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*BEYOND TECHNIQUE: AN EXAMINATION OF
MUSICAL AND TEXTUAL EXPRESSION FROM
BAROQUE TO TWENTIETH CENTURY*

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford

March 2013

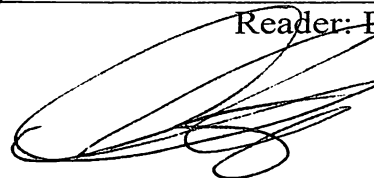
Approved by:



Advisor: Dr. Bradley Robinson



Reader: Dr. Jos Milton



Reader: Dr. Charles Gates

Dedication

To Lyndel Bailey – for making me realize that I had enough to pursue my dreams and that doing so was more important than being afraid.

To Professor Rex Nettleford (Prof) – for letting me know that you are only as good as your last performance.

To Dr. Olive Lewin (Miss Olive) – for always telling me “Amateurs practice until they get it right but professionals practice until they cannot get it wrong.”

Nante yie¹.

¹ From the Twi language of Ghana. Literally, meaning “Walk good” or “Walk well”. This adage has become popular in numerous Caribbean countries as a parting anecdote to those who have died.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

presents
Senior Voice Recital

Charles Moore, tenor
Amanda Johnston, piano

Pietà Signore

Anonymous

Care Selve from *Atalanta*
Sound an Alarm from *Judas Maccabeus*

George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759)

L'invitation au voyage
Le Manoir de Rosemonde
Phidylé

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

Ach so fromm from *Martha*

Friedrich von Flotow (1812-1883)

Intermission

Traum durch die Dämmerung
Breit über mein Haupt
Zueignung

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Nightsongs

H. Leslie Adams (b. 1932)

Prayer
Drums of Tragedy
The heart of a woman
Night Song
Sence You Went Away
Creole Girl

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance degree program and for the Sally Barksdale McDonnell
Honors College.

Charles Moore is a student of Dr. Bradley Robinson.

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Finally, to my thesis advisor and readers: Dr. Bradley Robinson, who wears many hats as my voice teacher as well as academic and thesis advisor, this would be impossible without you. To Doctors Jos Milton and Charles Gates, my second and third readers respectively, thanks for agreeing to be a part of my committee.

To my friends, special supporters and, yes, even my detractors, thanks for helping to strengthen me to complete this project with pride. Without all of you, I would not have been successful in this endeavor.

Introduction

Although vocal technique is an important element in the execution of any type of good singing, it is only meant to facilitate the transmission of a message, emotion or feeling. All composers put great thought into conveying this message through their settings, and it is up to the performer to follow their directions and to interpret independently when there are none given. In this regard, the vocalist becomes the conduit of the composer, bringing their wishes to life and adding their own personality and interpretive slants. Additionally, there are conventions of each specific period to which the pieces belong that must be observed. The result of this amalgamation is a layering of meaning beyond the intent of the composer. Meaning is always inherent in the music and text on the page before it is performed, but it is brought to life through the performers' interpretation. Tempo, diction choice, word stress, dynamic level, vocal color, motif emphasis (by the pianist), piano and vocal relationship, and even physical choice help to shape meaning a great deal. In addition to giving a historical overview of each period and piece, this discourse will also examine how the performers' choices convey the meaning of the works.

This work is meant to function as an accompanying booklet detailing the history of the works being performed. There is an extensive process of preparation that goes into performing a recital, and often, the research that is done is a process of discovery not only about the correct performance style of the music, but also about the lives and style of both the poets and composers.

Program notes do not often include much of the information found through this intense preparation process. This thesis is meant to serve as an extended performer 's journal to this specific recital. It is meant as a manual through its inclusion of information regarding the style

and prevailing expressive conventions of each period, which may assist the performer in making informed decisions regarding the interpretation and execution of the musical elements.

Chapter I - Recital Preparation and Challenges

When preparing for recitals, there are always those songs which, for some reason or the other stand out due to the personal connection with the experience being explored. There are others which do not appear to have a self-evident connection to the life of the performer. Despite one's personal feelings about the music being performed, there is not one song that generally does not have an extraordinary challenge that requires consistent work to overcome. There are also some challenges that, despite the very well-earned success of the recital, will require life-long work. For the purpose of this chapter, pieces will be grouped according to language as much as possible as care was made to select related pieces in order to create thematic and musical continuity. Some of the challenges that occur are sometimes related to general issues with expression in that particular language, rather than an isolated factor of that piece.

The Italian pieces for this recital were easy to bond with emotionally. The connection was instant and the understanding of content was immediate. However, the language was another matter altogether. Moving through the dental consonants posed a bit of a problem and, in addition to all this, I was not immediately embracing the legato line that was present in "Pietà Signore". The danger was that singing it in this disjunctive manner would be needlessly tiring. "Care Selve" was going well, except that my approach was too conservative – in an attempt to keep the line legato and the feeling delicate and the singing beautiful, I was not using the air effectively, and thus my breath became labored (almost as if I was holding my breath rather than using it to produce the sound). I remember feeling a sense of satisfaction after performing "Care Selve" as it had given so many problems from the outset.

However, despite this clear understanding of the Italian repertory, it was the French pieces that I found most appealing. All the French selections not only had sweeping lines, but an

understated and, at the same time, present passion with which I could identify. Yet, I had a massive challenge. It was not the language that was my immediate problem. I had worked on the language extensively and did not have major issues that I could not reasonably correct. I did not get the sweep of the French legato line immediately in order to capture the emotion accurately, and that aspect of French song is an absolutely critical component.

The German repertoire also took some time to grasp in terms of actually getting phrasing of the language together. However, my greatest challenge with the Strauss pieces was connecting with the emotion of the text while actually singing. Intellectually, I understood the sentiments; yet the deep link with them was not as easily made as in some of the other repertoire. It took much work in the non-singing portion of the process to actually be able to discover inner working of the poetry and the music.

