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THE AMALGAMATION OF POPULAR MUSIC AND DANCE: AN EXPLORATION
OF THE HUMAN IMPACT

By
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A RECITAL PAPER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Belmont University

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Introduction

The undeniable relationship between song and dance begins in the early stages of life, and it persists throughout time in bringing communities of people together. As Susan E. Pashman states in her article *When the Music Moves You: Revisiting the Classics in the Company of Neuroscience*, “music promotes a sense of oneness, a feeling that drives social bonding from an early age... In a dance club, then, it is *both* the music and the dance movements of others that draw an individual onto the dance floor.” (2014, 23). This emotional correlation, or “sense of oneness” that Pashman details repeats itself throughout a person’s lifetime in hallmark events such as weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, bat mitzvahs, funerals, and others. What is the root of this musical human connection that drives someone to sing or to dance? It transcends the length of genres, location, and time, but its derivation comes from personal experience. These experiences touch the listener so deeply until the emotional drive reaches a tipping point and sitting still and remaining silent is no longer an option. “Music, says Plato, strikes the appetitive part of the soul, the part from which action springs. Music has the power to shape those actions, conforming them to the emotions conveyed by the music” (Pashman 2014, 11). These emotional evocations born out of personal experiences with music and dance have led me to further explore the melodies, rhythms, beat emphasis, as well as a study of the lyrics of the proposed repertoire included in this recital paper. The research done for this culminating recital paper highlights artistic, physical, and creative challenges that arise in the execution of coinciding vocal and physical exertion as detailed through a careful

analysis of the melody, lyric, rhythm, and beat. Upon detailing each of these, every chapter concludes with a breakdown of these defining characteristics as they are implemented into the performance choreographically or vocally. Understanding the choreographic and vocal connections to music is recognized by both choreographers and vocalists.

In Lisa Jo Sagolla's article "Marrying Movement to Music," she interviews the world-renown choreographer, composer, artistic director and founder of the New York Chamber Ballet Miro Magloire. In this article, Magloire states that,

"If you go back far enough in history, you come to a time when the two art forms, music and dance, were one. You had a feeling, and you expressed it by singing and dancing. Then out of the human movement came the desire to add rhythm, so you started banging on a stone or a stick, and before you knew it you had music that was completely 'identical' to the dance. Virtually all cultures have dance traditions where every movement impulse matches a musical impulse."

(Sagolla, 2011, 16)

This article along with other articles and book sources such as Keogh's "I Hope You Dance: The Power of Spirit and Song," and Zeiner-Henriksen's *The PoumTchak Pattern: Correspondences Between Rhythm, Sound, and Movement* continue to reinforce the influence of rhythm, meter, melody, tempo, lyrics, and instrumentation in motivating the human spirit to sing or to dance. Now, music and dance are two different audience receptive experiences due to the comparisons between the physical embodiment of dance and the audible embodiment of music. However, both singing and dancing have "engaged in a duet that stands the test of time when paired together under the common denominator

of musical expression dating back to 6000 B.C.” (Anderson, 1992). This amalgamation of music and dance dates back to events recorded in Exodus 15:20-21 (NIV), the second book of the Bible, during which the Israelites flight out of Egyptian slavery where “then Miriam the prophet, Aaron’s sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them: ‘Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.’” Because of the history of the connection of music and dance, the reflections and analysis in this recital paper explore why certain elements within music either inspire particular types of dance or vocalization.

Through a detailed evaluation of the songs selected for the recital performance, this paper illustrates the analytical differences between music and dance and how they instigate the listener to sing, dance, or engage in both simultaneously. Therefore, varying degrees of the rhythm, beat, melodic contour, and lyric content decide the style and expression of movement that I choreograph either myself or other invited dancers in the performance. The perceived physical challenges are directly correlated to the analytical topics and lie within the cardiovascular system’s ability to maintain breath control, flexibility, stage presence, shifts in physical style (ballet, lyrical, hip hop, Latin, etc.), and proper use of the space. In the same way, varying levels of rhythm, beat, melodic contour, and lyric content delineate the vocal drive of a song whether it is performed by a soloist, a small group, or with the inclusion of an entire audience. In my discussions of performance challenges, this paper details the fundamental difficulties of the vocal and physical process in developing this performance, while the performance itself is a product of the proposed theme and program.

