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GRADUATE RECITAL

by

Carl L. Ashby

A report of a recital-performed in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Music

in

Music Education

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1966

3/12
1959
10

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The writer wishes to express his most sincere appreciation to Dr. Max F. Dalby, chairman of the graduate committee; to Professor Merl E. Puffer, accompanist and vocal coach for the recital; and to the members of the Bear River High School A Cappella Choir for assistance in performing the choral section of the program.

Carl L. Ashby

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INTRODUCTION

The writer, in preparing for the recital, was concerned mainly with the following objectives:

1. To improve his own ability to perform well with the vocal instrument.
2. To find new avenues of approach to the problem of teaching correct vocal methods in the classroom.

It is the belief of the writer that if one does not continue to study and learn of the many problems that arise in teaching the vocal art, he will not perform well as a teacher of that, or any, art. The writer is sure that if he had not continued his studies to improve his teaching method and understanding of the problems involved, the amount of improvement in his own work would not have been nearly so noticeable.

The writer keeps thinking of his first few years in the classroom. He realized that his methods and experience at that point had not developed to a degree of adequate performance for classroom instruction. It was this need for more understanding that motivated him to obtain more information about the subject of which was trying to teach. It was this motivation that led to the election of a recital program.

RECITAL PROGRAM

Utah State University
Department of Music

presents

Carl L. Ashby

in a

GRADUATE VOCAL RECITAL

Merl E. Puffer, Accompanist

LYRIC THEATER

Sunday, May 22, 1966 - 3:00 P.M.

I

Counts Aria from "The Marriage of Figaro"- - - - -W. A. Mozart

II

Vergin, tutto amor - - - - - Francesco Durante

Danza, danza fanciulla gentile - - - - - Francesco Durante

Arm, Arm Ye Brave from "Judas Maccabaeus" - - - - -G. F. Handel

III

Cortigiani, vil razza from "Rigoletto" - - - - -Giuseppe Verdi

IV

Gambler's Lament - - - - -John Jacob Niles

Gambler, Don't You Lose Your Place - - - - -John Jacob Niles

Oliver Cromwell (Nursery Rhyme from Suffolk) - - - - -Benjamin Britten

V

Bear River High School
A Cappella Choir

Hear My Cry, O God - - - - - Alexander Kopilov

Fire, Fire, My Heart - - - - - Thomas Morley

Come Soon- - - - - Johannes Brahms

Love In Grief from "Grief to Glory"- - - - -F. Melius Christiansen

PROGRAM NOTES

Arm, Arm, Ye Brave

George Frederic Handel was born in Halle, Germany, February 23, 1685. At the age of seven, Handel began his musical learning. He practiced the oboe, harpsichord, and organ. He also studied counterpoint and fugue.

From about 1721-1741, Handel wrote with varying success most of his operas. But from the year 1721 he abandoned stage composition for the work to which he owes enduring fame--oratorio.

The oratorio, "Judas Maccabæus," from which the writer performs, was composed in 1747 just twelve years before his famed Messiah. Judas Maccabæus was written in three main parts. Part I begins with the lamentations for the death of Mattathias (the father of Judas and Simon), by whom the Jewish people had been roused to resist the cruelties and oppressions of the Syrian King, in his attempt to suppress their religion and liberties. Judas becomes their leader and appeals to the patriotism of the people and to the value of liberty. He finishes this section with a resolve to conquer or die. It is from this part that the air "Arm, Arm, Ye Brave" is taken. Part II begins by celebrating the return of Judas from the victories over Opollonius and Seron. Judas again returns to meet the enemy and the people become determined to worship only the God of Israel. In the final part, Judas re-establishes the liberties of his country and returns from his final victory over Nicanor and his confederates.