The song cycle "Nightsong" posed unusual challenges. It was in English, and though it was more familiar because of this factor, it was not a dialect which was not my own. The compositions made use of the southern dialects and elements which were quite unnatural to my way of speaking English. I was not sure how I would overcome this hurdle. Additionally, I also had great problems getting the phrases beyond the musical elements and wide-intervaled, rhythmic melodies to sound as relaxed and Jazz-like as, I believe, they were intended to be. Some of these poems also spoke of experiences common to the African American community, but not one I understood in the same way, due to my own Jamaican heritage. Approaching this dialectical quandary required the full embrace of the universality of the experience in order to perform the pieces. Though the poet referred to an American experience, and the composer concretized this with American forms, it was an experience that was shared across the diaspora.

The performance of this cycle was not without flaw, but it was certainly satisfying to perform the work. The composer also received a copy of the recording of this cycle, and commented favorably on the performance. It was not hard gaining a general understanding of the experiences being examined however, specific and direct understanding took more time to realize. Once this happened, I could perform with great conviction and effectively communicate these pieces to the audience.

The arias posed their own set of problems. “Sound an Alarm” was difficult due to its melismatic qualities and spanned a wide range of the range. “Ach so fromm” posed a different challenge, as it rested primarily in the *passagio* and would prove to be a difficult sing at the end of the first half. The problem would now prove to be an issue of stamina for the recital. Also, during this entire semester of my recital, I was contending with illness which would prove to be a major challenge. However, there was a great sense of accomplishment after performing this literature. I wondered at first if perhaps it was due to the fact that “the much prepared for” was over. But there was something fulfilling about successfully performing these pieces that had caused much technical trouble beforehand.

Performing the pieces

The execution of the recital represented the final step of the process, and was the culmination of months of preparation. It required me to be so familiar with all aspects of the literature that their expression would become second nature. The performance element required the creation and sustaining of “the moment”. A credible and effective performance requires that the performer be fully committed and engaged at all points of the recital. The mind of the performer cannot be on multiple technical things at once, but has to be immersed in conveying

the emotions, mitigating problems and display of general artistry. Technical competence was not tested in the recital, it was simply trusted.

Beforehand, word for word translations of foreign language literature were completed and memorized. Paraphrases may have been looked at, but it was important to know the precise meaning of each word that was being sung and on what note. A number of composers featured in this particular recital paid great attention to making the text quite declamatory and faithful to the setting of the poetry. Mastery of the poetry was completed months before the recital.

After this detailed work, broader terms conveying overall emotions of pieces were chosen and some sections of longer pieces were assigned particular words. In lessons and in private practice sessions, gestures representing these emotions had been integrated, and great care was taken to convey this idea through the phrasing and vocalization of the melodic lines and these were implemented during performance. During "Pietà Signore", the focus was exclusively on the feeling of repentance which was being alluded to in the poetry. For a number of the works, I thought of myself as being in another location to get the emotion conveyed in the repertoire. This particular piece took place for me in a stone church made of stained windows. The character is on his knees and has been that way for a good time praying quietly. The text is very dramatic and almost operatic and it is very outward. I thought of this being the moment in which the character finally voices his/her sorrow at being a sinner. With this background, I was able to actually understand the mood with greater specificity. With these details, the unfolding of the piece occurred naturally.

"Care Selve" and "Sound an Alarm" required the same transcendental approach in order to fully perform the texts with conviction. The atmospheres that were spoken about in the actual songs were actually envisioned during the performance. A vision of the forest in which the

character searches for his love was necessary for me in order to grasp the full emotion of the aria. Images of the war were also conjured for “Sound an Alarm”. Yet, for the melismas, I had to bring myself to a point of great mental focus and stillness to ensure a successful execution.

The French pieces were different for a number of reasons. First, I did not have to visually create an atmosphere myself, as it was already embedded in the poetry. All three poems feature exquisite imagery, a device which serves as great inspiration for the composer. The aim here during the performance was to simply stay engaged and to enjoy the intersection of the lines of poetry with the inspired melodies. Thus, the process here became more inward: it was simply allowing the physical manifestation of the impact of the poetry to be viewed by the audience. This type of approach was also necessary to fully represent the understated French style and to maintain the integrity of the French *legato* line. Additionally, much of the text was so much more declamatory that it required more observance of this fact to ensure effective communication.

The German pieces required a much more outward approach overall. Strauss’ settings of the poetry often mimic arias as evidenced in the elaborately crafted melodies and music. The composer’s intention of drama is something that must be considered in interpreting this music. The poetry was the major element considered during the performance. The aim was different from that of the French selections. Accordingly, care was made to express these sentiments as externally as possible to reflect the German romantic notions idealized in the work of Strauss. The English pieces were not too different from this – yet it really was a slightly adjusted approach. The music to a great extent paints the text to which it is paired. Expressiveness for these pieces came by articulating this text and by closely thinking about the deeper experiences that the text embodies. Poetic experiences were thus to be indicative of a collective and relatable experiences of a people and this had to be reflected at all times.

Chapter II - *Baroque Expression and style*

The Baroque era spanned 1600-1750 and followed after the Renaissance period. The period of time included great strides of expressive methods in all areas of art (sculpture, paintings, dance forms), and music was no exception. The development of monody and recitative gave rise to new forms, such as opera and oratorio. Handel, Monteverdi and other composers became skilled in the creation of these forms of compositions. While the basic expressional purpose of the voice transcends through the later periods of music, the execution of this particular period makes it quite distinct. J. Peter Burkholder describes this purpose as maintaining the focus on “moving the affections”². Other critics support Burkholder in this claim of the highly emotional nature of the music of the period. Opera and oratorio forms had the general feel of the emotion throughout the settings, and one could feel this effect throughout the pieces. Despite this high emotional charge, the melodies and music were not always designed to emphasize specific text.

There are many basic examples of text painting and linking of text to meaning. The music was sufficiently ornate in order to express and amplify a simpler text. Composers, however, repeated lines were repeated differently without, it would seem, great care for the original crafting of the text so that this emotion could be shown. The period generally promoted the virtuosity of the instrument in its expression. While at times complex in their melismatic content, the vocal melodies showcased the voice in a manner that previous periods before had not done.

