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A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO KEITH GATES'S SONG CYCLE,
THE BARREN ONE

by

Analynn Sober

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Arts and Sciences
and the School of Music
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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ABSTRACT

Keith Gates's song cycle, *The Barren One* is based on Federico Garcia Lorca's play *Yerma*. Originally, Gates had planned to write an opera based on *Yerma*, but after a religious awakening, he decided to abandon the project. Instead, he took the music originally written for the opera and combined it with songs using Lorca's poetry to create a song cycle. The knowledge of Gates's operatic intentions as well as knowledge about the play should be considered when performing this work. This is because the song cycle is a miniature version of the opera and should be performed as such.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NCSA

North Carolina School for the Arts

CHAPTER I – COMPOSER, POET, AND TEXT

The focus of this first chapter is to introduce the song cycle, the composer, the play *Yerma*, and the specific text selections associated with the cycle.

Keith Gates (1948-2007), Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936), and *Yerma*.

Keith Gates's 1971 song cycle for soprano and piano, *The Barren One* based on Federico Garcia Lorca's play *Yerma*, is comprised of five songs on Lorca's texts: two from *Yerma* and three poems from different collections. The tragic story of *Yerma* attracted Gates with its dramatic possibilities for the stage. As he wrote, he envisioned staging, which is especially evident in the first song of the cycle.¹ According to Julie Miller, adjunct professor of piano at State University of New York at Potsdam as well as curator of Gates's website, Keith Gates had originally planned for *The Barren One* to be an opera, but abandoned the idea when he "experienced a religious awakening and felt compelled to write a religious work."² Instead of the opera, Gates composed and completed *Christiana's Conversion*, which was a "dramatic cantata" using text from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Miller is not certain if Gates returned to *The Barren One* after writing *Christiana's Conversion*, but she was able to find manuscripts of orchestration for the intended opera.³ Although Gates abandoned his original plan, he was still able to tell the story of *Yerma* in his song cycle.

1. Dr. Carol Lines, email message to Analynn Sober, September 30, 2019.

2. Julie Miller, email message to Analynn Sober, October 7, 2019.

3. Ibid.

Keith Gates was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1948. When he was very young, the family moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana, where Gates began piano lessons and gave his first recital of original works at age 11. As a sophomore in high school, Gates was selected to be part of the first class at the North Carolina School of the Arts (NCSA) in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he wrote his first opera as part of an assignment. This opera, *Escurial*, was written when he was only 18 years old. His second opera, *Migle and the Bugs*, was taken from an original short story he used in dramatic reading competitions while on the Speech and Debate team. This opera was premiered at NCSA and had its second performance by his classmates in Siena, Italy. After NCSA, Gates was accepted into the Juilliard School for his undergraduate degree. It was during his time at Juilliard that *Migle and the Bugs* received its Alice Tully Hall debut.

While pursuing his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in composition at the Juilliard School, Gates studied with Vincent Persichetti and Hugo Weisgall. During his time at Juilliard, Gates won the Lado Prize for string writing and the Irving Berlin Teaching Fellowship twice. After graduating with his Masters, he taught at a Bible College in New Jersey. His teaching career at a Bible College was brief due to a disagreement with one of the school's doctrines. After not being able to find another teaching position, he began working in a lumber yard in Pennsylvania and finally transferred back to Lake Charles to continue working in a lumber yard. William Kushner, conductor of the Lake Charles Symphony, and Sylvia Kushner, bassoonist, heard that Gates was back in town and commissioned him to write an opera for the Governor's Program.⁴ Eventually, Gates found himself teaching composition and piano at McNeese

4. Sonny Marks, "Premiere of Keith Gates' symphony will strike a personal chord." *American Press*, October 17, 1997, 26.

State University and working on commissions from high schools, universities, and military bands. Gates continued to write operas while living in Lake Charles. He wrote *The Hollow* (1988), *Tom Sawyer* (commissioned by the Kushners for the Governor's Program in 1989), *Evangeline* (1995), and *The Christmas Coin* (1999).

In addition to *The Barren One*, Gates wrote two other song cycles for soprano and piano: *Three Songs to Texts by Women Authors* (1993) and *When Hope Still Had Its Chance* (2003). *When Hope Still Had Its Chance* was commissioned by Dr. Carol Lines and is his most well-known song cycle. There are two collections of songs for high voice by Gates: *Secular Songs* and *Sacred Songs*. He won many awards including the Louisiana Artist Fellowship, the Louisiana Music Teachers Association Commission award, the Shearman Research Grant, the Fanfare Festival Composition Award, the National Flute Association Newly Published Music Award, and the Shearman Fine Arts Endowed Professorship. In 1996, he was named Artist of the Year by the Calcasieu Arts and Humanities Council. Gates passed away in 2007 after a battle with pancreatic cancer.⁵

Many performers of Gates's works describe his style as Neo-Classical. Although he felt out of place with the modernists at the Juilliard School, Gates was known for his lyricism and was able to find a style that balanced modern and traditional. While speaking with Cliff Seiber, Gates said, "I was the most conservative composer at Juilliard. I didn't get into the experimental sounds that were popular in the 70's."⁶ One review of Gates's opera *Tom Sawyer* described his music as a "... highly sophisticated style overlaid with the kind of tunes that are immediately likable. The opera's score is an

5. Lane Miller, *Keith Gates*, <http://www.keithgatesmusic.com>, (accessed January 2020).

6. Cliff Seiber, "Symphony premieres concerto by Gates: New work honors LCS founding member and former principal cellist Richard Pease" *American Press*, February 11, 2005, 23.

intriguing combination of syncopation, minor chords, and melodies that—though new—seem familiar.”⁷ Another description of Gates’s works comes from an article written about his “Symphony for Winds.” Dr. David Waybright describes the piece as “modern, yet romantic—contemporary, but traditional in form.”⁸ Gates teetered on the line between traditional and modern in his compositions. This is the most modern sounding of Gates’s song cycles.

Federico Garcia Lorca was also known for his ability to combine modern and traditional styles. The landscape, myths, and Andalusian culture were Lorca’s main sources of inspiration. It is important to note that the word “myth,” according to Susan K. Langer “... is a recognition of natural conflicts, of human desires frustrated by nonhuman powers, hostile oppression, or contrary desires; it is a story of birth, passion, and defeat by death which is man’s common fate.”⁹ The struggle between myth and modern ideas is consistent in Lorca’s poetry.¹⁰ This theme is exceptionally pronounced in his folk tragedies such as *Yerma*.

Summary of *Yerma*

The story of *Yerma* revolves around a character by the same name who has longed for a child since before her betrothal to Juan. Act One, Scene 1 begins two years and twenty days into the marriage between Juan and Yerma. The curtain opens on Yerma’s

7. Ed Alderman, “*Tom Sawyer*’ opens McNeese Theatre 50th in style,” *American Press* (October 7, 1989): 9.

8. Ed Alderman, “Wind ensemble to perform at band conclave,” *American Press* (March 2, 1985): 52.

9. Juan López-Morillas, “Lyrical Primitivism: Garcia Lorca’s *Romancero gitano*,” in *Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Manuel Duran, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 133.

10. López-Morillas, “Lyrical Primitivism”, 134.

dream about having a child. Once she's awake, she begins arguing with Juan about his health—convinced that is why she is not pregnant. Later in the first scene, Yerma talks with her friend Maria, who is recently pregnant, and her secret love, Victor. Yerma expresses her hope for having a child soon to both Maria and Victor.

Act One, Scene 2 opens with Yerma walking to bring Juan his dinner. On her way to the fields, she encounters several women of the town. First, she meets an older woman and asks her for advice on how to conceive a child. The old woman turns her down but assures her that she is still young and to have hope. Two younger girls happen upon the scene. One has a child at home and the other expresses her desire to no longer be married or have children. Yerma then asks the second girl if her mother is Dolores the sorceress. The girl confirms Yerma's suspicion and then continues on her way. As Yerma continues, she hears Victor singing. They have a brief conversation before Juan interrupts. After Victor leaves, Juan tells Yerma that he does not like her talking to people in the streets. He warns her about giving people the wrong impression that may lead to unwanted rumors. The conversation ends with Juan telling Yerma he won't be home because he needs to guard the fields.

Act Two, Scene 1 opens with a few town's women washing clothes and singing about the rumors revolving around Yerma. One rumor consists of why Yerma has not conceived a child. The other rumor involves Juan's decision to invite his sisters to live with them in order to keep an eye on Yerma. At this point, Yerma and Juan have been married five years.

Act Two, Scene 2 begins in Juan and Yerma's home. Juan asks his sisters where Yerma has gone. Yerma returns to the house, stating she had gone to the fountain to get water, which ignites the following argument:

JUAN. Don't you know my way of thinking? The sheep in the fold and women at home. You go out too much. Haven't you always heard me say that?

YERMA. Justly. Women in their homes. When those homes aren't a tomb. When the chairs break and the linen sheets wear out with use. But not here. Each night, when I go to bed, I find my bed newer, more shining—as if it had just been brought from the city.

JUAN. You yourself realize that I've a right to complain. That I have reasons to be on the alert!

YERMA. Alert? For what? I don't offend you in any way. I live obedient to you, and what I suffer I keep close in my flesh. And every day that passes will be worse. Let's be quiet now. I'll learn to bear my cross as best I can, but don't ask me for anything. If I could suddenly turn into an old woman and have a mouth like a withered flower, I could smile and share my life with you. But now—now you leave me alone with my thorns.

JUAN. You speak in a way I don't understand. I don't deprive you of anything. I send to nearby towns for the things you like. I have my faults, but I want peace and quiet with you. I want to be sleeping out in the fields—thinking that you're sleeping too.

YERMA. But I don't sleep. I can't sleep.¹¹

After their argument, Yerma sits alone and sees Maria rushing past the house. The two converse about Yerma's desire to have a child again. This time Yerma is less hopeful. After Maria leaves, Victor stops by the house to say his farewell to Yerma. Juan has purchased all of Victor's sheep, forcing Victor to leave town for another job. Yerma is pained by Victor's leaving. After Juan and Victor leave, the daughter of the sorceress

11. Federico Garcia Lorca, *Yerma* in *Three Tragedies*, trans. James Graham-Luján and Richard L. O'Connell, (New York: New Directions, 1955), 128.

from Act One arrives at the house and signals for Yerma to leave with her. When Yerma and the girl exit the stage, Juan's sisters follow and call out her name.