Judas Maccabaeus was first performed in London, Convent Garden Theatre, March 9, 1748. The words were written by Morrell.¹

Handel's works include operas, secular choral works, oratorios, passion music, church music, vocal chamber music, contatas for various voices and instruments, orchestral works, organ and instrumental chamber music, and harpsichord music. A great deal of his music is still performed every year throughout the world. The writer feels that it was in the medium of oratorio that Handel realized his fullest potentialities as a composer. Like Bach, Handel suffered blindness in his last years. He died in London on April 14, 1759, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, where a monument was erected showing the composer in front of his desk on which rests the score of the Messiah with the words "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Handel was said to have made this statement on writing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from the Messiah.

"I did think I did see all Heaven before me--and the great God himself....Where I was in my body or out of my body as I wrote it I know not. God knows."²

¹Eric Blom, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th Edition (New York; Saint Martin's Press Inc., 1960).

²David Ewen, The World of Great Composers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962, Prentice-Hall, Inc.).

Vergin, tutto armor (Preghiera)

Danza, danza, fanciulla gentile

Francesco Durante, celebrated Italian church composer and noted teacher, was born near Naples, March 31, 1684, and died in Naples August 13, 1755.

Durante ranks as one of the founders and a chief representative of the "Neapolitan School" of composition. He devoted himself almost exclusively to sacred music, in which the breadth, vigor, and resourcefulness of his style are more in evidence than marked originality.¹

He was a very great teacher; his pupils took almost complete possession of the European lyric stage during the latter half of the 18th century. He was one of the first teachers of comic opera. His works include masses, psalms, motets, several antiphons and hymns, madrigals, and harpsichord sonatas. The songs "Danza, fanciulla" and "Preghiera" are 19th century fabrications from two solfeggi by Durante, to which new words and more elaborate accompaniments were added.

¹Nicholas Slonimsky, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 5th Edition, (New York: G. Schirmer Company, 1960).

Courts Aria from "The Marriage of Figaro"

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart began to study the harpsichord when he was four years old and wrote his first compositions at five. His childhood exploits in music became legends, the yardstick by which all prodigies were henceforth measured. Before he reached his fourteenth birthday, he had had four violin sonatas published in Paris, his first symphonies had been performed in London, and an opera buffa had been commissioned from the Austrian Emperor.

Mozart poured forth a constant stream of compositions of all kinds. He wrote masterworks in every conceivable form, of a quantity and a quality to stagger one's imagination. Music seemed to flow from him almost faster than he could write it down. Mozart has said of himself:

"When I am at peace with myself, and in good spirits, for instance, on a journey, in a carriage, or after a good meal, or while taking a walk, or at night when I can't sleep--then thoughts flow into me most easily and at their best. Where they come from and how--that I cannot say; now can I do anything about it. I retain the ideas that please in my mind, and him them, at least so I am told. If I hold fast to one that I think is suitable, others, more and more, come to me, like the ingredients for a pate, from counterpoint, from the sound of the various instruments, and so forth. That warms my soul, that is if I am not disturbed, and keep on broadening those ideas and making them clearer and brighter until the whole thing is fully completed in my mind."¹

"Le Nozze di Figaro" "The Marriage of Figaro," was introduced at the Burgtheater on May 1, 1786, and became one of Mozart's most successful operas.

¹David Ewen, The World of Great Composers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962, Prentice-Hall, Inc.).

Cortigiani, vil razza from "Rigoletto"

Giuseppe Verdi, foremost Italian opera composer, was born in Roncole, Italy, on October 10, 1812. As a child, he received music instruction from a village organist and from Ferdinando Provesi in nearby Busseto. In 1832, Verdi went to Milan to enter the conservatory, but failing the entrance examinations, he had to study privately with Vincenzo Lavigna.

On November 17, 1839, his first opera, "Oberto," was successfully introduced at La Scala. His second opera, a comedy, was a complete failure. The dozen or so operas he completed and had produced during the next decade made him one of the most famous and prosperous opera composers in Italy.

"Rigoletto," one of Verdi's first unqualified masterworks, was produced in Venice in 1851. With this opera, a new and rich creative period opened for Verdi which yielded such greats as, "Il Trovatore" and "La Traviata," both written in 1853, "Don Carlo" in 1867, and "Aida" in 1871.