² Burkholder, J. Peter et al. *A History of Western Music*, p. 288

Pietà Signore (Pity Lord)

The tune of “Pietà Signore”, sometimes referred to as “*Aria di chiesa*”, “*Air d’église*” or “*Kirchen Arie*”, was originally attributed to Italian Baroque composer Alessandro Stradella, but later researchers have suggested that it may have been composed later by Niedermeyer, Fétis or even Rossini. It is still included in the Baroque repertory as its form (*Da capo*) and the structure implies that it was meant to be thought of this manner. Regardless, despite categorization issues, it remains an integral part of sacred and recital repertoire. “Pietà Signore” is also set to the text “Se i miei sospiri”.

Pietà Signore

*Pietà, Signore, di me dolente! Signor, pieta!
se a te giunge il mio pregar;
non mi punisca il tuo rigor.
Meno severi, clementi ognora,
volgi i tuoi sguardi sopra di me, sopra di me.*

*Non fiam mai che nell'inferno sia dannato
nel fuoco eterno
dal tuo rigor.
Gran Dio, giammai
sia dannato nel fuoco eterno
dal tuo rigor*

*Pity Lord, on my sorrow! Lord, Pity!
Lord, have pity if you hear my prayer;
Do not punish me with your wrath.
Be compassionate and forgive me
And look down upon me.*

*Spare me from damnation
To the eternal fires of hell
By your wrath.
Great God, Never I be
damned to the eternal fires of hell
by your wrath.*

Table 2.1

Key Signature	D-minor
Vocal Range	D3 to G4
Meter	3/4
Dynamic Range	p to f
Expression and tempo Markings	None (left up to the singer)
Form	Da Capo Aria/ Binary

Care Selve (Dear woods)

A leading composer of the Baroque period, George Friedrich Handel wrote approximately a thousand solos in his oratorios, operas and cantatas in Italian and English. Many have become staples of vocal literature. He demonstrated an intuitive understanding of the human voice and drama through his cleverly composed arias. Born in the same year as J.S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti, Handel was also celebrated for his concertos and for his enormous contribution to the development of Italian opera.

Atalanta is a three-act opera based on the life of a mythological female athlete of the same name. Handel composed the work in 1736 for the marriage of the Frederick, Prince of Wales, the eldest son of King George II. Set in legendary Greece, the opera tells the story of Meleagro, King of Etolia, who wins the heart of Atalanta after pursuing her into the woods and disguising himself as a shepherd. “Care Selve” is sung by Meleagro, a role normally sung by a *castrato*, but sung by a soprano or countertenor in contemporary productions.

Care Selve

*Care Selve, Ombre Beate
vengo in traccia del mio cor!*

*Dear woods, shadows blessed
come in search of my beloved
(Translated by Bard Suverkrop)*

Table 2.2

Key Signature	A-major
Vocal Range	E3 to A5
Meter	12/8
Dynamic Range	p to f
Expression and tempo Markings	None
Form	Binary

Sound an Alarm

Judas Maccabaeus is an oratorio in three acts composed in 1746 by George Frideric Handel. It is set to a libretto written by Thomas Morell. Based on the book of Maccabees, and the twelfth book of Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, the work was commissioned by Frederick, Prince of Wales.

Sound an Alarm

Sound an alarm! Your silver trumpets sound,
And call the brave, and only brave, around.
Who listeth, follow: to the field again!
Justice with courage is a thousand men.

Excerpted from Act II, "Sound an Alarm" is sung by the title character, who is calling the Israelites to arms after receiving the news of the advancing Syrian army. Handel uses text painting to a great degree to illustrate the intensity of the advancement of the troops throughout the aria. The melismas which occur on the word "brave", repeated trumpet like figures in both the vocal and piano line, as well as a thickly textured accompaniment with dotted rhythmic figures, convey an atmosphere of tension and conflict. The clever composition expertly mimics the elements of battle and bravery.

Table 2.3

Key Signature	A-major
Vocal Range	E3-A5
Meter	6/8
Dynamic Range	p to mf
Expression and tempo Markings	None
Form	Da Capo

Chapter III - Romantic Expression and Style

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

The Romantic period began early in the nineteenth century, following the Classical period. Most scholars place the period roughly between 1810-1910. The era saw the development of expression much different from the structure and form asserted by the practitioners of the Classical period. Some theorists see the start of the period with the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. However, there will always be problems pinpointing the start of any period due to the subjective nature of the ideas being categorized. It is important to note here that the Romantic Movement was not solely a musical one – it affected art, sculpture and literary works as well. The ideas of Romanticism started from the French Revolution with ideas that were compatible with the ideas of the Enlightenment.

There are a number of elements of Romanticism which are important to mention in any discussion of the vocal music of the period. These features are as follows:

1. Heightened use of chromaticism
2. The development of the early fortepiano into a larger and stronger instrument
3. Greater attention to the text being set. More composers looked to reputable poets for inspiration.
4. Development of song for voice and piano (with increasingly greater attention to the role of the piano)

These elements present themselves, to a great extent, in the works of many of the *Lieder*, English song and *mélodie* of the late Romantic period. The composers that will be discussed in this

chapter clearly exhibit these features in their creations. They adapted and used these techniques to create a new musical language of heightened expressiveness. By giving specificity to the emotions called for in their compositions through text painting, motives and accompaniment figures, they expanded the possibilities of the singer remaining true to the text to which the music was set.

In no area of art song does one find a more felicitous union of words and music than in the two hundred or so *mélodies* of Fauré, Chausson, Duparc and Debussy. These four composers brought to the magnificent poetry of their contemporaries...the delicacy, sensitivity, and voluptuousness that characterize French music of this era from 1865-1914.³

...imperfect... but works of genius. (Noske et al. 1970,)

Ravel on the works of Duparc

Of the composers mentioned in the aforementioned passage, Duparc is the least prolific of the four. He composed only sixteen songs for voice and piano, yet these songs are considered by many critics to be among the most beautiful in French song literature. His contribution to French *mélodie* was completed over a period of seventeen years and stands as a major contribution to the genre.

Duparc was born in Paris, three years after Gabriel Fauré. Duparc's compositions are characterized by melodic and harmonic subtleties. At the age of 37, after being diagnosed with neurasthenia, Duparc refocused himself on family and Christianity. Later, he destroyed the majority of his music, including his incomplete opera *Roussalka*.