Act Three opens with Yerma at Dolores the sorceress' house in the middle of the night. The two had just come from performing a ritual to help Yerma conceive. Juan and his sisters arrive shortly after. Juan and Yerma begin to argue about her leaving the house and the rumors circling around the town. Yerma begs Juan to give her a child. As her voice grows louder, Juan urges her to be quiet as to not let the town hear.

JUAN: Silence.

YERMA: That's it! That's it! Silence. Never fear.

JUAN: Let's go. Quick!

YERMA: That's it! That's it! And it's no use for me to wring my hands!
It's one thing to wish with one's head...

JUAN: Be still!

YERMA: *low* It's one thing to wish with one's head and another for the body—cursed be the body!—not to respond. It's written, and I'm not going to raise my arms against the sea. That's it! Let my mouth be struck dumb!¹²

Act Three, Scene 2 continues with a pilgrimage specifically for women to go to the hermitage and give offerings and prayers for a child. The townspeople are singing and dancing. Maria tells a friend that Yerma had not left her chair in over a month. Yerma appears at the festivities singing with the other women, but as the women travel up the mountain to the hermitage, she stops. An old woman talks to her and offers for her to run away with her fertile son. Yerma tells the woman of her loyalty to her husband and asks her never to speak to her again. The woman retorts by calling Yerma barren and says she

12. Ibid, 142-143.

has no pity for her. Yerma exclaims that this is the first time she has been referred to as barren.

Juan overhears the conversation and moves to speak with Yerma after the woman leaves. He confronts Yerma and says this is the last time he will put up with her lamenting over not having a child. Yerma asks why he wanted to marry her.

YERMA. Then what did you want with me?

JUAN. Yourself!

YERMA. *excitedly*. True! You wanted a home, ease, and a woman. But nothing more. Is what I say true?

JUAN. It's true. Like everyone.

YERMA. And what about the rest? What about your son?

JUAN. *strongly*. Didn't you hear me say I don't care? Don't ask me anymore about it! Do I have to shout in your ear so you'll understand and perhaps live in peace now!

YERMA. And you never thought about it, even when you saw I wanted one?

JUAN. Never.

YERMA. And I'm not to hope for one?

JUAN. No. ¹³

Juan tries to kiss her and in a moment of passion she shrieks and strangles him. After she sees what she has done, she exclaims to the people beginning to gather at the tents that by killing Juan she has killed her son.

The myth surrounding Yerma's desire for a child and the description of the land and cultural beliefs were present throughout the play. Part of Andalusian culture is the

13. Ibid, 152-153.

awareness of death as an awareness of life.¹⁴ Lorca uses death to display how the will and desire for something leads to death.¹⁵ Angel del Rio, in his essay on Lorca's theater, describes a constant trembling of life found in Lorca's poetry and tragedies. He continues by saying Lorca had to achieve a perfect fusion where lyricism could submit to dramatic tones, allowing life to be "felt with all its violence." This was the only way for Lorca to fully express his complete self.¹⁶

Yerma has been said to express another part of Lorca, the part of him which desired to carry a child. J. B. Trend describes *Yerma* as Lorca's own tragedy. He also includes in his essay a quote by Argentinita from the night of *Yerma*'s premier:

"This play is about Federico's own personal drama. What he would like best in the world is to become pregnant and give birth... That's what he misses in life: to be pregnant, to give birth to a boy or girl... I supposed he would like to have a boy... *Yerma* is Federico, Federico's tragedy."¹⁷

To Lorca, this play was more than just a tragic story about *Yerma*. In some ways it was about himself. Gates was also able to see himself in *Yerma*. According to Julie Miller, Gates felt a kinship to outcasts.¹⁸ Although it does not say that *Yerma* was ostracized, Juan's firm grip on her as well as the rumors circulating in the town forced

14. Pedro Salinas, "Lorca and the Poetry of Death," in *Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Manuel Duran, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 104.

15. López-Morillas, "Lyrical Primitivism," 137-138.

16. Angel del Rio, "Lorca's Theater," in *Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Manuel Duran, (Englewood Cliffe, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 149.

17. J. B. Trend, "Lorca" in *Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Manuel Duran, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 47.

18. Julie Miller, email to author, October 7, 2019.

her into being alone. Gates described himself as being an outcast and feeling isolated because of his past addiction in his program notes on his work “The Maniac of Gadara.”¹⁹

Text Selections for the song cycle

“The Little Mute Boy”

The first song in the cycle, “The Little Mute Boy,” was in Lorca’s collection titled *Canciones* or *Songs*. The sections in this book are entitled: “Songs for Children,” “Three Portraits with Shadow,” “Andalusian Pieces,” “Eros with Walking Cane,” “Future Life,” and “Theories.” “The Little Mute Boy” is from the section titled “Songs for Children.”²⁰

Critics of this section of poetry were conflicted over the combination of childlike innocence and adult themes.²¹ All the poems in this section are imaginative and full of hidden meaning. Critics believed that these poems were Lorca saying that his time of innocence was over.²²

The translation of “The Little Mute Boy” is as follows:

The little boy was looking for his voice
(the king of crickets had it).
In a drop of water
the little boy was looking for his voice.

I do not want it for speaking with,

19. Lane Miller, *Keith Gates Music*, <http://www.keithgatesmusic.com>, (accessed January 2020).

20. *Ibid*, 51.

21. *Ibid*, 52.

22. *Ibid*, 53.

I will make a ring of it
So that he may wear my silence
On his little finger.

In a drop of water
The little boy was looking for his voice.
The captive voice far away, put on a cricket's clothes.²³

“The Little Mute Boy” in the song cycle represents Yerma’s excitement at the prospect of having a child. The boy’s inability to speak represents his being alive only in Yerma’s dreams and imagination, and therefore, having no voice of his own. The whimsical nature of the song could also align with Yerma’s dream at the opening of the play. Act One, Scene 1 begins with Yerma sitting in her chair asleep. The stage is set with “*the strange light of a dream.*”²⁴ A shepherd is seen leading a child dressed in white by the hand to Yerma until the clock strikes, causing the shepherd and child to leave.

“Lullaby”

The text for the second song in the cycle titled “Lullaby” is taken from Act One, Scene 1 refers to a conversation between Maria and Yerma. As Yerma is sewing and singing her lullaby, she is interrupted by Maria coming to ask for a favor. Maria has been married five months and already is pregnant. Yerma is excited for her friend and begins asking her questions about how she knows she is pregnant, what it feels like, and how she brought about the pregnancy. Maria is nervous and Yerma comforts her by imparting

23. Federico Garcia Lorca, “The Little Mute Boy” in *Selected Poems by Federico Garcia Lorca*, ed. Francisco Garcia Lorca and Donald M. Allen, (New York: New Directions, 1955), 55.

24. Lorca, *Yerma*, 103.

wisdom on what to do and what not to do while pregnant despite not having given birth herself.

The conversation is overall loving and friendly. The pieces of text Gates used are from Yerma's advice and Maria's explanation of how it feels to be carrying a child. In the play Yerma says, "... When you breathe, breathe as softly as if you had a rose between your teeth."²⁵ Gates changed the text to be "Gently breathe as though you held a rose between your teeth." The next lyrical line is taken from when Maria speaks excitedly about feeling the baby kick for the first time. Yerma responds by saying, "And that's when you love him best, when you can really say: 'My child!'"²⁶ Gates also changed this text to "soon you'll feel him gently upon your heart, and that is when you'll say that you love him most!" Here are the lines from the play next to Gates's configuration of the text for the song.

Text from *Yerma*

"... When you breathe, breathe as softly as if you had a rose between your teeth."

"And that's when you love him best,
When you can really say:
'My child!'"

Text from *The Barren One*

"Gently breathe as though you
Held a rose between your teeth.
Soon you'll feel him gently
Upon your heart,
And that is when you'll say
That you love him most."

The text used for Maria's lines in the song are closer to the words she says in the play. Yerma asks Maria to tell her about the pregnancy, and at first, she resists but then asks, "Have you ever held a live bird pressed in your hand?" Yerma replies, "yes" and

25. Ibid, 107.

26. Ibid.

Maria says, “Well—the same way—but more in your blood.”²⁷ Here are the texts side by side.

Text from *Yerma*

Have you ever held a live bird
Pressed in your hand?

Well—the same way—
But more in your blood.

Text from *The Barren One*

Have you ever held a live bird
Pressed gently in your hand?

Well the same way
But more in your blood.

The final section of text is not from *Yerma*. It was written by Gates to help finish the song as well as connect “Lullaby” lyrically to the third song “From Where Do You Come?” The text for the final verse is: “Gently sing him lullabies till winter’s icy frost has come. Gently sing lullaby. Ah, lullaby.” The image of “winter’s icy frost” parallels the text “from the mountains of icy cold.”

“From Where Do You Come?”

The earliest selection from the play is the text for the third song titled “From Where Do You Come?” In the play, Juan has just left for work leaving Yerma alone with her thoughts and her sewing. As she sews, she begins to sing a lullaby for the child she longs for. This is the first time Yerma sings in the play.

Although it’s strange to imagine Yerma singing a lullaby alone, in the next scene, singing is suggested as a way to encourage pregnancy. Gates uses most of Lorca’s lyrics in his song. In the last verse, he omits the text “I shall say to you child, yes. For you I’ll torn and broken be.”²⁸ Here are the two texts side by side.

27. Lorca, *Yerma*, 107.

28. *Ibid*, 106.

Text from *Yerma*

From where do you come, my love, my baby?
“From the mountains of icy cold.”
What do you lack, sweet love, my baby?
“The woven warmth in your dress.”
Let the branches tremble in the sun
And the fountains leap all around.

In the courtyard the dog barks,
In the trees the wind sings.
The oxen low for the ox-herd,
And the moon curls up my hair.
What want you, boy, from so far away?

