, my beauty, let us  
 marry!  
 In our two families, everyone is tous sont

related!

French version by Calvocoressi. trans. Stephen Varcoe

When Vaughan Williams went to Paris in 1907 to study with Ravel, his interest in folksong must have led him to this French arrangement, made during that period. The text and melody are from the fifteenth century, and are presumably descendants of the troubadour tradition of courtly love.

**L'Amour de Moy**  
 L'amour de moi, s'y est enclose  
 Dedans un joli jardinet.  
 OÙ croît la rose et le muguet.

Et aussi fait la passerose.

Ce jardin est bel et plaisant.  
 Il est garni de toutes fleurs.  
 On y prend son ébatement  
 Autant la nuit comme le jour.

Hélas! Il n'est si douce chose  
 Que de ce doux rossignolet  
 Qui chante au soir, au matinet:  
 Quand il est las, il se repose.

Je la vi l'autre jour ceuillir  
 La violette en un vert pré,  
 La plus belle qu'oncque je vis  
 Et la plus plaisante à mon gré.

Trad. 15<sup>th</sup> Century

**My Love**  
 My love has enclosed herself  
 Within a pretty little garden,  
 Where grow the rose,  
 lily-of-the-valley  
 And also the hollyhock.

This garden is beautiful and pleasing;  
 It is filled with every flower.  
 One may play there  
 By night as well as by day.

Alas! There is nothing sweeter  
 Than this sweet nightingale  
 Which sings evening and morning:  
 When it is weary, it rests.

I saw her the other day gathering  
 Violets in a green meadow:  
 The most beautiful girl I ever saw,  
 And the most pleasing to my taste.  
 trans. Stephen Varcoe

In its traditional context the folksong would more than likely have been familiar to its listeners. Performances would have been to some extent social acts, helping to cement the bonds between the participants in their shared culture. The singer might, therefore, give a plain, unadorned version which would remind the audience of what it already knew, or he (or she) might every time play the part of the involved storyteller, especially if the song has a good story to tell. 'Les garçons de Bordeaux', from the 1888 collection *Les plus jolies chansons du pays de France* has just such a story, and it seems appropriate to enliven it with some characterisation.

**Les garçons de Bordeaux**  
 Les garçons de Bordeaux, deridi,  
 Et ceux de La Rochelle,  
 Ils vont se promener, deridi,  
 Sur un vaisseau de guerre.

*Derirette, lon lan lire la lira,  
 Derirette lon lan lire.*

Ont pris sur le vaisseau, deridi,  
 Charmante marinière.  
 La belle, nuit et jour, deridi,  
 Pleure et se désespère.

**The boys of Bordeaux**  
 The boys of Bordeaux, deridi,  
 And those of La Rochelle,  
 Are going to set sail, deridi,  
 On a man-of-war.

They took on board, deridi,  
 A charming sailor-girl.  
 The fair one, night and day, deridi,  
 Cries and despairs.

Menez-moi, matelot, deridi,  
 Chez mon père et ma mere.  
 - Belle, vous n'irez pas, deridi,  
 Ils sont trop en colère.

- Laissez-moi, matelot, deridi,  
 Oh! que dira le monde?  
 Laissez-moi me noyer, deridi,  
 Dedans la mer profonde.

- Belle, ne pleure pas, deridi, -  
 A dit le capitaine.

- Allons où tu voudras, deridi,  
 Ta volonté soit faite.

- Ne me to connais pas, deridi,  
 Ma petite charmante?  
 Hier, nous étions là-bas, deridi,  
 Tous deux dedans ta chambre.

- Hier, nous étions là-bas, deridi,  
 Tous deux dedans ta chambre.  
 Rentrons, et nos parents, deridi,  
 Nous marieront ensemble.

Trad.

Lead me, sailor, deridi,  
 To my father and my mother.  
 "Fair one, you shan't go, deridi,  
 They are far too angry."

"Let me go, sailor, deridi,  
 Oh, what will people say?  
 Let me drown myself, deridi,  
 In the deep sea."

"Fair one, don't cry, deridi,"  
 Said the captain.

"We'll go where you wish, deridi,  
 Your will shall be done.

"Don't you recognise me, deridi,  
 My little charmer?  
 Yesterday, we were down there, deridi,  
 Both of us in your bedroom.

"Yesterday, we were down there, deridi,  
 Both of us in your bedroom.  
 Let's go back, and our parents, deridi,  
 Will marry us."

trans. Stephen Varcoe

In the folk tradition the singer may be male or female whatever the gender of the song's narrator: 'Ye banks and braes' is sung by a girl who has been abandoned by her false lover. However, this is not truly a folksong, since the tune ('The Caledonian Hunt's Delight') was written in 1788 by James Miller, and the words were written in 1791 by Robert Burns. Yet the style is so authentic that the pedant can be invited to be silent. In this arrangement Quilter gives a harmonic treatment which demands from the singer an expressive performance more suited to the drawing room than the inn.