³ *Nineteenth century French Art Song*, Barbara Meister, p. vii

L'invitation au voyage (Invitation to the Voyage)
 Poet: Charles Baudelaire

Barbara Meister describes this *mélodie* as one that is “full of the mystery and allure of never-never land”. She further notes that the poet, Charles Baudelaire, was so fascinated with the ideas expressed in this poem that he created a second version of it.⁴ Baudelaire (1821-1867), in addition to being a French poet, was a writer and critic who is credited with the translation of the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Additionally, his prosodic-poetic style influenced many other French poets and, being quite ahead of his time, developed the term *modernité* (modernity):

By modernity I mean the transitory, the fugitive,
 the contingent which make up one half of art, the other
 being the eternal and the immutable.⁵

Baudelaire charged the artist with the responsibility of documenting and reflecting the transient nature of modern urban life. He achieves this feat particularly in his work “*Fleurs du mal*” (Flowers of Evil), which deals with sex, homo-eroticism and death. Six of these poems were actually banned, and the printer and poet fined and reprimanded. “*L'invitation au voyage*” comes from the same collection of poems, and reflects some the tamer ideas of the work – ultimate desire and a longing for a utopia which the poet sets in the *Les Pays-Bas* (Holland). The element of sensuality is initiated from the persona’s address of his beloved and this feeling is maintained throughout the collection (though perspective alters the examination of this theme). Additionally, the vivid nature of the imagery charges the poem with great eroticism.

⁴ Nineteenth Century French Song, Meister - 249

⁵ “The Painter of Modern Life” in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, edited and translated by Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon Press, 13.

L'invitation au voyage

Mon enfant, ma soeur,
 Songe à la douceur
 D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
 Aimer à loisir,
 Aimer et mourir
 Au pays qui te ressemble!
 Les soleils mouillés
 De ces ciels brouillés
 Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
 Si mystérieux
 De tes traîtres yeux,
 Brillant à travers leurs larmes.

*My child, my sister,
 Think of the rapture
 Of living together there!
 Of loving at will,
 Of loving till death,
 In the land that is like you!
 The misty sunlight
 Of those cloudy skies
 Has for my spirit the charms,
 So mysterious,
 Of your treacherous eyes,
 Shining brightly through their tears.*

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
 Luxe, calme et volupté.

*There all is order and beauty,
 Luxury, peace, and pleasure.*

Vois sur ces canaux
 Dormir ces vaisseaux
 Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
 C'est pour assouvir
 Ton moindre désir
 Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
 Les soleils couchants
 Revêtent les champs,
 Les canaux, la ville entière,
 D'hyacinthe et d'or;
 Le monde s'endort
 Dans une chaude lumière.

*See, their voyage past,
 To their moorings fast,
 On the still canals asleep,
 These big ships; to bring
 You some trifling thing
 They have braved the furious deep.
 Now the sun goes down,
 Tinting dyke and town,
 Field, canal, all things in sight,
 Hyacinth and gold;
 All that we behold
 Slumbers in its ruddy light.*

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
 Luxe, calme et volupté.

*There all is order and beauty,
 Luxury, peace, and pleasure.*
 (Translated by Edna St. Vincent Millay)

“L’invitation au voyage” illustrates the hallmarks of Duparc's style – an ability to combine voice and accompaniment into a true partnership, an adept evocation of mood, and a keen sense of lyricism. In this piece, a lover invites his beloved to accompany him to a place of enchantment and abundance. The vivid imagery used by Baudelaire is complimented by the undulating accompaniment patterns used to conjure suspense.

Table 3.1

Key Signature	C-minor
Vocal Range	G3 to G4
Meter	6/8 to 9/8
Dynamic Range	pp to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Doux et tendre
Form	Through composed

Le Manoir de Rosemonde (The Manor of Rosamund)

Poet: Robert de Bonnières

This song is an expression of the futility of searching for happiness and love. The character searches for the manor of the “rose of the world”. Set to text by Bonnières, with whom Duparc maintained a close friendship, the subject of the poem bears some resemblance to Rosamund, former lover of King Henry II, who was sent off to a nunnery after their indiscretions became public. The illicit romance inspired many stories, including the legend of a maze that was built as a prison for her and it was one in which Henry was expected to find her. Meister also mentions the possibility of this Bonnières’ poem referring to Rosemonde who lived about 570 A.D. and was the wife of a Lombard King. This Rosemonde was said to have inspired epic poems from the English poet Swinburne (1837-1909) and Italian poet Alfieri (1749-1803).⁶

Duparc’s compositional techniques complement the imagery of futility in the poem. The sound of the horses, the anguish and bitterness of the character, the arduous journey and the ultimate frustration of a fruitless search are all reflected in the pulsating dotted rhythms. The sudden stops and the clever harmonic and tonal subtleties relate to the many moods experienced in this trek. The most striking feature of this *mélodie* is the stark musical contrast between the two sections. While the second section is much more subdued and contains far less motivic motion (except at the very end), it is certainly no less intense than the first. It requires just as much intensity as the first – just a different kind of passion.

⁶Meister, p. 257

Le Manoir de Rosemonde

De sa dent soudaine et vorace,
 Comme un chien l'amour m'a mordu
 En suivant mon sang répandu,
 Va, tu pourras suivre ma trace
 Prends un cheval de bonne race,
 Pars, et suis mon chemin ardu,
 Fondrière ou sentier perdu,
 Si la course ne te harasse!
 En passant par où j'ai passé,
 Tu verras que seul et blessé
 J'ai parcouru ce triste monde.
 Et qu'ainsi je m'en fus mourir
 Bien loin, bien loin, sans découvrir
 Le bleu manoir de Rosemonde.