“The mountain white upon your chest.”
Let the branches tremble in the sun
And the fountains leap all around!

I shall say to you, child, yes
For you I’ll torn and broken be.
How painful is this belly now,
Where first you shall be cradled!
When, boy, when will you come to me?

“When sweet your flesh of jasmine
smells.”
Let the branches tremble in the sun
And the fountain leap all around!²⁹

Text from *The Barren One*

From where do you come, my love, my baby?
“From the mountains of icy cold.”
What do you lack sweet love, my baby?
“The woven warmth in your dress.”
Let the branches tremble in the sun
And the fountains leap all around!

In the courtyard the dog barks
In the trees the wind sings.
The oxen low for the ox-herd,
And the moon curls up my hair.

How painful now is this belly
Where first you shall be cradled.

What want you, boy, from so far away?
“The mountains white upon your chest.”
When, boy, when will you come to me?
“When sweet your flesh of jasmine
smells.”

Let the branches tremble in the sun,
And the fountains leap all around!

How painful is this belly now
Where first you will be cradled.
Ah. When... When...³⁰

29. Ibid, 105-106.

30. Keith Gates, *The Barren One*, (Lake Charles, Louisiana: Lorica Press, 1971).

At the end of Scene 1, Yerma reprises the verse: “I shall say to you, child, yes for you I’ll torn and broken be. How painful is this belly now, where first you shall be cradled! When, boy, when will you come to me?” This reprisal occurs after Yerma’s friend and secret love, Victor, stops by to speak with Juan. He sees Yerma sewing and inquires as to what she is working on. She tells him she’s sewing diapers and he reacts by suggesting Yerma give the baby her name if it’s a girl. Yerma stammers and says she is sewing for Maria. Victor then states that their house needs a child and playfully tells Yerma to try harder. After he leaves, Yerma says, “That’s it! Try...!” and then continues singing.³¹

The sadness in the text and the description of aspects of the land is traditional in Spanish lullabies.³² Lorca explains that the landscape that influences the songs “has the same harsh accent, the same dramatic originality, the same lean air as the songs that sprout in it.”³³ In this song the landscape is simple, and the plot is abstract involving the mother going on an adventure with her child.³⁴ Although sadness is expected in the Spanish lullaby, the conversation between Yerma and the boy is not. Lorca says that the cradle song was invented by women who feel that their children are a burden and that because each child is a burden, the “women cannot help singing to them (even though

31. Lorca, *Yerma*, 109-110.

32. Christopher Maurer ed., “On Lullabies” in *Deep Song and Other Prose*, (New York: New Directions, 1980), 9-10.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Maurer, “On Lullabies,” 13,16.

they love them) of their own weariness of life.”³⁵ Yerma’s weariness stems from her lack of child rather than her grief from having one. In a way, her lullaby is for herself.

Although this text comes in the first Act and scene, Gates chooses to place the song in the center of the cycle. There are two reasons for this decision. The first is the intensity of the music creates a strong apex for the cycle. The other is how the text accurately depicts Yerma’s feelings through the second Act and first scene of Act three. Yerma is beginning to lose hope as mentioned in the conversation between Yerma and Maria. Yerma describes how the wheat continues to grow and the fountains continue to produce water, yet she has nothing. The mention of the wheat and the fountains connects the phrase “Let the branches tremble in the sun, and the fountains leap all around.” In the same conversation Yerma says:

“I’ll end up believing I’m my own son. Many nights I go down to feed the oxen—which I never did before because no woman does it—and when I pass through the darkness of the shed my footsteps sound to me like footsteps of a man.”³⁶

One of the mood shifts in the music is spurred by the text “The oxen low for the oxherd,” which could represent the quote above. It is through the textual connections as well as mirrored shifts in mood that Gates was able to trace Act Two and the beginning of Act Three with this lullaby.

35. Maurer, “On Lullabies,” 10.

36. Lorca, *Yerma*, 133.

“Barren Land”

The fourth song in the cycle is titled by Gates as “Barren Land”; however, this is not the title associated with the poem. The title “Evocation” represents a selection of text from “Poema de la soleá.” Even though “Evocations” is a small fragment of the whole poem, Gates did not use the last four lines of poetry. Instead, he adds the text “Land of sorrow.” There was a book that had printed the translation Gates used, but the publishers listed were no longer associated with that particular book. Here are the two translations side by side.

“Evocation” published by City Lights

Dry land
Still land
Of immense nights

(wind in the olive grove,
Wind in the sierra.)

Ancient
Land
Of oil lamp
And grief.
Land of deep cisterns.

Land
Of a death without eyes
And of arrows.

(Wind on the roads.
Breeze in the poplar groves.)³⁸

Text used in *The Barren One*

Barren land
Quiet land
Land of immense nights.

(wind in the olive trees,
wind in the mountains.)

Aged
Land.
Land of candles
And anguish.
Land of sorrow.³⁷

37. Keith Gates, “Barren Land” in *The Barren One*, (Lake Charles, Louisiana: Lorica Press, 1971).

38. Federico Garcia Lorca, “Evocation” in *Poem of the Deep Song*, trans. Carlos Bauer, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1987), 21.

“Poema de la soleá” is from one of Lorca’s most famous books of poetry, *Poema del cante jondo* or *Poems of deep song*. The *cante jondo* is a folk song in Andalusian culture. It is equated with the sounds of nature and the roots of culture. During one of his lectures, Lorca said that the songs grew from history and experience. They are connected to the pain of the land.³⁹ Granada is made up of two poles: the interior and the coast. The interior is the land most described by Lorca. The land is dry and parched, making it the birthplace of tragedy and the breeding ground for the best *cante jondo*.⁴⁰

Divisions of the book, *Poema del cante jondo*, are based on the flamenco genre, which was an influence in a lot of his poetry. It was this connection to the traditional rhythms, melodies, and verses that helped Lorca mold his poetic expression.⁴¹ The poems of these songs tend to be shorter with a focus on love and death⁴². In Flamenco verse, the word *pena* frequently arises. In *Poema del cante jondo*, Lorca uses *pena* as “both a human cry and a vague, impersonal exhalation of the earth.”⁴³ *Pena* is found in the original Spanish version of the poem: “Tierra vieja del candil y la pena” which translates to “Ancient land of candles and anguish.” Edward Stanton describes *pena* as “not an action, but an expectation that will never be fulfilled. It is black because it is hopeless. It

39. Federico Garcia Lorca, *Deep Song and Other Prose*, ed. Christopher Maurer, (New York: New Directions 1980), 25-26.

40. Edward F. Stanton, *The Tragic Myth: Lorca and Cante Jondo*, (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 56.

41. Ibid, 23.

42. Lorca, *Deep Song*, 31.

43. Stanton, *The Tragic Myth*, 33.

is the anguish of being and of nothingness.” This description of anguish accurately describes Yerma in the final Act of the play.

Act Three, Scene 2 of *Yerma* takes place on a mountainside in the evening. The stage directions are: “... *Yerma enters with six Women, who are going to the chapel. They are barefooted and carry decorated candles. Night begins to fall.*”⁴⁴ Gates equated the poetic lines “Land of immense nights” and “land of candles” to Lorca’s description of the scene. The ancient land described could be the chapel where the women are bringing their offerings.

Act Three, Scene 2 is the first instance of Yerma being referred to as barren and the scene where Yerma, in a moment of passion, murders Juan. Gates chose the line of text, “barren land,” to be the title as an allusion to Yerma’s newfound plight. This assumption is based on the connection of the poem for the last song in the cycle to Yerma’s final statement in the play.

“Song of the Barren Orange Tree”

The final song in the cycle uses the text “Song of the Barren Orange Tree,” taken from Lorca’s book *Canciones* or *Songs*, which was written between 1921 and 1924. Although this poem is approximately ten years older than *Yerma*, it lightly outlines Yerma’s tragic tale.⁴⁵ The text of the poetry is as follows:

Woodcutter, cut my shadow from me.
Free me from the torment

44. Ibid, 145.

45. Felicia Hardison Londré, *Federico Garcia Lorca*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1984), 80.

Of seeing myself without fruit.

Why was I born among mirrors?
The day walks in circles around me,
And the night copies me in all its stars.

I want to live without seeing myself,
And I will dream that the ants
And the thistle burrs are my leaves
And my birds.

Woodcutter, cut my shadow from me.
Free me from the torment
Of seeing myself without fruit.⁴⁶

The subject matter of being barren has haunted Lorca for a long time. One interpretation of the poem perfectly aligns with Lorca's connection to *Yerma*. Felicia Hardison Londré says, "this might be the voice of the artist frustrated in the process of creation, but it is equally possible that it is the lament of a man who will never have children."⁴⁷

There was difficulty in deciding where this poem fit in the play. This poem could have easily fit in Act Two when Yerma sees Maria rush past the house. Yerma stops her and asks why she runs, and Maria tells her it's because every time she sees her child, she weeps.

MARIA. It makes me sad that you're envious.

YERMA. It's not envy I feel—it's poverty.

MARIA. Don't you complain.

46. Lorca, *Selections*, 67.

47. *Ibid.*

YERMA. How can I help complaining when I see you and the other women full of flowers from within, and then see myself useless in the midst of so much beauty.⁴⁸

Yerma's statement perfectly matches the sentiment of the tree. The poem could have functioned as a summary of the last two Acts of the play, but with "Barren Land" as the second to last song, this is unlikely.

It is more likely that sentiment of the poem functions as Yerma's final statement of the play. While the poem could have signified the conversation where Yerma says, "I'm like a dry field where a thousand pairs of oxen plow, and you offer me a little glass of well water. Mine is a sorrow already beyond the flesh,"⁴⁹ Yerma, unlike the barren orange tree, has not yet accepted her fate. It is not until Yerma murders Juan that she confirms herself as barren. She now knows that her hope of having a child will never come to fruition just like the barren orange tree is aware that it will never produce fruit.