Chapter 1

Will I Dance for You Jesus? Or in Awe of You be Still

Historical Overview

“I Can Only Imagine” was written by Bart Millard, lead singer of Contemporary Christian band MercyMe while touring in Oklahoma in 1999. Millard’s inspiring journey of faith and family follows an estranged relationship with his abusive father who was later diagnosed with stage four cancer bringing the two together in an unlikely father-son story of forgiveness. While his father was sick, Millard began to think about the realities of facing God at the end of his life, and his final thought was that he “can only imagine what it would be like.” Thus, the song was written in the backseat of a van, and it went on to gain the attention of the award-winning singer-songwriter Amy Grant who sought to purchase and record the song herself (Millard 2018, 135-136). However, overwhelmed with conviction and emotion upon hearing Millard’s story and the power of the song, Grant made a spontaneous decision. When she debuted “I Can Only Imagine” in the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee in 2001, Grant surprised audiences by asking Miller to leave his seat in the audience to sing the lead vocal onstage. This small act

launched MercyMe into the international spotlight and allowed them to reach millions of listeners. Today, “I Can Only Imagine” is the most played Contemporary Christian song ever recorded (Millard 2018, 128-131).

Theoretical Analysis

The harmonic structure of “I Can Only Imagine,” originally written and recorded in E major, follows a I-I-IV-IV pattern in the verses and a IV-V-I-I pattern in the chorus. This simple, standard harmonic progression allows for creative expression in the melodic and instrumental sections of the song. When this song is translated to a female performance, one of the technical challenges is within the melodic range. The melody in “I Can Only Imagine” spans from a B₃ to a G-sharp₄. Miller has a wide vocal range that maintains a deep, resonant timbre, so this range is not a problem for him. However, the vocal range becomes an obstacle because the female vocal range, depending on voice type and skill, comfortably ranges anywhere within an E₃-C₆, therefore making anything below the E₃ difficult to resonate fully in the female voice. The means for overcoming this obstacle will be outlined in detail below.

The song begins with the simplistic solo lead vocal, piano, and a delicate strings section creating an ethereal atmosphere around the sound. The acoustic guitar and drums enter on the downbeat of the second verse enhancing the lower tones and rhythmic groove of the song. From there, the dynamic build continues to rise in the second verse reaching a new peak where Millard sings the melody an octave above the melody from the first chorus. This leads into the climax of the song as Millard repeats the lyrics “I Can Only Imagine” for ten measures with the instruments building dynamically beneath him, and on the eleventh measure after the chorus, all of the instruments except for the strings

section rest. The piano re-enters with Millard's voice as he sings the final line and finishes the song. "I Can Only Imagine" follows a simple harmonic progression giving the dynamic and texture changes in the song the most musical significance in supporting the emotional content of the lyric.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

The original recording of "I Can Only Imagine" rests at 80 beats per minute, and it is written in a 4/4 time signature. With a simple time signature and a moderate tempo, the rhythmic interest lies within the melodic rhythm where each phrase begins a beat and a half before the downbeat of the tonic chord. This tempo and beat pattern, alongside the syncopated rhythm of the melodic makes the song distinct and implies the most natural motives for physical motion. The dance interpretation for "I Can Only Imagine" comes out of the rhythms in the vocal melodic line and in the piano part. The piano section also follows a syncopated rhythm with the motive beginning on the downbeat with a dotted quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note and another dotted quarter note. This piano section's rhythmic motive, the melodic rhythm, and the melodic contour suggests slower, lyric movement with an emphasis on languid, sweeping gestures.