### Ye banks and braes

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
 how can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?  
 How can ye chaunt, ye little birds,  
 and I sae weary, fu' o' care?

Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird  
 that wantons thro' the flow'ry thorn;  
 thou minds me o' departed joys,  
 departed, never to return.

Oft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,  
to see the rose and woodbine twine  
and ilka bird sang o' its love  
and fondly sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose  
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;  
but my fause lover stole the rose  
and oh, he left the thorn wi' me.

Robert Burns

Percy Grainger collected 'British Waterside' in 1906 from the singing of Mr Samuel Stokes, and by some idiosyncratic spellings he gives some indications of the pronunciation he wanted. 'The greatest crime against folksong', wrote Grainger, 'is to "middle-class" it with "white collar" voice production and "other townified suggestions"'. Unfortunately for him, though fortunately for us, he has written a song arrangement which requires plenty of white collar singing and even more white collar playing. Indeed, much of the interest of this song lies in the complexity and rhythmic drive of the accompaniment.

### **British Waterside**

Down beyond the British waterside, as I walked along,  
I overheard a fair maid, she was singing a song.  
The song that she did sing, and the words rep-e-ried she:  
"Of all the lads in England is the sailor lad for me".

You may know a jolly sailor lad as he walks down the street,  
He is so neat in this clothing, and so tight on his feet.  
His teeth are white as ivory and his eyes black as sloes;  
You may know a jolly sailor boy by the way that he goes.

North Yarmouth is a pretty place, it shines where it stands;  
The more I look upon it the more my heart burns.  
If I was at North Yarmouth I should think myself at home,  
For there I have sweethearts and here I have got none.

I'll go down to yon British waterside and build my love a touwer  
Where the lords, dukes and skewiers may all it admire.  
The King can but love the Queen, and I can but do the same;  
But you shall be the shepherdess andell I will be your swain.

Trad.

**Stephen Varcoe** is well known as a song recitalist, and works frequently with some of our finest accompanists. He has many CDs to his credit, including part of the Hyperion complete Schubert edition, the complete Fauré songs, Chabrier and Hahn songs, all with Graham Johnson; Finzi, Parry and Stanford with Clifford Benson; Armstrong Gibbs with Roger Vignoles; Percy Grainger with Penelope Thwaites.

Since his students days Stephen has been working with Peter Seymour, appearing with him in many concerts of Baroque music. With the encouragement of Klaus Neumann of West German Radio, they created a partnership for the performance of Lieder with fortepiano, and they have given many successful recitals together of this repertoire, especially the songs of Schubert and his predecessors.

Alongside his concert work, Stephen is studying at the University of York for a PhD on communication in song, and he gives lectures, masterclasses and seminars on this and related topics. He teaches at the Royal College of Music, Clare College, Cambridge, Dartington and Shrewsbury summer schools, and is often called upon to adjudicate prizes at Universities and Music Colleges.

**Peter Seymour** studied at Huddersfield School of Music and at University of York, including post-graduate work researching into the performance of baroque music. In July 1994 he was awarded the degree of D Mus., at University of York for research into performing style. He is director of Yorkshire Baroque Soloists, Yorkshire Bach Choir and Corona Coloniensis and has worked and recorded in most European countries. He is also an artistic adviser to York Early Music Festival and Senior Lecturer in Music and Organist at the University of York. He has recorded regularly both as conductor and keyboard player for WDR-Köln, BBC and other radio stations. As a keyboard player he appears with singers Yvonne Seymour, Stephen Varcoe, Emma Kirkby, Lynne Dawson, Mhairi Lawson, Barbara Schlick, Thomas Guthrie and Thomas Thomaschke, David Thomas, Christoph Prégardien, Ian Partridge, James Gilchrist, Roderick Williams, James Bowman and Matthew Brook, and instrumentalists Crispian Steele-Perkins, Lucy Russell, Simon Jones, Anthony Robson, Pamela Thorby. This season he conducts Bach *B minor Mass*, *Christmas Oratorio* and *St Matthew Passion*, Vivaldi *Seasons*, Handel *Coronation Anthems*, Mozart *Requiem*, Michael Haydn *Requiem*, Joseph Haydn *Nelson* and *Harmonie* masses, Purcell *Dioclesian* and *Fairy Queen* Brahms *Requiem* and Mendelssohn *Elijah*. He also directs programmes of Tudor music, English 20<sup>th</sup> Century choral classics and music by Lassus, Gabrieli and Schütz.

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