Yerma's final words in the play most closely relate to the orange tree. She says:

Barren, barren, but sure. Now I really know it for sure. And alone. Now I'll sleep without startling myself awake, anxious to see if I feel in my blood another new blood. My body dry forever! What do you want? Don't come near me, because I've killed my son. I myself have killed my son!⁵⁰

48. Ibid, 132.

49. Ibid, 151.

50. Ibid, 153.

CHAPTER II – THEMES AND ELEMENTS

This chapter will discuss the connective elements Gates used through the song cycle as well as the significance of the first 60 measures of the work and the last 14 measures of the work.

Gates's use of themes and operatic elements in *The Barren One*.

Gates uses two recurring themes in songs one, three, and five. The first is melodic and portrays Yerma's desire to have a child of her own. This will be known as the Hope theme. The Hope theme is found in the first four measures of the song cycle and is heard in the piano. The second is quick and rhythmic. It appears whenever Yerma dreams about the child she wants. This will be called the Child theme. The Child theme immediately follows the Hope theme beginning in the second half of the fourth measure and finishing in the first half of the fifth measure. This theme's strongest identifying characteristic is the ascending sixteenth note arpeggiation followed by descending eighth notes. The names of the themes are given by Analynn Sober. Both themes are shown in Musical Example 1.

The image displays two staves of musical notation for piano. The top staff is labeled 'Piano' and 'Moderato'. It features a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. A box labeled 'Hope Theme' is positioned above the first three measures. The melody consists of a series of eighth and quarter notes, all under a single long slur. The bottom staff is labeled 'Pno.' and contains measures 4 through 7. A box labeled 'Child Theme' is positioned above the first two measures of this section. The melody in measure 4 is a pick-up into a sequence of eighth notes, followed by a half note in measure 5 and a quarter note in measure 6. Measure 7 begins with a half note followed by a quarter note. The bottom staff continues with a bass line of quarter notes and rests.

Musical Example 1 “The Little Mute Boy” mm 1-7.

Measures 1 through the first two beats of measure 4 are the Hope theme. The pick-up into measure 5 through measure 7 is the Child theme.

Both themes are spread throughout mm. 1-60 of “The Little Mute Boy.” The pianist plays the themes until the pickup to m. 44 when the voice enters with the Hope theme. Mm. 54-60 close the opening section with the vocalist singing the Hope theme above a piano *ostinato*. Gates writes out the *morendo* of the song leading into two beats of rest before the music decisively shifts into the music associated with “The Little Mute Boy” as shown in Musical Example 2.

Musical Example 2 “The Little Mute Boy” mm. 54-61

This musical example shows the complete stop of music in measure 61.

The Hope theme and the Child theme are used to represent two different scenes in the beginning of *Yerma*. The first scene begins in m. 21 with the rapid ascending 16th notes mimicking the rising of the curtain. The Hope theme is played in the left hand of the piano while the right hand plays a *staccato* bouncing figure in mm. 22-23. Lorca’s stage directions for *Yerma*’s opening scene are:

When the curtain rises Yerma is asleep with an embroidery frame at her feet. The stage is in the strange light of a dream. A Shepherd enters on tiptoe looking fixedly at Yerma. He leads by the hand a Child dressed in white. The clock sounds. When the Shepherd leaves, the light changes into the happy brightness of a spring morning. Yerma awakes.⁵¹

The Hope theme in m. 22 represents the Shepherd and the bouncing *staccato* figure represents the child being led onto the stage. This bouncy *staccato* figure foreshadows the energy and buoyancy of “The Little Mute Boy.”

51. Federico Garcia Lorca, *Yerma in Three Tragedies*, trans. James Graham-Luján and Richard L. O’Connell, (New York: New Directions, 1955), 103.

Poco piu mosso

Soprano

Piano

21

mf

legato

22

stacc.

S

Pno.

23

24

25

Musical Example 3 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 21-25

Measure 21 is the curtain rising. Measures 22-25 is the Shepherd leading the Child.

The Child theme enters in measure 26 alternating between the right hand and left hand. This is where the two slowly approach Yerma. In m. 33, the right hand of the piano plays open octaves in a pattern that sounds like a bell indicating a clock chiming. Underneath the chiming of the clock is the Hope theme played in the left hand signaling the exit of the Shepherd and child.

Musical Example 4 “The Little Mute Boy” mm. 33-40

Measures 33-37 show the clock chiming. Measures 38- 39 show the Hope theme returning. Measure 41 shows the first 32nd note ascending line representing the lights on the stage changing.

Fragments of the Hope theme are played in mm. 38-40 and mm. 41-43 immediately followed by ascending 32nd notes. The Hope fragments suggest that the desire did not leave with the Shepherd, as the 32nd notes indicate the lights on the stage changing and Yerma waking up.

The vocalist enters for the first time in the pickup to m. 44 singing the Hope theme, which represents a small vocal solo from the play for the “voice from within” heard directly after Yerma wakes up. This vocal entrance in “The Little Mute Boy” represents that small vocal solo. Following the Hope theme in the voice, the piano begins playing the Child theme in m. 47. Here, the voice and piano exchange the Child theme as though in conversation. With each reiteration, the pitch ascends, and the vocal line varies.

This interaction between voice and piano represents Yerma and Juan’s first conversation in the play. The energy and growing intensity between the voice and piano in mm. 47-53 displays the spirit of the argument. The nature of both Juan and Yerma is slightly frustrated but not angry in this scene.

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 43 to 45. It features a Soprano line and a Piano accompaniment. The piano part begins with a 32nd-note ascending line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Poco meno mosso' and dynamics include 'p' and 'p dolciss.'. The second system covers measures 46 to 50. It continues the vocal and piano parts. The piano part includes dynamics 'mp', 'accel. e cresc.', and 'mf'. The vocal line is marked 'S' and 'Pno.'.

Musical Example 5 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 43-50

This example shows: the 32nd ascending line, the vocal entrance, and the interaction between voice and piano.

Mm. 1-60 and mm. 61-128 are two separate pieces with different functions in the song cycle. Once the music for “The Little Mute Boy” begins in m. 61, neither of the two themes emerge until the third song in the cycle.

With the reiteration of the two themes as well as the connection to the stage directions in *Yerma*, Gates originally wrote these first 60 measures as the overture and

opening scene. Not wanting to waste the work, he attached his overture to “The Little Mute Boy,” changing it into the prelude for the song cycle. Since there is a detachment between the two sections, mm. 1-60 will be referred to as the prelude for the rest of the paper.

The Hope theme and the Child theme make an appearance at the beginning of the third song in the cycle, “From Where Do You Come?” The Hope theme only appears in the opening piano interlude in mm. 1-3. It begins in the same manner of the prelude, but instead of the Child theme being played in full, the pianist plays the ascending arpeggiated 16th notes and then falls into a descending atonal line. The Child theme returns in the two verses of the song. This first theme returns in the voice in mm. 25-27 followed by the piano in mm. 27-28 as shown in Musical Example 6. The second return of the theme is in mm. 76-78. This time, it only appears in the piano as the vocalist sings the line *parlando* style as shown in Musical Example 7.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part is in 3/8 time, marked 'a piacere', and contains the lyrics "The wo - ven warmth in your dress." The Piano part is in 3/8 time and features a long, sustained chord in the right hand and a descending arpeggiated line in the left hand. The score is numbered 25, 26, 27, and 28.

Musical Example 6 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 25-28.

This example shows the Child theme in the voice and piano.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part is in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a 3/8 time signature. The lyrics are: "When sweet your flesh of jas-mine smells." The Piano part is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. Measure numbers 76, 77, 78, and 79 are indicated below the piano part. A 'Bliss' marking is present at the end of measure 79.

Musical Example 7 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 76-79.

This example shows the Child theme in the piano.

The Child theme only accompanies the latter half of the verses when the little boy Yerma dreams about answers her second question. Yerma’s first question is answered by the Boy melody which will be discussed in chapter three.

The last presentation of the Hope theme and the Child theme occur in the last 14 measures of “Song of the Barren Orange Tree.” Similar to “The Little Mute Boy,” the last measures function as a separate unit from the song itself. Unlike “The Little Mute Boy,” the two sections slightly overlap by a 16th note. In m. 39 the voice *crescendos* into the start of the *sforzando* of the piano. Due to the separation of the music, mm. 40-54 were meant to be the *finale* of the work. This section will be known as the postlude for the rest of the paper.

Neither of the themes enter until m. 44 after the lower syncopated section of the piano’s postlude. The Hope theme begins in the right hand and then switches to the left hand. At the end of the song is an *ostinato* based on the rhythmic pattern and general arpeggiation of the Child theme.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'Soprano' and 'Piano', covers measures 39 to 42. The Soprano part begins with a single note marked 'fruit.' in measure 39. The Piano part starts with a dynamic marking of *ff* in measure 39, followed by *mf* in measure 41, *fz* in measure 42, and *cresc.* in measure 42. A *Lento* tempo marking is positioned above the Soprano staff. The second system, labeled 'S' and 'Pno.', covers measures 43 to 45. The Soprano part is silent. The Piano part features a triplet in measure 44 marked *dim.* and a *p* dynamic marking in measure 45.

Musical Example 8 “Song of the Barren Orange Tree.” mm. 39-40.

This example shows the change from the first section of the song into the postlude, and the Hope theme played in measures 44-45.

Gates’s original plan for the themes he used in the prelude section of “The Little Mute Boy,” “From Where Do You Come?,” and the postlude section of “Song of the Barren Orange Tree” were most likely meant to be *leitmotifs* in the opera. Through his strategic placement of the themes and the staging he imagined while composing, the themes would have clearly represented what he intended in the opera. In the song cycle, they may have taken a different form from the original intention, but an audience will still be able to hear the connection to pieces and identify them as meaningful.

CHAPTER III – MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE

This chapter will focus on the music and performance of the song cycle. It will discuss the challenging aspects of performing this cycle both musically and theatrically.

“Prelude/ The Little Mute Boy”

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the opening 60 measures function as a prelude and introduction of the Hope theme and the Child theme. The Hope theme typically leads into the Child theme, and the two never overlap. When the voice enters in m. 44, which begins *piano*, she sings the Hope theme doubled in the right hand of the piano. This is followed by the conversation between the voice and piano using the Child theme. Each time the voice answers the Child theme, the tune slightly varies.