*With its sudden and voracious fang,
 Like a dog, love has bitten me.
 By following the blood I have shed, go!
 You will be able to follow my trail.
 Take a thoroughbred horse,
 Set out, and follow my arduous way,
 Bog or hidden path,
 if the ride does not exhaust you.
 In passing where you have passed,
 You will see that alone and wounded,
 I have ranged this sad world
 And that thus went to die
 Far far away without discovering
 The blue manoir of Rosamund.
 (Translation by Pierre Bernac)*

Table 3.2

Key Signature	D-minor
Vocal Range	D3 to A5
Meter	9/8 to 3/4
Dynamic Range	pp to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Assez vif , avec force and declame
Form	Through composed

Phidylé**Poet: Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle**

Leconte de Lisle's poem was published in his collection *Poèmes et poésies* (1855). De Lisle, often referred to as a "Parnassian Poet", often uses Greek legend and antiquity as his inspiration. He evokes a tender scene in an idyllic Mediterranean setting – a young man and his love lying on the grass. Duparc's setting of this poem shows his compositional versatility – from his slow setting of the first quatrain to his use of moving rhythms against a smooth melody to evoke a feeling of timelessness and seduction.

Phidylé

L'herbe est molle au sommeil sous les frais
peupliers,
Aux pentes des sources moussues,
Qui dans les prés en fleur germant par
mille issues,
Se perdent sous les noirs halliers.

*The grass is soft for slumber beneath the fresh
poplars,
on the slopes by the mossy springs,
which, in the meadows flowering with a
thousand plants,
lose themselves under dark thickets*

Repose, ô Phidylé! Midi sur les feuillages
Rayonne et t'invite au sommeil.

*Rest, o Phidylé! The midday sun shines on the
foliage
and invites you to sleep!*

Par le trèfle et le thym, seules, en plein
soleil chantent les abeilles volages.
Un chaud parfum circule au détour des
sentiers,
La rouge fleur des blés s'incline,
Et les oiseaux, rasant de l'aile la colline,
Cherchent l'ombre des églantiers.

*Among clover and thyme, alone, in full
Sunlight hum the fickle honeybees.
A warm fragrance circulates about the turning
paths,
the red cornflower tilts,
and the birds, skimming the hill with their wings,
search for shade among the wild roses.*

Repose, ô Phidylé
Mais, quand l'Astre, incliné sur sa courbe
éclatante,
Verra ses ardeurs s'apaiser,
Que ton plus beau sourire et ton meilleur
baiser
Me récompensent de l'attente!

*Rest, o Phidylé!
But when the sun, turning in its resplendent
orbit,
finds its heat abating,
let your loveliest smile and your most ardent
kiss
recompense me for waiting!*
(Translation by Emily Ezust)

Table 3.3.

Key Signatures (in sequence)	A-flat, F-major, A major, B-flat major, G major, E-flat major, A-flat major
Vocal Range	E-flat3 to A-flat4
Meter	Triple meter most times
Dynamic Range	pp to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Doux et sans nuance
Form	Through composed

Friedrich von Flotow (1812-1883)

Ach so fromm (Ah, how innocent)

Friedrich von Flotow was born in Teutendorf, in the Mecklenburg region of Germany, and studied at the Conservatoire de Paris. His operas reflect the influences of Rossini, Meyerbeer, Donizetti, and Gounod, especially with his use of *bel canto* styled arias. Von Flotow wrote approximately thirty operas, many of which were performed in different versions and under different titles and languages. All but *Martha* and *Alessandro Stradella* have fallen into relative inconspicuousness.

Martha is set in 18th-century England, during the reign of Queen Anne, and tells the story of Lady Harriet, a high ranking beauty, who disguises herself as a peasant. She takes the name of Martha, and, with her maid Nancy (who is also cloaked) joins a crowd of girls going to Richmond. Two young farmers, Plunkett and Lyonel, engage Martha and her companion as servants. However, the two ladies do not like their rustic conditions, and decide to flee the same night. The two farmers are devastated at this turn of events, as they have already fallen desperately in love with the girls.

The aria “Ach! so fromm” is taken from Act III, where Lyonel sees “Martha” again with Queen Anne’s ladies-in-waiting. He grieves that he will probably never be with her again. There is some dispute as to whether the aria was originally intended for *Martha*. Some critics contend that it was instead meant for *L’âme en peine*, while others assert that it was always meant to be included in *Martha*. It is also often sung in its Italian translation, “M'appari tutt'amor” (“She appeared to me full of love”).

The aria features a number of musical features common to the romantic period. The change of the characterization of the accompaniment to depict a change in the focus of the text occurs in the middle of the piece, between the A and B sections. There is a shift from gentle arpeggiation to blocked chords in an equal eighth-note motif. The extended preludes and postludes are also found in a number of Donizetti and Bellini operas, and require expressive playing to demonstrate the intense emotion present in the text. The coda, which shows a climaxing of the emotion of the character, is also meant to show the skill of the singer, as it sits in the *passagio* and then features an accompanied B-flat in the vocal line. The tempo of the piece is highly *rubato* and the singer is of central focus.

Ach so fromm

Ach! so fromm, ach so traut,
Hat mein Auge sie erschaut;
Ach! so mild, und so rein
Drang ihr Bild in's Herz mir ein.

*With such innocence and faith
Has my eye her perceived
Ah, so gentle and so pure
Was the image that penetrated her heart*

Banger Gram, eh' sie kam,
Hat die Zukunft mir umhüllt,
Doch mit ihr blühte mir
Neues Dasein lusterfüllt.
A new joy-filled existence.

*Before she came into my life,
only fearful sorrow
Lay in my future
But with her blossomed in me*

Weh! Es schwand, was ich fand, ach!
Mein Glück erschauft ich kaum,
Bin erwacht und die Nacht

*Woe it disappeared that which I found
Ah my happiness was barely allowed to exist
When I awakened the night had*

Raubte mir den süßen traum
 Martha! Martha!
 Du entschwandest, und mein Glück
 Gib mir wieder, was Du fondest
 Oder theile es mit mir.

*stolen my sweetest dream from me
 Martha! Martha!
 You disappeared and my happiness took with you.
 Return to me again what you found
 Or share with me.*
 (Translated by Bard Suverkrop)

Table 3.4

Key Signature	F-major
Vocal Range	F3 to B-flat 5
Meter	2/4
Dynamic Range	None given leaving it for the performer to decide.
Expression and tempo Markings	Allegro moderato
Form	Binary

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Born in Munich to Franz Strauss, principal horn player in the Munich Court Orchestra, Richard Strauss had great exposure to music at an early age. He began piano lessons at the age of four and a half and, by the age of six, he had not only seen his first operas (*Der Freischütz* and *Die Zauberflöte*) but had written his first compositions⁷.