Lyric Study

The lyric story of "I Can Only Imagine" describes a person's questioning of what eternal life will look like on the other side of death when facing God in heaven. Millard wonders at his own reaction in the lines "What will my heart feel? Will I dance for you, Jesus? Or in awe of You be still? Will I stand in Your presence? Or to my knees will I fall? Will I sing hallelujah? Will I be able to speak at all?" with the final thought being

that he “can only imagine” because his mind couldn’t comprehend what he doesn’t know. The lyrics paint a picture of what Millard hopes to do with God in heaven such as “walk by Your side” or what God will look like when His “face is before [me].” Overall, the lyric elements of the song encompass an awestruck reverence for God and the incomprehensible glory that anyone wonders at what they will face at the end of their lives. In the recital performance, the narrative of the song will merge with the lyrics of “The Reason” by Travis Cottrell alternating verses and choruses to build a song that encompasses the duality of our relationship with God as we live on the earth and eventually live in heaven. While “I Can Only Imagine” centers around describing life in heaven, “The Reason” covers the purposes God has given us to live here on earth. In bringing these two songs together, the full story will include the mission of today detailed in “The Reason” and the hope for the future and reasoning why we live the way we do so that we can reach the other side described in “I Can Only Imagine.”

Physical and Vocal Execution

In translating “I Can Only Imagine” from the page to the performance, I will alternate between sections of “I Can Only Imagine” and the vocal and instrumental lines in “The Reason” by Travis Cottrell. Through the amalgamation of these two songs, it creates a powerful opening number that remains cohesive in its message and communicates the connection between God and man as I sing about “the reason for this life inside me” and how “I can only imagine what it will be like when I walk by Your side.” The first vocal challenge to overcome lies in the melodic range. By raising the key into C major, the melody becomes more accessible. While it is a considerable vocal

challenge to merge the two songs, these changes in volume dynamics and lyric placement will develop the musicality and growth of the song.

Artistically, the performance will include a physical embodiment of the music through dance, creating a cardiovascular challenge in maintaining breath support and tonal quality in the voice. Most of the movement will occur during the instrumental sections in order to preserve breath control and clarity of diction, and also so that the dance acts as a response to the words and melody that had been sung. The inclusion of added physicality will enhance the performance giving it both a visual and an audible experience, but it will require a higher tolerance of physical strain and a focus on breath placement. Intentional choreography that doesn't overwork the core muscles and focuses the movement in the extremities such as the arms and legs will allow the slower, dream-like movement to reflect the artistic expression of the song and regain a steady rhythm in the breath to accomplish an evenness in the vocal tone. By placing the majority of the movement during the instrumental sections, this allows for the breath to remain steady and to maintain the tonal integrity of the vocal line.

Chapter 2

There's a Reason for This Life Inside Me

Historical Overview

Written by Belmont University alum Travis Cottrell, “The Reason” outlines Cottrell’s purpose and dream in being a worship leader (Yap, 2018). Cottrell is confident in partnering with other well-known worship teams such as Elevation Worship and Hillsong United, and he has performed with well-known theologians and singers such as Max Lucado, Beth Moore, Garth Brooks, and more. In 2013, he received the Encore Award given to accomplished alumni from Belmont University for his achievement of excellence in the field of music. A Dove Award winner, worship leader, father, and devoted Christ-follower, Travis Cottrell wrote “The Reason” to share his love for worship and his heart in praising God. He details the purpose in praising God behind his musical giftedness in this song and understands “the reason” why he sings and lives his life the way that he does. He also wrote this album in collaboration with his daughter, Lily Cottrell, as a source of inspiration and exposure for her in performing with him. “The Reason” is the title track from his 2018 album project, and Cottrell felt it was the

keystone song in connecting the covers, arrangements, and original songs completed in that album (Cottrell 2019).

Theoretical Analysis

“The Reason” follows a simple harmonic progression and a small melodic range. “The Reason” follows a harmonic progression that is commonly used in church compositions: iv-V-IV-I. This progression repeats throughout the entire song giving the end of each phrase a plagal cadence, a commonly used cadence within church compositions. Technically, this piece has a similar melodic challenge as “I Can Only Imagine” with it being recorded by a male voice, however the difference is that it also includes extensive background vocals. The vocal range of the original recording done in C major ranges from C3 to E4, once again putting it below the E3 cutoff for the female passaggio. However, the range in “The Reason” is not as wide as that in “I Can Only Imagine,” still making the key change necessary but no longer relying on the range of the melody to add to the development of the song.