Coordinating the *accelerando* between the vocalist and pianist is initially difficult but becomes ingrained as the process of learning the music continues. Longer held notes in the vocal line make it challenging to feel the *accelerando*, which could cause the overlapping entrances to be missed as a result. A recommendation for learning this section would be for the vocalist to count sing her part against a metronome initially since the entrances are not on the down beats. The next step would be to study the piano part and play the measure before the vocal entrance slowly, so the vocalist can practice finding her starting pitch.

The Hope theme reenters in the voice in m. 54 after a rest with a *fermata*. Since the entrance is *a cappella* directly after an *a cappella* section, the silence will feel long. This long pause was originally meant to coincide with the imagined staging for the scene, but it can still be used as a moment to return to the mood set in m. 44. This time the voice

enters *pianissimo* and the pianist plays an *ostinato* figure underneath. The *morendo* movement was discussed in chapter two.

Tempo changes occur throughout the prelude. It opens with the marking *moderato* and remains until m. 21 when the curtain rises. Here, the tempo is marked *poco più mosso*. The movement slows in m. 43 with the entrance of the voice singing the Hope theme, creating a calm atmosphere before the next change. Beginning in measure 48 with the call and response section based on the Child theme, the tempo increases with the *accelerando* and *crescendo*. This, combined with the call and response of the piano and voice, makes it sound like an argument, which mimics the disagreement between Yerma and Juan in the first scene. M. 51 returns to the original tempo as the voice sustains the A-natural₆ and continues with a descending atonal line. In comparison to the call and response, the descending line feels longer and drawn out due to the *a tempo* marking. The final tempo change for the prelude is the marking of *poco meno mosso* during the final singing of the Hope theme. Gates slows the rhythmic figure signaling the close of the section.

A recurring element that was not discussed in chapter 2 is the descending atonal line. In the prelude sections of “The Little Mute Boy” and “From Where Do You Come?” both the Hope theme and the Child theme are followed by a descending atonal line in the piano. The vocalist also has a descending atonal line at the end of the prelude section in mm. 51-53 and at the end of “From Where Do You Come?” in mm. 86-87. Atonal descending lines in the song act like a deep sigh or cry depending on the scene being depicted. As mentioned, the *accelerando* section in the prelude depicts an argument between Juan and Yerma. The stage directions following the argument mention that Juan

leaves and Yerma “*passes her hand over her belly, lifts her arms in a beautiful sigh, and sits down to sew.*”⁵² Therefore, the descending line in mm. 50-53 represents her sigh and should be sung lighter and more legato than the previous section. Here, the vocalist needs to decide what the “sigh” means for Yerma. A suggested subtext to aid in the performance of the sigh could be Yerma thinking “oh well,” which might be sung with a *decrescendo* at the end of the line and a shrug by the singer. Another performance suggestion for the sigh would be to have the vocalist mimic an eye-roll with her voice. This can be accomplished through having the voice *crescendo* into the B-flat followed immediately by a *decrescendo* while the vocalist exaggerates the physical motion of the eye roll with her head. Both in the piano and in the voice, the line leads into the Hope theme showing the connection between longing and hope in this opening scene. The descending line for the piano is shown in Musical Example 9 and the descending line for the voice is shown in Musical Example 10.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part is on a single staff with three measures of rests. The Piano part is on two staves (treble and bass clef) with three measures. The key signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 to 3/4. The piano part features a descending line with a tritone interval (B-flat to F-sharp) and an octave sign (8va) above the staff.

Musical Example 9 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 10-12.

This example shows the atonal descending line in the piano.

52. Federico Garcia Lorca, *Yerma* from *Three Tragedies*, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1955), 105.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part is in 3/4 time and features a descending atonal line starting with the vocalization 'Ah' at measure 50, followed by a long horizontal line. The Piano part is also in 3/4 time and starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic at measure 50, then changes to *a tempo* at measure 51. The score covers measures 50, 51, 52, and 53.

Musical Example 10 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 50-53.

This example shows the descending atonal line.

Without the assistance of text, the performance of the “prelude” section has its own particular set of challenges. The imagined staging of this scene is based on the stage directions in *Yerma*.

It is nearly impossible to present the action in the dream without the aid of other performers. Aside from beginning on the stage, there are two places where the vocalist can enter. One is in m. 21 with the rise of the curtain, and the other is m. 40 with the rising of the sun. If the vocalist chooses to remain on stage throughout, she should begin with her head down and raise it in m. 21 indicating a change. The next 11 measures will be hard to present alone. One option is for the vocalist to see the Shepherd in one direction and the Child in another through changing her focal point and facial expressions with the playing of each theme. When the Shepherd and Child leave the stage, the vocalist can show the audience by turning her head in the direction she chooses to see them exit.

Another option for the vocalist choosing to stay on stage is to have a chair already on the stage and begin the scene seated. The vocalist can begin “asleep” on the stage with slight movements relating to the Hope theme and the Child theme. From here, she can choose to rise from the chair in m. 21 or remain “asleep” until m. 43 before she sings. If the vocalist is choosing to enter the stage later in the “Prelude,” she should enter in m. 40 so that she is in place for m. 43 before she sings.

Before the disagreement between Yerma and Juan in m. 47, the mood for the vocal entrance in m. 44 should change from light and ethereal to conversational. This can be achieved through energizing the 16th notes creating a sense of urgency. Body language should also change slightly to indicate that a conversation is taking place. Interactions between the piano and voice in this section should remain light but build intensity with each repetition of the Child theme.

Mm. 54-60 should be sung with the same intention as mm. 44-47 since the character singing is the same as the “voice from within.” There isn’t a clear direction on how to present the “voice from within” that Yerma hears, and maybe there does not need to be. The audience will be familiar with both themes and recognize them as they appear throughout the cycle. An adjustment of focal point and a lighter, ethereal *timbre* will let the audience know that this is sung by a different character. The vocalist should not risk tone quality in order to sing *pianissimo*. It is more important for the voice to remain smooth and connected than to perform the dynamic marking exactly as written.

The music accompanying the text of “The Little Mute Boy” begins in m. 61. Gates uses a *staccato* figure in the piano for much of the song. This bouncing figure is meant to represent the hopping of the king of crickets and the joyfulness of the little boy.

There are two sections where the piano does not play *staccato*. The first section is when the little boy is speaking in mm. 88-92. The second is the last section beginning in m. 105 and continuing until m. 125 when the voice disguised as a cricket hops away. When the little boy is speaking, Gates changes the pattern to sustained notes in the right hand and a new repetitive figure in the left hand. The moment the little boy is finished speaking, the *staccato* pattern returns in a new key for the final verse. After the verse ends in m. 104, the piano plays a rapid descending line in the left hand. The right hand then joins with a trill in m. 106. Just like in the “prelude” section, Gates writes a rest with a *fermata*. This time the rest is in the left hand of the piano while the right hand has a *fermata* over the trill. Gates’s choice to halt the momentum of the song signals a change in the mood.

The last line of the poem begins after a quartal chord is played *piano* and sustained. The voice enters *forte* on an E-natural 4, creating dissonance against the F-sharp in the quartal chord. Because of the sustaining chord in the piano, the vocalist has some freedom with the *diminuendo* and the *ritardando*. However, Gates does give one specific performance direction. He instructs the vocalist to “hum with mouth closed” after the words “The captive voice far away.” This is shown in Musical Example 11.

Musical Example 11 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 111-118.

This example shows Gates’s stage directions as well as the changes in the voice and piano.

Gates writes one last pause in the piano in m. 124 when the vocalist sings “clothes.” This is immediately followed by a final *staccato* figure played *allegro*, mimicking the cricket hopping away.

There are two aspects of this song that prove particularly challenging. The first is the vocal entrances for the verses. The *ostinato* figure starts on the pickup beat and is slurred into the downbeat in the left hand. This weighty sound emphasizes the pickup and causes the ear to hear it as the downbeat. One of the most helpful methods of finding the downbeat is to immediately count the pickup as either the “three” of the measure or the “and” of the measure. This pattern can be seen in Musical Example 12.

The musical score shows a Soprano line and a Piano accompaniment. The Soprano line is in treble clef with a 3/8 time signature. The lyrics are: "The lit - tle boy was look ing for his voice". The Piano part consists of two staves. The right hand plays a repeating pattern of chords (C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4, C4-E4-G4) with a fermata over the first measure of each chord. The left hand plays a repeating pattern of bass notes (C3, E3, G3) with a fermata over the first measure of each note. The measures are numbered 64 through 69.

Musical Example 12 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 64-69.

This example shows the *ostinato* pattern used in the piano.

The second aspect is the tempo alterations throughout the song. The only tempo marking for “The Little Mute Boy” is at the beginning. Gates marks it *allegretto* with a suggested 176 beats per minute. The challenge comes with the *ritardando* and *a tempo* markings found in mm. 72-75, mm. 91-92, and mm. 118-124. The first *ritardando* appears in the middle of the first verse when the voice sings “(The king of crickets had it.)” The parentheses suggest that this phrase is an aside and therefore Gates felt it should be emphasized. Because the *ritardando* begins on the second beat of the measure, the vocalist will have to lead the slowing of the tempo as well as the sudden *a tempo* directly on m. 75. One suggestion is to put emphasis on the word “king” when slowing down and then *crescendo* into m. 75 to indicate the movement to *a tempo*.

The second *ritardando* takes place in the middle of the phrase where the little boy speaks in m. 91. Both the voice and piano are given the marking *ritardando*, but the piano is given the added dynamic marking of *piano*. The text is “so that he may wear my...” with a tenuto marking on the word “wear.” Due to the briefness of this *ritardando*, the lead into the *a tempo* will have to take place during the triplet on the word

“my.” This is another instance where Gates breaks the momentum of a song to show a change in mood. At this moment, the little boy is expressing his resolve in finding his voice. The jump back to *allegretto* for the continuation of the text is jarring for both the performers and the audience. It also occurs on the most vocally demanding measure of the song due to the large leap and quick rhythm. This is shown in Musical Example 13.