In the aria "Cortigiani, vil razza dannata" (vile race of courtiers)

"Rigoletto, the court jester, has gleefully enjoyed the Duke's seductions of the women of his court. Now, however, it is Rigoletto's daughter who is involved, and the frantic jester seeks the kidnapped girl vainly in this festive court scene. Giving way to his feelings in this passionate aria from Act III, "Cortigiani vil razza dannata," he rages of his detest for the Duke's followers, of his determination to find the girl, and finally, pleads piteously for compassion and help."¹

¹Milton Cross, Complete Stories of The Great Operas (Garden City, New York, 1952, Doubleday and Company, Inc.).

Gambler's LamentGambler, Don't Lose Your Place

John Jacob Niles, noted composer and one of the country's leading authorities on American Folk music, is also well-known as a concert singer and player. He has contributed greatly to our knowledge and appreciation of our native musical heritage and has delighted audiences throughout the United States and Europe with his arrangements of authentic folk-music.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, he received his formal education both here and in France, having studied at the Cincinnati Conservatory as well as the University of Lyon and Schola Cantorum in Paris. More recently, the Cincinnati Conservatory awarded him an honorary Doctor of Music degree.

For many years, his special field of study has been the music of the southern Appalachian Mountains. He not only has to his credit close to 1000 arrangements of folk melodies, but he also makes his own accompanying instrument, the dulcimer. Three of his dulcimers always go with him on tour.

Reelfoot Lake, the background for several of these "Gambling Songs," lies mostly in Tennessee (its northern tip being in Kentucky) and is one of the world's best fishing grounds. Formed by an earthquake in 1811, the lake is surrounded by country abounding in characters who seem to have walked out of the pages of folklore. According to local legend, the earthquake was caused by the steamboat "New Orleans" when it made the first steam-powered journey down the nearby Mississippi River.

Oliver Cromwell (Nursery Rhymes from Suffolk)

Benjamin Britten is a remarkable English composer who played piano and composed at a very early age. He later studied composition with John Ireland and piano with Arthur Benjamin and Harold Samuel.

He produced his first opera, "Paul Bunyon," at Columbia University New York, May 5, 1941. Since that time, he has composed numerous operatic works with a great deal of success. It has been said that Britten is the first significant British composer of operas since Purcell.

"His success is explained, apart from a genuine gift for dramatic and lyric expression, by his ability to sustain melodic interest and a clear rhythmic line in a contemporary modern style, marking free use of dissonant harmony, and his ability to obtain sonorous effect with small orchestras in his operatic scores, thus making it possible to perform them outside the great opera stages."¹

The four British folk songs with traditional text, of which "Oliver Cromwell" is one, originally were scored for tenor and orchestra in 1942. In 1945, they were rearranged for all voices.

¹Eric Blom, Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1960).

Fire, Fire, My Heart

Thomas Morley was an English organist, theorist and composer. He also was a student of William Byrd, who greatly influenced his musical style. Morley's contemporaries, such as Meres and Peacham, placed him among the best English musicians of the time.

At the present day, Morley perhaps holds the first place in popular esteem of all the Elizabethan composers, partly because of the cheerfulness and tunefulness of his balletts, a form of composition which he introduced into England. "Fire, Fire, My Heart," is one of a group of balletts for five voices written about 1595.

"The ballett is a vocal composition of dance-like character, written in a simplified madrigal style and frequently provided with a fa-la-la-burden which was probably danced. The first publication in this field was Giov Castoldi's Balletti a cinque voci...di cantare, sonare e ballare (1591)."¹

It was imitated by Thomas Morley in his "The First Book of Balletts to Five Voices" (1598), and similar publications until 1620.

Morley's vocal works include motets, anthems, canzonets for two, three, four, five, and six voices, madrigals for four voices, balletts for five voices, and dialogue for seven voices.