Although Richard Strauss' operas rank high in his contribution to vocal music, particularly those created collaboratively with noted poet and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, he also composed over 100 *Lieder* for voice and piano, many of which he later orchestrated. However, Newman notes that "careful study gives one the impression that comparatively few of his *Lieder* have much chance of survival"⁸. Despite his pedantic pronouncements upon the *Lieder* of Strauss, the works have been sung with great success by singers of great renown. Newman's comments, along with those of other critics, suggest a misunderstanding of the works of Strauss. Strauss' works all reflect highly symphonic influences. While *Lieder* is not Strauss' primary area of compositional strength, the pieces certainly do not show weakness. His *Lieder* reflects his core compositional philosophy in an area which was not his primary one. A statement he made in his youth describing a performance of Siegfried gives us some insight:

I was bored stiff, I was quite frightfully, so horribly
I cannot even tell you. But it was beautiful, incredibly
beautiful, this wealth of melodies, this dramatic intensity,
this fine instrumentation, and it was clever, eminently beautiful!⁹

This passage illustrates to some extent that Strauss highlighted the drama of the music over the drama of the text that he set. Though criticized for his choices of poets by Newman as well, his music seemed to create tension and drama where none was glaringly apparent. This theatricality

⁷ Kennedy, 1988, p. 1

⁸ Newman, 1908, p.89

⁹ Kennedy, 1988, p. 3

and focus on the musical element did not mean that there was no text focus, one will see in the songs examined.

Strauss is well known for his many tone poems, operas and ballets which he composed over his lifetime. All of these works reflect a dramatic Wagnerian influence, particularly relating to the creation of a complete work with balanced elements. Additionally, he composed 27 songs specifically for voice and orchestra. He brought a new paradigm of drama to art song that many composers sought to enliven in their own works. His songs, including these three, are often very aria-like and require great expressiveness from the singer.

Traum durch die Dämmerung (Dream through Dusk)
Poet: Otto Julius Bierbaum

Set in the summer after his marriage in 1894, “Traum durch die Dämmerung” was one of three songs by Otto Julius Bierbaum that were published as Strauss’ Op. 29, and dedicated to Bavarian Court Opera’s singer Eugen Gura. All three works are rapturous love songs, but this first *Lied* is often described as perhaps the most sensual of the group. Set as a through-composed song with an exquisite melody over a simple and thinly textured accompaniment, the song places the focus squarely on the singer. Its use of a modulation and chromaticism highlights the innate elements of lyricism and ecstasy.

Traum durch die Dämmerung

Weite Wiesen im Dämmergrau;
 die Sonne verglomm, die Sterne ziehn,
 nun geh' ich hin zu der schönsten Frau,
 weit über Wiesen im Dämmergrau,
 tief in den Busch von Jasmin.

*Broad meadows in grey dusk;
 the sun has died, the stars come out,
 to the fairest of women I go
 far across meadows in grey dusk,
 deep into the shrubs of jasmine.*

Durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land;
 ich gehe nicht schnell, ich eile nicht;
 mich zieht ein weiches samtenes Band
 durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land,
 ich gehe nicht schnell, ich eile nicht;
 in ein mildes, blaues Licht

*I do not walk fast, I do not hurry;
 Through grey dusk to the land of love,
 to gentle blue light.
 Through grey dusk to the land of love;
 I do not walk fast, I do not hurry
 to gentle blue light.*

TABLE 3.5

Key Signature	F-sharp major to B-flat major to F-sharp major
Vocal Range	C-sharp 3 to G-flat 4
Meter	2/4
Dynamic Range	pp to f
Expression and tempo Markings	Sehr Ruhig
Form	Through composed

Breit über mein Haupt (Spread over my head)***Poet: Adolf Friedrich von Schack***

Featuring the poetry of German poet Adolf Friedrich von Schack, “Breit über mein Haupt” comes from Strauss’ Opus 19 and features an intimate scene between lovers. The *Lied* demonstrates Strauss’ flair for the operatic – his use of sustained chords against an expertly written vocal line instantly allows the singer to freely express the declarative and overtly romantic notions of the text. “Breit über mein Haupt” also features two very common hallmarks of Strauss: text painting and, to a lesser degree, chromaticism.

Breit über mein Haupt

Breit' über mein Haupt dein schwarzes Haar,
Neig' zu mir dein Angesicht,
Da strömt in die Seele so hell und klar
Mir deiner Augen Licht.

*Spread over my head your black hair,
lower to me your face
then into my soul so clear and bright
the light of your eyes will stream.*

Ich will nicht droben der Sonne Pracht,
Noch der Sterne leuchtenden Kranz,
Ich will nur deiner Locken Nacht
Und deiner Blicke Glanz.

*I want not the glory of the sun above
nor the gleaming crown of stars
only the night of your locks do I want
and the radiance of your looks.*

TABLE 3.6

Key Signature	G-flat major
Vocal Range	G-flat 4 to A-flat 5
Meter	Common time
Dynamic Range	p to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Andante maestoso
Form	Through composed

Zueignung (Dedication)
Poet: Herman Von Gilm

Strauss composed “Zueignung” at 18 years old as part of his first collection of songs. He expressly stated that he had the tenor voice in mind for this particular collection. “Zueignung” is perhaps one of his most familiar songs and features broad vocal phrases and a repeating of “Habe Dank” (have thanks) at the end of each verse. “Habe Dank” was also Gilm’s original title for the poem. The song culminates in a dramatic climax in the third verse with its progression to the euphoric high note on “Heilig” (holy) which also shows Strauss’ deft hand at text painting.

Ja, du weißt es, teure Seele,
 Daß ich fern von dir mich quäle,
 Liebe macht die Herzen krank,
 Habe Dank.

Einst hielt ich, der Freiheit Zecher,
 Hoch den Amethysten-Becher,
 Und du segnetest den Trank,
 Habe Dank.