Soprano
I do not want it for speaking with I will make a ring of it.

Piano
89 90

S
so that he may wear my ³ silence on his lit - tle fin - ger.

Pno.
rit. ----- ten. a tempo
p 91 92

Musical Example 13 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 89-90.

This example shows the *ritardando* into the *a tempo*.

The final *ritardando* covers mm. 118- 124 as the voice hums and sings the final phrase “... put on a cricket’s clothes.” Unlike the other instances, the piano is sustained

through this section. This gives the voice freedom to slow down as much as it feels is necessary for the mood of the text. Instead of writing *a tempo* in m. 125, Gates writes *più allegro*. This sudden change is meant specifically for the piano’s portrayal of the cricket hopping away as shown in Musical Example 14. Because the change is so sudden, it brings back the lightness from the beginning of the song.

The image shows a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part is in treble clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a half note B4. The tempo marking changes from *rit.* to *Piu allegro* at measure 125. The lyrics "clothes." are written under the first two notes. The Piano part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs), 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp. It features a series of chords and single notes, starting with a half note G2 in the bass and a half note B4 in the treble. The dynamics are marked *stacc.* and *mf* at measure 126, and *sempre dim.* from measure 126 onwards. Measure numbers 124, 125, 126, 127, and 128 are indicated at the bottom of the piano staff.

Musical Example 14 “The Little Mute Boy.” mm. 124-128.

This example shows the voice disguised as the cricket hopping away.

Referencing chapter one, “The Little Mute Boy” does not fit a scene in *Yerma*. It was written to show Yerma’s excitement at the prospect of having a child, while subtly foreshadowing the rest of the story. Gates decides to keep the mood of the song playful and full of youthful energy. He does this through text painting the hopping of the cricket and keeping the tempo upbeat. Even the way he approaches the verses and the small section of the little boy speaking is quick and lively.

There are two characters that speak in this song. The main character is the narrator who describes the scene and speaks in the verses and in the final section, and the Little Mute Boy is the other character, who only speaks in mm. 89- 92. The narrated

sections mimic how someone would tell a story to a small child. This is done through the movement from higher to lower pitches showing the inflections in the voice and the slowing down when telling something very important to the story, which is apparent in the writing for the twist on the last page of the song. The vocalist can choose to over-exaggerate these inflections dynamically in order to give even more emphasis to the child-like quality of the narrator.

When the little boy speaks in mm. 89-92, the *tessitura* remains high and the melody changes from acrobatic to simple for most of the phrase. Gates wrote the higher *tessitura* combined with the rapid and singular pitch to mimic the speech of an insistent, young child. As soon as the child has determined what he will do with the voice, the tempo slows, and the phrase descends much like in speech, which can be seen in Musical Example 13.

Telling the story is the most important aspect of this song. The vocalist should become more animated the moment the *ostinato* begins in m. 61. This is the liveliest song in the cycle, and *timbral* shifts between characters and stage positioning are open to the interpretation of the vocalist. One suggestion is for the vocalist to change her focal point or move across the stage to where the Little Mute Boy is searching for each verse. A light, but warm *timbre* for the narrator's voice would be an appropriate choice as well. When the Little Mute Boy begins to speak, the voice and body language should change abruptly. The poem does not say who is speaking, so it is the responsibility of the vocalist to change enough so that the audience understands the character. One suggestion would be to change to a brighter *timbre* and make all movements overly dramatic to show the sudden shift between characters. The vocalist can use the *glissando* in m. 88 to morph

into the Little Mute Boy and then use the “Ahs” in mm. 93-96 to transform back into the narrator. The “Ahs” can also be used to move to a different section of the stage and prepare for the final verse.

The last section of music after the quartal chord is the twist in the poem where an ominous stillness is portrayed by the voice and the pianist. Since the vocalist is in control of the *ritardando*, she will need to use the text to determine how slow to take the lines. There should be a balance of energy and calmness in the tone to contrast the *più allegro* coming in the piano at the end of the vocal line. This presents an opportunity for the vocalist to play with the presentation of the text such as singing the word “cricket’s” *staccato* with the emphasis on the consonants. The last sounds of the song are the voice disguised as a cricket hopping away. Here, the vocalist can choose to look to where the cricket is traveling after the last chord or she can follow the pianist’s line and “watch” the cricket hop through all four bars.

“Lullaby”

The music for “Lullaby” has an overall lilting motion found in the rocking between two notes in both the voice and piano. According to Lorca, “the perfect lullaby would be the seesaw repetition of two notes for as long as possible.”⁵³ This scene in *Yerma* is a conversation between Yerma and her friend Maria.⁵⁴ It was originally written to be a duet between the two women, but has now transformed into a duet between the

53. Maurer, Christopher, ed. and translator, *Deep Song and Other Prose*, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1980), Page 12.

54. Lorca, *Yerma*, Page 107.

voice and piano. Yerma and Maria each have their own melodies and time signatures.

The vocalist begins the song with Yerma's melody in a round with the piano in 9/8 with the main beat being the dotted quarter note. Her tune can be heard in m. 2 through the first beat of m. 8 in a round with the piano as shown in Musical Example 15.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features a Soprano line and a Piano line. The Soprano part begins with a whole rest in measure 1, followed by a melody in measures 2 and 3. The Piano part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of dotted quarter notes. The second system (measures 4-5) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The third system (measures 6-8) shows the vocal line concluding and the piano accompaniment continuing. The score includes lyrics: "Gent - ly breathe as though you held a rose be - tween your teeth soon you'll feel him gen - tly up - on your heart and that is when you'll say that you love him most." Performance markings include *p* and *dolce* for the piano part.

Musical Example 15 "Lullaby." mm. 2-8.

This example shows Yerma's melody.

Maria's melody begins with the last beat of measure 8 and ends in m. 15. The voice and piano are not in a round like before. Instead, the vocal line is doubled in the right hand of the piano with the left hand playing a rocking figure. The time signature for

Maria's melody is technically written as 6/8, but the main beat is the quarter note giving the feel of 3/4 time. This can be seen in Musical Example 16.

The musical score for Musical Example 16, "Lullaby," mm. 8-15, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 8 through 12. The Soprano part begins at measure 8 with the lyrics "have you ev - er held a live bird pressed gent - ly in your hand well the". The Piano part starts at measure 9 with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes a *rit.* (ritardando) marking at measure 15. The second system covers measures 13 through 15. The Soprano part continues with the lyrics "same way but more in your blood." The Piano part continues with the *rit.* marking.

Musical Example 16 "Lullaby." mm. 8-15.

This example shows Maria's melody.

The change in the time signature from 9/8 to 6/8 of the music is important in the telling of the story, but initially, it feels out of place. The next section after Maria's melody is the duet between the two women, and it is the most difficult section of the song. The vocalist sings Yerma's melody against the pianist playing Maria's melody. This juxtaposition between three beats against two beats help gives individuality to the characters but creates a difficult entrance for the vocalist. The entrance is on the "and" of

the second beat for the pianist. In one of the scores for this song, Gates had to write in the notes for the vocalist because of how out of sync the entrance feels.

The additional text added to “Lullaby” was discussed in chapter one as a connective element to the next song “From Where Do You Come?” Gates connects the two songs musically as well. Gates wrote the last verse to end in A-flat major. The main key for the next song in the cycle is A-flat minor. Since these are the only two selections from *Yerma*, Gates must have felt that they needed a musical relationship as well.

The performance for this song should match the musical conversation between Yerma and Maria. At the beginning, Yerma’s voice is marked *piano* and is therefore slightly stronger than Maria’s voice, which is marked *pianissimo*. Maria’s vocal line is more even and less lilting than Yerma’s line. It’s as though Yerma is living in a dream state while Maria is living in reality. Through the music, the audience will be able to grasp the idea of two different people speaking, but the performer should take extra precautions to ensure this. One suggestion would be to change focal point, posture, and *timbre* depending on the character. This is where knowledge of the play becomes useful. As previously mentioned, Maria is scared of being pregnant, and to comfort her, Yerma gives advice despite never having a child. Yerma’s melody could be sung in a comforting manner using a warmer *timbre*, while Maria’s melody could be timidly sung through the use of a lighter *timbre*. Yerma’s gestures could be broader and more open while Maria’s could be smaller and close to her body. Another suggestion would be to have the vocalist sit when singing Yerma’s melody and stand when singing Maria’s. When the voice and piano are singing in duet, the vocalist can choose to turn slightly towards the piano as though in conversation.

“From Where Do You Come?”

As mentioned in chapter one, Yerma is sitting alone in the house sewing and singing a lullaby to the child in her dreams.⁵⁵ The text is longing and melancholic as Yerma asks the child when he will come to her. Gates’s melody is equally somber and full of mourning, which aligns with Lorca’s perspective on lullabies in Spain. Lorca, in one of his lectures, said, “I found that Spain uses its very saddest melodies and most melancholy texts to darken the first sleep of her children.”⁵⁶ Gates gives the musical direction “Hauntingly; in a moderate tempo” at the beginning of the song, indicating the mood represented in the lullaby from the play.

This song begins with the repetition of the Hope theme and Child theme in mm. 1-4 followed by an atonal descending line in mm. 4-5 and in mm. 86-87. In comparison to the descending lines in the prelude section, the atonal descending lines in this song resemble a cry more than a sigh. Neither the descending line in the piano or in the voice are followed by the Hope theme. Instead both lines are followed by melodic lines associated with the text “How painful now is this belly.” The first melody associated with that text follows the piano in mm. 6-7 and is seen in Musical Example 17. In mm. 87-89 the second melody associated with that text follows the voice and is shown in Musical Example 18.

55. Ibid.

56. Christopher Maurer ed., “On Lullabies” in *Deep Song and Other Prose*, (New York: New Directions, 1980), 9.

Hauntingly, in a moderate tempo

Soprano

Piano

mp

1 2 3 4

Poco piu mosso

S

Pno.

espress.

5 6 7

Musical Example 17 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 1-7.

This example shows the descending atonal line as well as the Hope theme and Child theme.

Musical Example 18 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 86-88.

This example shows the vocal ascending atonal line followed by a melody connected to a specific text.