¹Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953, Harvard University Press).

Come Soon

It may seem a hard fate for a composer to be criticized in his lifetime for being a dry reactionary and to be regarded by many at the present time as an old-fashioned sentimentalist; but it is a testimony to his independence and integrity. It would be unwise to claim for him the dynamic qualities of Beethoven or Wagner. With notable exceptions the tempo of his music tends to the moderate more than to the very fast or the very slow. His orchestration is of a kind that gives satisfaction more by general appropriateness than by any very striking individual effects. In his themes it is not so much the initial phrase as the continuation that gives the passage its distinction.

To Brahms, as to Schubert, song-writing was an important branch of composition from his early years, and with both composers the stimulus of setting poetry to music resulted in melodies of most serene beauty.

This number was arranged by Julius Harrison, an English conductor and composer. He has arranged numerous part songs of which "Come Soon" is one. His literary works include a book titled "Brahms and His Four Symphonies." The writer feels that Mr. Harrison has captured the mood and style of Brahms very well in his interpretation of this arrangement.

Hear My Cry, O God

Kopilov was born in St. Petersburg, in 1854. He entered the court chapel in 1862 where he became a member of the choir. While there, he studied violin and pianoforte. In 1872, his voice broke and he was obliged to leave the chapel.

He later began private lessons in harmony with Hunke, who recommended him to Bakhmetev as teacher of singing at the chapel in place of Rozhnov, who had recently died. It was here that he became acquainted with Balakirev, who is said to have profoundly influenced his musical style. For his studies in form and instrumentation, Kopilov resorted to Rimsky-Korsakov, with whom he worked for a few years.

His works include a symphony, string quartets, a work for solo voice and orchestra, and choruses for womens and mixed voices.

He died in St. Petersburg, February 20, 1911.

Love In Grief from "Grief to Glory" Verse II

Dr. Christiansen, founder of the world famous St. Olaf choir and dean of American choral composers, has been an inspiration to musicians throughout this country and abroad through his lifetime devotion to the finest ideals of choral singing.

He came to the United States in 1888 and studied first at the Northwestern Conservatory of music, where he was graduated in 1894. He then traveled to Leipzig, Germany, to study at the Conservatory there. Upon his retirement in 1941, his son Olaf Christiansen became director of the St. Olaf choir and school of music. Dr. Christiansen received honorary doctorate degrees from Muhlenberg College, in 1922; Capital University, and Oberlin College in 1927.

The number "Love in Grief" is taken from his St. Olaf Choir Series (six volumes) written in about 1920.

CONCLUSIONS

In the task of preparing the recital, the writer found many difficulties that had to be overcome. To a degree, these difficulties still exist. The tightness and tension of the throat and neck muscles greatly impaired his ability to sing with good tone. He found that the larynx was not relaxed and that the pharynx was not open enough to allow the tone to flow freely through the resonating chambers.

It was found that the brilliance of the tone could be enhanced by focusing the sound high and forward in the facial mask. However, care had to be taken in trying to focus it in this manner so that the sound did not become wide and strident. Professor Puffer had the writer "hold in" on the corners of the mouth to assure a vertical sound with more depth and meaning and to modify the strident quality.

It was found that the writer was not producing enough air to sustain a long phrase. The expansion of the lower abdominal muscles and the forming of deeper breathing habits helped solve this problem.

On many occasions in the practice sessions the writer discovered himself unconsciously returning to the bad habits that had been formed in earlier years. The writer found it a constant struggle to keep from going back to the habit of "clutching" the sound in the throat.

Some of these habits may never really be completely broken; however, it is felt that a great deal of development and maturation in performing ability was gained from work done in preparing for the recital. It is further true that the concepts learned from the recital preparation will undoubtedly transfer into his own teaching situations and that they will result in greater teaching efficiency.

He further concluded that his lack of ability to play the piano was a definite handicap and that he should take strides to improve his ability to play the instrument.

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