Und beschworst darin die Bösen,
 Bis ich, was ich nie gewesen,
 heilig, heilig an's Herz dir sank,
 Habe Dank

Zueignung

*Yes, dear soul, you know
 away from you I'm in torment,
 love makes hearts sick,
 have thanks.*

*Once I, drinker of freedom,
 held the amethyst goblet
 and you blessed that draught,
 have thanks.*

*And you drove out from it the evil ones,
 til I, as never before,
 holy, sank holy upon your heart,
 have thanks!*

(Translated by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau)

TABLE 3.7

Key Signature	C-major
Vocal Range	E3 to A5
Meter	Common time
Dynamic Range	p to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Moderato
Form	Strophic

Chapter IV - Twentieth Century Expression and Style

H. Leslie Adams

The works of H. Leslie Adams suggest a number of classical and contemporary influences. He has composed in various classical genres including chamber, orchestral, choral, opera and art song. An African-American, he has composed over forty songs for solo voice, among which include four song cycles. His broadening of the definition of “song” breaks a number of barriers, both racially and musically. It also adds to the repertory of American song with the inclusion of poets and musical forms that are distinctly American. Among his credits are included the opera *Blake*, which was written and composed in the mid-1980s, and *Slaves*, a musical drama created in collaboration with writer Sidney Goldberg. Lauded for his innate lyricism, Adams’ musical journey began with piano lessons at age four and was furthered by an intense exposure to the arts, which was supported by his parents. In an interview, Adams noted, “I have the freedom to express myself in any way I see fit, unlike many composers who wrote for patrons or never lived to see their works honored, I am so lucky that I have the chance to express myself without reserve...”

The compositions of H. Leslie Adams are characteristic of much of the music of the late twentieth century. Other composers had also sought to continue the ideas of the late Romantic period by employing reputable poets. Following the traditions of Schubert, Wolf and Schumann, Adams gives the text due attention in his settings. This technique highlights the meaning of the poem through the relationship between piano and voice. His skill at doing this is comparable to any exceptional composer of *Lieder* or *mélodie*. However, the difference in the selection of poetry by twentieth century composers, Adams in particular, is in their tackling of the issues

which helped to shape the African-American experience. While he is not the first to do this (as one must acknowledge the many choral and solo vocal works set by other composers such as William Grant Still, George Walker and Nathaniel Dett), his work certainly does exponentially adds to a growing work of song composed by works authored by African American poets. This fact speaks directly to an experience not captured in much Literature before the twentieth century.

Nightsongs, previously titled *Six songs on texts of Afro-American poets* or *African-American songs*, reflects Adams' compositional style: lyricism with a fusion of jazz with twentieth century compositional techniques. The composer differentiates his work from a traditional song cycle by not portraying a single narrative. Rather, the cycle portrays five different personalities and poetic styles. However, there is a permeating story through the composer's selection of the poets (most of whom had ties to the Harlem Renaissance). The cycle is a celebration of black history and explores sensuality, identity, gender, faith and spirituality, emotion, death and loss. In essence, the narrative, if one could sum it up in one word, is one of experience.

The first two songs in the cycle are settings of poems by Langston Hughes (1902-1967). Often called "The Poet Laureate of the Negro Race", Hughes was a prime figure in the Harlem Renaissance movement and has often been considered by critics as one of the most significant African-American writers of the twentieth century. Adams, while living in New York in the early 1960's, met Hughes at a staging of "*The Barrier*" – an opera in which Hughes was the librettist. It was here that Adams received permission to set the songs "The Prayer" and "Fantasy in Purple" (now called "Drums of Tragedy" for this setting). These songs both explore spirituality.

Prayer

I ask you this:
 Which way to go?
 I ask you this:
 Which sin to bear?
 Which crown to put
 Upon my hair?
 I do not know,
 Lord God,
 I do not know.

“The Prayer”, through the chords and space between the chords, evokes a hushed atmosphere which seems to mimic the quietness of a confessional. The character’s ambivalence and confusion is reflected in the seemingly wandering nature of the harmonies of the accompaniment. This plaintive text has also been set by Ricky Ian Gordon.

TABLE 4.1

Key Signature	G-flat major
Vocal Range	E-flat 3 to G-flat 4
Meter	Common time
Dynamic Range	pp to f
Expression and tempo Markings	Adagio expressive
Form	Strophic

Drums of Tragedy

Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
 Beat the drums of tragedy and death.
 And let the choir sing a stormy song
 To drown out the rattle of my dying breath.
 Beat the drums of tragedy for me.
 And let the white violins whirl thin and slow,
 But blow one blaring trumpet note of sun
 To go with me to the darkness where I go.

“Drums of Tragedy”, in direct contrast to the last song, features a very rhythmic accompaniment against a moving and, at times, melismatic vocal line. The song is one of defiance and triumph, as the character – like the one in Dylan Thomas’ “Do not go gentle into that good night” – rebels against death. The syncopated rhythms, both in the accompaniment and the vocal line, resemble percussion instruments and evoke a “tribal” and earthy dance feel which creates a vivid scene for the audience.

Table 4.2

Key Signature	C-major (but goes through different keys)
Vocal Range	E-flat 4 to B-double flat 5
Meter	Common
Dynamic Range	pp to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Allegretto Marcato
Form	ABA/ Binary

Nightsong

The night was made for rest and sleep,
 For winds that softly sigh;
 It was not made for grief and tears;
 So then why do I cry?
 The wind that blows through leafy trees
 Is soft and warm and sweet;
 For me the night is a gracious cloak
 To hide my soul's defeat.
 Just one dark hour of shaken depths,
 Of bitter black despair-
 Another day will find me brave,
 And not afraid to dare.

Written by African-American educator, poet, and social worker Clarissa Scott Delany (1901-1927), "Nightsong" portrays a questioning persona who moves from that uncertain stage to a resolute stance. This transition is depicted through a number of visual, tactile and olfactory imageries which are further enhanced by the harmonic and tonal ambivalence of the accompaniment and vocal line. During her years at Wellesley, Delaney attended meetings of the Literary Guild in Boston, where she had the opportunity of hearing featured speakers, such as Claude McKay.¹⁰ It was in this context that she began her association with the Harlem Renaissance.¹¹ The resolve of the persona is depicted by the broadening of the last verse, the use of octaves (particularly on the last page), the thickening of chordal texture, and the increase of triplet rhythms in the accompaniment set against a high tessitura vocal line set in duple meter.