The growth and development of the song contribute to the theoretical analysis of “The Reason” as it details the changes in instrumentation in order to maintain the creative interest. The song opens with a solo piano playing chords over the functioning harmony along with the lead vocal in the first verse. The second verse begins with the piano and lead vocal as well, however it adds the drums and electric guitar creating a more dynamic approach to the growth of the song. After the second verse, the first chorus of the song introduces the fifty-voice choir therefore bringing another increase in the development of the song. Following the chorus, the third verse begins with a solo piano part, but is closely followed by the entire band and choir joining the lead vocal leading directly into

the second chorus. The bridge climactically welcomes Lily Cottrell with her solo vocal line over the band and choir bringing the song's growth to its peak. Then, the bridge is closely followed by the fourth verse equivocating the dynamics to those in the beginning including only the piano and lead vocal. Following the fourth verse, the band builds again into the final chorus with the entire choir singing in four-part harmony, the lead vocal singing the melody, and Lily Cottrell singing vocal improvisations in a higher melodic register. The song concludes with the solo piano repeating the opening progression. This dynamic growth of "The Reason" creates variation and contrast using the individual parts so that the entire song culminates into an interesting listening experience.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

Rhythmically, "The Reason" is simple, allowing audiences to sing along and learn the melody quickly. With a simple rhythm and repetitive melody, the audience can remember and replicate the song quickly and with ease. This mentality drives worship music used in contemporary church services and onto popular charts as listeners are able to communally experience the music. "The Reason" was written in a 4/4 time signature and recorded at 82 beats per minute giving it an even, easy beat to follow and a tempo that allows the listener to obtain and retain the melody. The primary rhythmic motive reflected in the melodic and instrumental lines begins with the first chord on the downbeat followed by the second chord in a pushed or slightly anticipated rhythm right before the third beat. This motive remains in the instrumental section throughout the song and is heard in the vocal section during the bridge. The melody in the verses consistently starts on the second beat of the measure moving either by an eighth note or quarter note duration. The melody in the chorus also follows a primarily eighth note duration motive

and begins on the fourth beat of the previous measure. The melody in the bridge begins on the downbeat of each measure and includes the downbeat and pushed third beat rhythmic motive. Because of the consistent and limited melodic and rhythmic movement, this song drives the listener to sing along and would inspire more subdued movements kept in time with the beat of the song. Some of these movements might include swaying, walking, clapping, and stepping, with the focus placed primarily on singing along with the music and less on the movement.

Lyric Study

The lyrics of “The Reason” follow a conversational, praise format similar to other modern 21st century worship songs. The focus of the lyrics follows the “reason” or the purpose for singing, living, and behaving the way that we do according to the Christian beliefs. Cottrell writes “there’s a reason I can sing. There’s a reason for this life inside me. One name above all names, Jesus, yes it’s Jesus.” The verses follow these motives of describing the “reasons” being Jesus and who He is. The lyrics in the chorus, however, act as a response to that purpose stating “I will lift my hands up, I will raise my voice high, I will shout of Your love till the day that I die... You’re the reason I live, You’re the reason I sing.” These lyrics follow basic Christian doctrine that the sole purpose in life is to praise God and to live life according to His purpose which is to spread the love, joy, peace, and kindness that He shows humanity through Jesus. It is because of these descriptive lines that it transitions into the lyrics of “I Can Only Imagine” so well as “The Reason” focuses the intentions on life here on earth which is lived for the purposes explained in “I Can Only Imagine.” These ideals are reflected in 1 Corinthians 10:31 where it says “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of

God,” and in Ephesians 4:15 where it says, “But speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become mature in Christ Jesus.” The lyric story of “The Reason” creates an evangelical worship narrative for the lead vocalist and any who sing along.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The vocal approach to the performance of this song reflects similar challenges as seen in “I Can Only Imagine,” however the physical and artistic goals are different. An appropriate solution to the vocal range challenge would be in raising the key by four half steps putting it in E major, therefore placing the melodic range between E3 and G4. This range falls within the desired female vocal range making it accessible to a quality vocal performance. Physically, “The Reason” elicits a more subdued movement response so the performance focus will be placed more on the vocal development and building the cohesive, communal musical experience instead of a choreography driven performance.