The thematic material specifically connected to the third song of the cycle begins in m. 6 with the key change to A-flat minor. This theme has two other entries in the song. The first entry functions as part of a larger melodic line in mm. 49-52, and the other is found in the piano in mm. 53-55. Other melodies associated with this song are directly related to the text of the poem.

In this lullaby, Yerma is having an imaginary conversation between herself and her longed for child. Her melodic lines are written with longer note values and mostly stepwise motion while the child’s lines are comprised of shorter note values and large leaps, which is similar to the quick notes and large leaps in “The Little Mute Boy.” It’s

important to note that the child's responses are in quotations. Yerma's melody in mm. 12-15 and the Boy's melody in mm. 16-20 can be seen in Musical Example 19.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'Soprano' and 'Piano', covers measures 12 to 15. The Soprano part has the lyrics: "From where do you come, my love, my baby? —". The Piano part provides accompaniment. The second system, labeled 'S' and 'Pno.', covers measures 16 to 20. The Soprano part has the lyrics: "From the moun - tains of i - cy cold." The Piano part provides accompaniment. Both systems are in a key with five flats and a 3/8 time signature.

Musical Example 19 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 12-20

This example shows Yerma's melody and the Boy's melody.

In mm. 64-78, both Yerma's melody and the Boy's melody return in the piano and voice. In this section, Yerma's lines are sung *parlando* while the piano plays her melody in mm. 64-67 and in mm. 72-75. The Boy's melody in this section is slightly varied. The melodic change in m. 68 is on the second syllable of the word “mountains.” Here Gates has written the second pitch on the B-flat instead of remaining on the E-flat as he wrote in m. 17. He also lowers the pitches on the words “white” and “your.” This can be seen in Musical Example 20. These changes are subtle, but important to the feel of this

moment. The lowered pitches soften the sharpness experienced from the higher *tessitura* from before.

The image displays a musical score for Soprano and Piano, covering measures 64 to 71. The Soprano part is written in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a 3/8 time signature. The lyrics are: "What want you boy from so far a-way? 'The moun-tains white up - on your chest.'" The Piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked "Tempo primo" and the dynamics are "p" (piano) and "dolciss." (dolcissimo). The score includes measure numbers 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, and 71.

Musical Example 20 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 64-71.

This example shows the change in the Boy’s melody.

The middle section of this song is the most intense and dramatic section in the song cycle. Tempo shifts begin directly on m. 33 with the marking *poco più mosso*, and mm. 33-36 bring the song into the new key. The brief piano interlude in mm. 40-42 text paints the wind while also including a melodic fragment found in the last song of the cycle. Gates teases the ear by shifting the dynamic from *mezzo-forte* to *piano* several times before the climax of the song. Both the voice and piano begin the movement into the apex in m. 47 with *subito piano*. The vocalist and the piano then *crescendo* and ascend by half-step into the melodic line introduced in Musical Example 16. This is shown in Musical Example 21.

Soprano
and the moon curls up my hair ah

Piano
46 47 48

S
how pain - ful now is this bel - ly where

Pno.
49 50

S
first you shall be cra - dled.

Pno.
51 52

Musical Example 21 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 46-52.

This example shows the climax of the song as well as the repetition of the melody from example 16 in the voice.

This climactic section is vocally taxing due to the high *tessitura*, few rests, and strong dynamics. Despite the intense passion of this moment, the vocalist should be

cautious about adding too much weight to the sound in order to give depth. The pianistic movement and the natural volume of the *tessitura* will be enough sound. Gates does not write a rest for seven measures, however, there are places to breathe in mm. 49 and 50. After the vocal apex, there is a difficult piano interlude from mm. 53 through 63. The melody the vocalist just finished singing is repeated in the piano in mm. 53-55. Throughout the interlude, the texture, dynamics, and tempo wain to prepare for the final verse. There are two melodies associated with the phrase “How painful is this belly now where first you will be cradled.” The first melody is shown in Musical Example 21, and the second melody begins after the completion of the second verse. Gates marks this section *very slow and tranquil* with the dynamic level marked *piano dolcissimo*. This creates a stark contrast from the first time these words were sung in mm. 49-52. The second melody for this text is shown in Musical Example 22.

very slow and tranquil
p dolciss.

Soprano

How pain-ful is this bel-ly now, where first you will be cra-dled

Piano

pp

84 85

Musical Example 22 “From Where Do You Come?” mm. 84-85.

This example shows the second melody associated with the same text from the climax.

“From Where Do You Come?” is the longest and most varied song in the cycle in terms of emotion. Chapter one discussed how Yerma sings this lullaby before her conversation with Maria. She also sings a smaller section of the lullaby after her conversation with Victor. She is alone each time she sings. Although this lullaby is sung at the beginning of the play, Gates’s placement of the song indicates that it represents a later section where Yerma is more desperate to have a child.

Keeping this information in mind, the vocalist will need to begin painting the picture of Yerma from the opening bars. The entrance of the Hope theme at the beginning of the song has a heavier feeling, which can be shown in how the vocalist is standing or sitting if she chooses to use a chair. She can also choose to darken her *timbre* to portray the somber nature of the song. Since the first melodic theme of “how painful now is this belly” returns, attention should be brought to its meaning either through a change in focal point or a motion like placing a hand on her stomach during the piano prelude. Mm. 6-7 in Musical Example 17 on page 48 shows this section.

For the verses, the vocalist can choose to sit in a chair and mimic rocking or stand. It is not recommended that the vocalist place too much emphasis on the actions in the play. For example, Yerma is sewing in this scene, but since the song does not mention sewing, it might be difficult for an audience to understand that performance choice. The music and mood are calm for the verses and should be portrayed as such. One suggestion would be to create longer vocal lines through softening the consonants, which gives a more legato feeling. A *timbral* choice would be a warmer, gentler sound for Yerma and a brighter, light sound for the Boy.

The first change in mood begins with the adjustment in tempo beginning in m. 33. In Lorca's stage directions for this section of text, Yerma is singing as though she is speaking to a child.⁵⁷ Mood changes from calm to impassioned happen rapidly through this center section, but the evolution of facial expressions and body language should remain fluid. This is to portray Yerma's change from Act One through Act Two. After the vocalist finishes singing the climax of the song, the mood should remain intense and match the adjustments in the piano interlude.

The piano interlude begins by repeating the melody relating to "How painful now is this belly," and continues to build until m. 58 where the right hand plays a rocking motion in octaves. Imitating rocking an imaginary child or rocking in a chair would be appropriate here. A *diminuendo* in the piano begins in m. 60. Here, the vocalist's mood needs to slowly evolve from showing the intensity of the moment into the feeling of despair for the final verse. One suggestion to show the shift in mood would be to choose contrasting stances or motions such as intensely rocking and being hunched over to standing upright and very still and slowly change with the music. The rocking motion continues in the piano, but now it is slower and texturally not as thick. The rocking ends in measure 64 with the last verse.

The last verse is less melodic and more *parlando*, which gives the vocalist a chance to change the mood from intense and passionate, to desperate and tired. Using a monotone, speech-like quality for Yerma's first line of text in the final verses could help portray her exhaustion and lack of hope. Her second line of text sounds like she's pleading with the Boy, which can be displayed through a *crescendo* through the text

57. Lorca, *Yerma*, 105.

“When boy, when...” followed by a *decrecendo* finishing the line of text “... will you come to me.” The vocalist should consider keeping the Boy’s responses consistent throughout the song.

The repetition of the phrase “How painful is this belly now” has new meaning aligning with the change in melody. One way to achieve this would be to soften the voice and add weighted emphasis to the words “painful” and “belly.” Since the texture remains fairly thin, the vocalist can maintain the softness of the voice needed for the mood. Body language and, if applicable, position on stage should be adjusted to represent the turning point for Yerma in the story. The final atonal descending line shown in Musical Example 18 is Yerma’s cry before she sings “when” twice. A suggestion to distinguish the cry from the sigh in Musical Example 10 would be to have the vocalist darken her *timbre* and exaggerate the swelling of the dynamics allowing the feeling of the word “pain” to enter the cry. For more of a moaning quality, she can add weight to the sound and slightly slur the notes. Each time the vocalist sings “when,” she should change the *timbre* and lengthening of the vowel and final consonant to show a change in meaning between the two. The final measure of the song has a stillness that should be observed by the vocalist. It is important to remember that the pianist has a *fermata* over the last notes and to not break the mood of the scene until the sound dies.

“Barren Land”

As previously mentioned, the poem *Poema de la soleá* does not represent a specific moment in *Yerma*. Although this is the shortest song in the cycle, it is one of the most difficult songs to perform. Wind in the *Poema del cante jondo* is the bringer of

chaos,⁵⁸ and is the catalyst for the song’s overall movement. The song begins slow and sparse and then quickly builds intensity until the climactic moment in m. 15, which is immediately followed by a *diminuendo* and *ritardando*.

It continues to slow as the music becomes more dissonant beginning on the E-flats on the word “Land” against the F-natural in the bass. The tempos fluctuate with a return to the first tempo in m. 20 on the word “anguish” followed by a *ritardando* in m. 21 and then *a tempo* in m. 22 on the word “sorrow.” Gates slows mm. 20 and 22 and has the piano play a C- sharp against the vocalist’s D-natural⁴ which text paints the words “anguish” and “sorrow.” This is shown in Musical Example 23.

Musical Example 23 “Barren Land.” mm. 17-22.

This example shows the dissonance on the word “Land” in measure 17 and the text painting on the words “anguish” and “sorrow”.

58. Stanton, *The Tragic Myth*, 85.

The tempo stays consistent through the piano postlude, which resurrects the grace notes also found in mm. 4 and 8. These grace notes represent the ringing of the bells in Act Three, Scene 2.⁵⁹ The piano also text paints the sound of the wind in mm. 9-13 on the text “(Wind in the olive trees, wind in the mountains)” by using descending eighth notes moving in half-steps. This motion also assists in helping the vocalist keep track of how long to sustain on the words “wind” and “trees.” Each time the voice holds a note, it is for a different length of time as shown in Musical Example 24.