Table 4.3

Key Signature	A-minor
Vocal Range	D3 to A5
Meter	Common time
Dynamic Range	p to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Moderato con moto
Form	Modified Strophic

¹⁰ Claude McKay was Jamaican-American writer and poet. He was a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance.

¹¹ Hughes, et al. 1970

The Heart of a Woman

The heart of a woman goes forth with the dawn,
As a lone bird, soft winging, so restlessly on,
Afar o'er life's turrets and vales does it roam
In the wake of those echoes the heart calls home.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night,
And enters some alien cage in its plight,
And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars
While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.

“Heart of a woman”, like other songs of this cycle, reveals a heavy Jazz influence on the composer. The graceful yet balanced melody features leaps and contains rhythmic stresses on off-beats. James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), a prominent figure of the Harlem renaissance, featured this text in his first collection of poetry entitled *Bronze*, which was published in 1918. Johnson is probably best known for “Lift every voice and sing”, dubbed as the “black national anthem”. The melody for this hymn was written by his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson. “Heart of a woman” demonstrates Adams’ self-professed core compositional philosophy: “Music comes from the heart; technique is the servant of emotions.”¹²

Table 4.4

Key Signature	A-flat major
Vocal Range	E-flat 3 to A-flat 5
Meter	12/8
Dynamic Range	pp to ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Andante appassionato
Form	Strophic

¹² H. Leslie Adams' "Nightsongs": Poetry, Music, and Performance By Allanda Constantina Small.

Sence you went away

Seems lak to me de stars don't shine so bright,
 Seems lak to me de sun done loss his light,
 Seems lak to me der's nothin' goin' right,
 Sence you went away.
 Seems lak to me de sky ain't half so blue,
 Seems lak to me dat ev'rything wants you,
 Seems lak to me I don't know what to do,
 Sence you went away.

Oh ev'ything is wrong,
 De day's jes twice as long,
 De bird's forgot his song
 Sence you went away.

Seems lak to me I jes can't he'p but sigh,
 Seems lak to me ma th'oat keeps gittin dry,
 Seems lak to me a tear stays in my eye
 Sence you went away

The text for “Sence you went away”, also written by Johnson, expresses heightened emotion by relating the poem in Southern parlance. *Ebony Magazine* described “Sence you went away” as one of the most moving songs ever written by an American composer. According to the scholar Dr. Allanda Small-Campbell, “It is in the work’s simplicity, its sweeping vocal line, the rapport between singer and pianist which must be established, how the emotive nature of the work tends to transport the listener to a deep place; these qualities render it a most affecting piece.” Its lack of introduction heightens the stark emotion permeating the work.

Table 4.5

Key Signature	G-major to A-flat major
Vocal Range	E3 to A-flat 5
Meter	Common time
Dynamic Range	p to f
Expression and tempo Markings	Moderately moving and very expressively
Form	Strophic

Creole Girl

When you dance, do you think of Spain,
Purple skirts and clipping castanets,
Creole Girl?

When you laugh, do you think of France,
Golden wine and mincing minuets,
Creole Girl?

When you sing, do you think of young America,
Grey guns and battling bayonets?
When you cry, do you think of Africa,
Blue nights and casual canzonets?

When you dance, do you think of Spain,
Purple skirts and clipping castanets,
Creole Girl?

“Creole Girl” serves as the climax of the cycle with a fast tempo, syncopated rhythms and high energy. Its opening is reminiscent of “Drums of Tragedy” and, in a similar manner, creates a dance rhythm which sets a vivid scene. The sensuality of this text is brought out even further in the strictly harmonic and rhythmic function of the piano: it does not at any point, play a melodic role, but provides a pulsing canvas for the color of the voice. The mood of the song is mysterious, sensuous, exotic and exciting.

Table 4.6

Key Signature	A-minor
Vocal Range	D-flat 3 to A5
Meter	3/4
Dynamic Range	mp - ff
Expression and tempo Markings	Allegretto
Form	AABA

Conclusion

*“Art is the only way to run away without leaving home.”
— Twyla Tharp*

There are many structuralist and postmodernist theories which make various suppositions regarding the relationship between art and literature. Some argue that art mirrors life and that it is a reflection of man's inner pathos and experiences. Other theories contend that there is a much more symbiotic relationship between art and life and that, in fact, both elements unduly influence each other. There are also those who suggest that true art is not a reflection of life at all, but that, in fact, it is a fabrication. There are also those theories which place the burden of the creation of the meaning squarely in the realm of the audience. Regardless of which theory one may subscribe to as correct, the creation of “the moment” on stage is inevitable. The evocation of that one moment in which the audience is forced to suspend disbelief and venture with the performer into a world started by the poet and composer is the point of the process. The fact that the output differs from period to period does not mean that the process becomes any less or more arduous or significant. As a matter of fact, the process does not change due to the discovery of new facts or the realization of influences. It simply becomes more interesting as these elements must be considered in the performance of the literature.

So what is the point of it all? What is the point of the preparation for a recital, the subjection of one's self to the rigors of hours of practice as well as being patient as the artistry and technical elements slowly come? The point of it all is definitely the evocation of aforementioned “moment which indubitably highlights the process of execution. While there are valuable lessons in the actual practice and preparation processes, it is only to help the performer showcase the pieces that he or she will perform with greater authority as it relates to genre, style

and performance practice. The preparation process itself is lengthy and, at times, arduous. On the other hand, the moment of performance lasts for a much shorter time. Yet, this performance can have a profound effect upon an audience member (even one who may not understand the language in which the literature is being performed), and this fact validates the entire process. The preparation involved in this particular recital, and the depiction of success in various elements serve to show the overall worth of the entire process. The unlocking of the artistry inherent in each individual piece of literature, depending on the experience each performer brings to it, may take longer to achieve. But once this work is done, it can be quite rewarding to both participants in the process of creation: audience and performer.

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