The largest technical and artistic obstacle to overcome in this song is in maintaining the grandeur and power of the song without the support of a 4-part, 50-voice choir used in the original recording. Artistically, the challenge is to keep the “old church choir” feel of the song inside of a concert hall setting while still bringing a personal artistic style to the piece. While it is possible to ask 50 people to walk onstage for the purpose of one song, to accomplish a unique, personal performance, there are other artistic ways to transport the audience. To accomplish this task, I intend to minimize the electric components of the instrumental performance and instead select four background vocalists to support the harmonies, include an upright bass along with the piano, drums, guitar, and violin, and have the instrumentalists sing the melody of the chorus in unison.

This will create a unified, worship experience onstage among the performers and the multi-voice goal is still accomplished through the participating vocals onstage.

Chapter 3

Never Settle for the Path of Least Resistance

Historical Overview

The iconic anthem “I Hope You Dance” written by Lee Ann Womack, Mark D. Sanders, and Tia Sillers was released on May 3, 2000 and recorded by Lee Ann Womack. This song went on to become a heartfelt hymn for people going through a difficult time in life, and it relayed the wishful thoughts for the sake of another person. In a *Billboard Magazine* interview, Womack said,

“It made me think about my daughters and the different times in their lives. As a parent, you just hope those are the kinds of things you will make your children think of. But it can be so many things to different people. Certainly, it can represent everything a parent hopes for their child, but it can also be for a relationship that's ending as a fond wish for the other person's happiness or for someone graduating, having a baby, or embarking on a new path. It fits almost every circumstance I can think of” (Taylor 2000, 68).

“I Hope You Dance” won the CMA, ACM, ASCAP, BMI, and NSAI Song of the Year Awards in 2001, and is considered Womack’s signature song (Stark 2006, 44).

Theoretical Analysis

With the powerful swells and emotional connection of “I Hope You Dance,” the song has a challenging melodic contour, harmonic progression, and dynamic growth. Originally recorded and performed in G major, the vocal melody of “I Hope You Dance” ranges from a G3 to an A4. Traditionally, the notes between A4 and B4 presents vocal challenges as it rests in the vocal “break” or the area in a female’s passaggio where the register uncomfortably transitions from the chest placement to her head placement. The term “chest placement” places the vocal focus in the natural speaking timbre and resonance, while the “head placement” usually involved a raised soft palette giving the sound a lighter, more cavernous quality and allows for a higher range in pitch access. So, with elongated notes sustained on the B-flat4, that delicate transition point holds the most impactful melodic section of the song. The harmonic progression follows a vi-IV-I-V-vi-IV-V⁵ in both the introduction and in the choruses, and the progression follows a I-I-vi-vi-IV-IV-V-V in the verses. All of these phrases end on the dominant chord creating a half cadence structure at the end of each line. This attests to the emotional and musical growth of the song giving it an unfinished hopeful, and lifted feeling. This harmonic choice aligns well with the encouraging, benevolent message of the song.

The instrumental and vocal performance ascertains the development of musical ideas experienced in the original recording of “I Hope You Dance.” The song opens with an electronic bass and drum lead-in, then is followed by a solo guitar line and later joined by a smooth swell of string parts. The introduction builds consistently before falling into

a simple drum, guitar, and light string underscoring in the first verse upon the introduction of the lead vocal. At the end of each vocal line, the strings and guitar alternate in responding to the lead vocal with a small solo line. As the dynamics slowly build into the chorus, the song includes a soft female background vocal line underneath the lead vocal. In the second verse, both the guitar and strings respond to the lead vocal, and a steel guitar and harmonica play lightly for the first time in the song. Once again, the build into the chorus reaches a climax on the downbeat of the chorus, however instead of soft female background vocals, the introduction of male background vocals creates an entirely new vocal part and gives the song a different creative feature. The bridge follows abruptly after the second chorus and includes the lead vocal, the acoustic guitar, steel guitar, and strings. The bridge slowly intensifies until all of the remaining instruments re-enter on the downbeat of the chorus. The final chorus includes both the male and female background vocals giving the end of the song a full-bodied quality. As the song finishes, the instruments slowly phase out with periodic strings and guitar solo parts until the song fades to a close. The overall dynamic growth of “I Hope You Dance” follows a slow upward progression followed by a quick, soft descent into the end of the song allowing it to communicate hope without losing the wistful undertones.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