The image displays a musical score for Soprano and Piano. The Soprano part consists of two staves. The first staff shows the vocal line with lyrics "(Wind in the ol-ive trees, _____" and a fermata. The second staff shows the vocal line with lyrics "wind in the" and a fermata. The Piano part consists of two staves. The first staff shows the piano accompaniment with measures 9, 10, 11, and 12. The second staff shows the piano accompaniment with measures 13 and 14. The piano part features descending eighth notes in the right hand and a steady accompaniment in the left hand.

Musical Example 24 “Barren Land.” mm. 9-14.

This example shows the descending line in the piano text painting the wind. It also shows the lengths of the words “wind” and “trees.”

59. Lorca. *Yerma*. 147.

One of the most difficult aspects of this song is the *a cappella* first note. The issue lies in whether or not to break the tone set by the third song in the cycle by having the pianist play the note or risk singing the wrong note which the pianist inevitably plays in the following measure. A D-flat is played in the left hand at the end of “From Where Do You Come?”, which can be used to find the D-natural for the start of “Barren Land.” The vocalist can also use the A-flat sung on the word “when...” at the end of the third song if she is able to sing a tritone lower. Aside from using final pitches from the third song, the vocalist can rely on muscle memory by practicing moving from the third song immediately into “Barren Land.” Having the pianist play the first pitch is not recommended if the song cycle is being performed in its entirety. The opening measures are shown in Musical Example 25.

Slowly *pp* *sempre poco a poco cresc.*

Soprano

Bar - ren land. Qui - et land.

Piano

1 2 3 4

Musical Example 25 “Barren Land.” mm. 1-4.

This example shows the *a cappella* beginning as well as the grace notes imitating bells in measure 4.

Performing this song does not require any gesturing or changes in staging. If the singer chooses a gesture, an option would be to slightly turn the body with the change in focal point each time the word “wind” is sung. The most that this song needs are slight

changes in facial expressions and adjustments in vocal *timbre* painting the words “anguish” and “sorrow.” This can be achieved through darkening the *timbre* slightly and adding weight to the front of the word. Maintaining the intensity of the song while limiting movement on stage will help with the transition into the final song of the cycle.

“Song of the Barren Orange Tree/ Postlude”

The final song in this cycle is sung unaccompanied until measure 39 when the piano enters with the postlude. Dr. Carol Lines believes that he [Gates] chose this unusual setting to reflect the word “barren.”⁶⁰ The difficulty of this song lies in the extreme leaps and difficult rhythmic sections. These large leaps can be vocally taxing if the vocalist adds too much weight to the voice, which is why Gates’s vocal music is typically recommended for advanced singers.⁶¹ An example of the most difficult section of this song can be found in Musical Example 26. Creating the muscle memory needed to perform this song is tedious but necessary. One way to approach learning this song is to break up the unaccompanied section into separate sections. Three suggested sections are mm. 1-12, mm. 13-25, and mm. 26-39. Mm. 13-25 are the most difficult to learn and will therefore need the most attention and precision. It is recommended to learn mm. 13-25 first, then mm. 26-39, and finally finish with learning mm. 1-12. Once the notes and rhythms are learned, the vocalist should begin putting the sections together in the correct

60. Dr. Carol Lines. Email with Analyynn Sober. September 30, 2019.

61. Keith E. Clifton, *Recent American Art Song: A Guide*, (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2008) 60.

order and begin memorizing. The sooner this song is memorized, the sooner the vocalist can begin adding the character into the performance.

Musical Example 26 “Song of the Barren Orange Tree” mm. 22-31.

This example shows the rhythmic difficulty and large leaps associated with the difficulty of this song.

Gates was specific in his dynamic and expression markings, which are initially difficult to integrate into the singing. One way to practice these markings is to speak the text as though giving a dramatic reading while using Gates’s markings. The text is the most important aspect of this song. Since it is unaccompanied, the vocalist has a little more freedom to play with the text and express the feelings of Yerma and the orange tree. The voice should remain energized without adding weight in order to aid the large leaps. According to Edward Cone, the singer, when performing unaccompanied, functions both as protagonist and as the implied musical persona.⁶² As discussed in chapter one, Yerma’s final statement in the play is kin to “Song of the Barren Orange Tree.” Once again Yerma is pleading, but this time it’s a plea for peace and to be allowed to live in

62. Edward T. Cone, *The Composer’s Voice*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.) 58.

ignorance of her situation because reality is too painful. Unlike “From Where Do You Come?” and “Barren Land,” this is a clearly marked outward expression of anguish and should be the most impassioned and gestured song of the cycle. If the vocalist is unable to portray the intensity of the music and the emotions of the orange tree, the audience will lose interest in the story and the song will fall flat. The highest note in the song is the C-natural₆ in m. 30 as shown in Musical Example 26. Gates has written notes an octave lower as an option in case the vocalist is unable to perform the higher notes proficiently.

The vocalist *crescendos* into the *sforzando* at the beginning of the postlude in m. 39 and should remain still and emotionally intense as the low, jagged chords in mm. 39-40 create a sudden contrast to the unaccompanied section. The *ostinato* based on the Child theme is played in the piano in the last section with the note that “the same accompaniment continues freely without measure, creating a drone in the background.”⁶³

The last entrance of the Hope theme is *aleatoric* as Gates writes the directions: “(The voice should sing freely, entering at any point, disregarding the rhythm of the piano.)”⁶⁴ The vocalist ends the cycle as she began: portraying the voice from within Yerma. This can be seen in Musical Example 27.

63. Keith Gates, “Song of the Barren Orange Tree” in *The Barren One*, (Lake Charles, Louisiana: Lorica Press 1971).

64. Ibid.

Soprano

Piano

48

49 *rit.*

(The voice should sing freely, entering at any point, disregarding the rhythm of the piano.)

S

Pno.

50

51

p

S

ah

ah

Pno.

The same accompaniment continues freely without measure, creating a drone in the background

52

53

Musical Example 27 “Song of the Barren Orange Tree” mm. 48-53.

This example shows the *aleatoric* vocal section, the *ostinato* based off the Child theme, and the last entrance of the Hope theme.

This reiteration of the Hope theme could mean many things. One option is that Yerma still has hope and another option is that Yerma’s hope is fleeting. Whatever the reason the vocalist decides, it should be clear in the *timbre* of the voice and the facial expression accompanying it. Three options for staging the postlude are: having the vocalist remain on the stage until the final note of the piano, having the vocalist remain on the stage until she is finished singing and then slowly leave the stage, and having the

vocalist leave the stage during the jagged piano section of the postlude in mm. 40-43, and then stand in the wings of the stage to sing the Hope theme.

CONCLUSION

Through the study of the poetry, play, and music, it is evident that Gates intended *The Barren One* to be a miniature version of his originally planned opera. Gates's use of thematic material throughout numerous songs in the cycle suggests the operatic element of *leitmotifs*, reminding the audience of Yerma's hope for a child. Through the selections of the poetry by Lorca, the story of *Yerma* was able to be condensed. The prelude section within "The Little Mute Boy" portrayed Gates's ability to imagine staging for the beginning of the opera. "The Little Mute Boy" showed Yerma's excitement and the lightness of emotion at the beginning of the play. "Lullaby" was taken directly from the play and was turned from a conversation between Yerma and Maria into a conversation between the vocalist and the pianist. "From Where Do You Come?" was originally from the opera, but now serves the purpose of depicting Yerma's fall from excitement to desperation. "Barren Land" expresses the change in Yerma's mental state as she is faced with the description of "barren." The final song, "Song of the Barren Orange Tree," summarizes Yerma's story and shows her acceptance of her new status. The postlude section of "Song of the Barren Orange Tree" leaves the story open ended with the Hope theme either lingering in Yerma or leaving.

The natural tendency when first looking at a song cycle is to start from the beginning and learn the notes and rhythms. With *The Barren One*, I recommend learning the story of *Yerma* first. At first glance, the poetry and songs seem disconnected except for the themes discussed in chapter two. Without the overview of Yerma's story, the characters in the poems are not consistent, especially when looking at beginning with a

little mute boy and ending with a sad orange tree. Only after the songs are connected to *Yerma* do the songs become cohesive. Once I had a deeper understanding of the story, I was able to memorize these strange poems quicker and connect to the music in a way I was not able to before. Knowing the story of *Yerma* enabled me as a performer to create a relatable character in the hopes that an audience would understand the beauty and tragedy of Lorca's words.

Musically, the two most difficult songs for the vocalist are "The Little Mute Boy" and "Song of the Barren Orange Tree." It is best to learn "Song of the Barren Orange Tree" first due to the unaccompanied beginning of the piece, so there is enough time for it to settle in the voice and the body. Collaboration with a pianist for "The Little Mute Boy" takes the most work and repetition. The vocal entrances are difficult and there are many tempo changes which require time and consistency for the performance to flow smoothly. Once these two songs are comfortable, the next difficult sections are the atonal descending lines found in the prelude and in "From Where Do You Come?" Each line has different pitches and different emotional approaches. Once again, building the muscle memory for these sections will help the singer feel free to immerse herself in the character rather than worry about the pitches being correct. When learning "Barren Land," the vocalist should practice finding the starting pitch by singing the final phrase of "From Where Do You Come?" and transitioning from the final word "when" on the A-Flat₅ and beginning "Barren Land" on the D-natural₄. It is my recommendation to learn these tricky sections first and to ingrain them in the voice and body. If the vocalist has to focus too much on the next pitch or next set of words, the acting and staging will suffer, which may result in an audience not understanding what Gates was trying to accomplish.

If the audience is unfamiliar with the story of *Yerma*, the vocalist can still help them understand the overall premise and emotional journey of the character by staying connected to the story. The function of this work as a miniature opera based off a well-known play makes it worthy of study by an advanced vocalist. It is known that Gates was open to the ideas and interpretations of the performers of his works. Dr. Carol Lines states that “as a lover of opera, Keith would welcome an interpretation by the singer that delved into the range of emotions found in the opera.”⁶⁵

65. Dr. Carol Lines, email to Analynn Sober, September 30, 2019.

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