The rhythmic motives of “I Hope You Dance” push and pull the beat allowing the listener to stay engaged and the physical interpretation to follow a myriad of solo directions. The song follows a simple 4/4 meter and the beat rests at 78 beats per minute, however its creative spin occurs on the second and fourth beat of each measure. On the second and the fourth beat, the pushed rhythm coincides with the harmonic change giving

it a seemingly jolting effect that is then smoothed over by the consistent bowing string pattern. This juxtaposition creates a tender, warm sound shrouded in poignant, emotive rhythms. Physically, these rhythmic elements provide sharp accents and transitional points in movement that without it would make it a dull lyrical piece. The rhythmic motives in the melody also reflect the harmonic pushed themes with the lead vocal lines beginning on the fourth beat of the measure and ending on the second beat of the measure. In the chorus, it also follows an atypical rhythmic entrance with the melody entering on the “and” of the third beat, but the instrumental section enters on the following downbeat. With opposing entrances, the rhythms suggest “I Hope You Dance” to be a primarily vocalized instead of a physicalized song to the general listener. However, if taken into a purely physical context, “I Hope You Dance” has the musical elements to inspire a powerful physical performance in a solo framework. Overall, “I Hope You Dance” does not motivate the audience of listeners to move but does encourage those listening to sing along and participate vocally.

Lyric Study

“I Hope You Dance” lyrically reflects a motherly approach of imparting wisdom upon another person and wishing them a joyful, contented life. The verses contain proverbs of positive advice such as, “I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance. Never settle for the path of least resistance. Living might mean taking chances, but they’re worth taking. Loving might be a mistake, but it’s worth making.” Each of these lines in the first and second verse speak to developing personal character, maturity, and triumph. Each of these small phrases culminate in the overall message that is articulated in the chorus through repetitions of the title line “I Hope You Dance.” The

phrase “I Hope You Dance” is the vocalist’s way of saying to the subject that through all of the various trials of life and whatever obstacles the subject may face, that they hope the subject chooses to dance and find joy in the midst of struggle.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The largest vocal challenge in performing “I Hope You Dance” is in finding the correct key placement in order to avoid vocal strain or a trembling tone quality while simultaneously singing and dancing. “I Hope You Dance” differs from “The Reason” and “I Can Only Imagine” as it was originally recorded and performed by a female. However, Womack did not engage in strenuous physical activity while singing in her performances and focused purely on the vocal delivery as opposed to a physical representation of the performance. In a working setting, it is beneficial to massage the vocal “break,” or transitional period in the vocal register and keep the song in G minor so that the vocalist may strengthen the transitional section of their voice. However, when developing a strong, confident performance it is best to place a song within a key that highlights the vocalists’ strengths. Moving the key down to F minor would resolve these issues so that the melody in the verse rests in a comfortable range, but the sustained A-flat⁴ on the word “dance” in the chorus doesn’t lose its tonal quality on the [ɛ] vowel of “dance.”

The artistic challenges in the physical performance of this song lie in communicating the emotional contour and growth without distracting from the lyric delivery. This means that the physicalized movements will need to be minimal, fluid in nature so it does not distract, and informed by the words being sung so that they enhance the story. Through the implementation of the following personal experiences, the emotional and artistic growth will be further accomplished by including voiceover

recordings of influential people in my life such as my grandmother, my mother, and my father speaking on the impacts of dance in my life. These voiceovers will be played over the instrumental portions between sections of the song and during the introduction adding a personal emotional connection, more physical inspiration in which to express, and a unique aspect to the performance.

Chapter 4

If My Heart is Yours and Yours is Mine

Historical Overview

“Dance With Me” was released in 2018 as a part of the album “Things That We Drink To” where each track was written and produced by artist Morgan Evans and producer Chris DeStefano. Even more than producing and writing all of the songs, Evans and DeStefano also played every instrument heard on each track. “Dance With Me” includes duet vocals done by Evans’ wife, country recording artist Kelsea Ballerini. Morgan Evans moved to Nashville, Tennessee from Australia in 2016, and after writing hundreds of songs and connecting with the top names in the country music industry, he and DeStefano embarked on a project that Evans feels is “honest and tells [his] story” (Houghton, 2018, 1). The song “Dance With Me” is an ode to Evans’ wife and the relationship that they share, and it speaks to the future that they hope to share together.

Theoretical Analysis

Evans and DeStefano crafted a country song with a simple harmonic structure, an abnormal phrase structure, and unique instrumental elements that are both relatable and

entertaining to the listener. “Dance With Me” was written in a simple 4/4 time signature with the tempo resting at 70 beats per minute. The harmonic progression follows a I-vi-IV-V pattern in the verses, a vi-V-I-V-I-IV-V pattern in the pre-chorus, and a IV-V-vi pattern in the chorus. Interestingly, this creates a half-cadence structure in the verses and pre-chorus, and a deceptive cadence at the end of each chorus. Although the cadential structure feels unresolved, the song ends on the tonic chord bringing it to a satisfying close. Both of the verses follow a standard 8 bar phrase structure; however, the pre-chorus and chorus have irregular phrase-measure structures. On the first turn of the pre-chorus, it includes only five measures, while on the repeat of the pre-chorus after the second verse, Evans and DeStefano add an extra measure with the IV and V chords falling on the first and third beat of the measure. The choruses have an 11-bar phrase structure and an added four measures completing a tag on the final chorus before the 5-measure outro. Each of these phrase structures and harmonic choices will be implemented into the recital. The acoustic guitar and upright bass play throughout the entire song and will keep to these phrasing and harmonic standards.

The layered choice in instrumental development of “Dance With Me” encompass a dance between the instruments and the vocalist. The song opens with a simple shaker and acoustic guitar pattern before the lead vocal enters in the verse with an electronic pad underscoring and the introduction of the steel guitar. The instruments exist in their own melodic motives throughout the verse, but on the downbeat of the chorus they swell together into a cohesive sustained chord as Kelsea Ballerini’s voice joins the lead vocalist. As the chorus progresses, the acoustic guitar continues its previous motive and the other instruments follow suit and play their own interwoven parts. Ballerini’s part

continues through the second verse acting as a background vocal part vacillating between echoing the lead vocal lines and harmonizing. The second chorus begins and progresses identically to the first chorus however it concludes with a cymbal swell that leads into the outro. The outro includes only the acoustic guitar pattern, shaker, and steel guitar with the lead and background vocal ushering the song into its finish. Similar to the harmonic and phrase structures, these motives will also be reflected in the recital. Instead of a shaker, I intend to use a brush technique on the drum performance and a violin to play the steel guitar part. In these choices, the song will reflect a more pop-style ballad instead of a country ballad in the recital.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

The rhythmic patterns of “Dance With Me” are primarily driven in the acoustic guitar part while the shaker anchors the beat. This shaker part will be played instead by a brush pattern on the drums in the recital. The acoustic guitar follows a subdivided rhythm with the bass note plucked on the downbeat followed quickly by the third and fifth note of the chord. This motive continues throughout the entirety of the song and only alters slightly in the pre-chorus as it moves to a strummed instead of a plucked pattern. Each of these rhythmic patterns will be played in the recital. Some might notice this consistent rhythmic pattern as an anchor for the physical interpretation and base the movement off of this motive. Meanwhile, the elongated melodic lines in the lead vocal suggest a longer, sweeping physicalization instead of the staccato, skipping reflection when basing the movement off of the acoustic guitar pattern. In the recital, the intention is to alternate between the melodic inspiration and the rhythmic interpretation, oscillating from more elongated, stretched choreography to sharper, short movements.

Lyric Study

The poetic lyrics detail a series of antecedent to consequent phrases in hypothetical emotional states finalizing in the overall promise of loyalty and commitment between two lovers. In the opening line, Evans sings “May my hands be the hands that you hold onto when you let go of everything else.” This line sets the expectation of the remaining phrases in the verses to follow the pattern of solutions for the subject to turn to in the event that they find themselves “letting go” or “getting to heavy” or even “feeling lost.” These scenarios paint the word pictures of a partner committing themselves to someone in both the good and the bad times, and the phrases emulate a vow-like design. Following the verses, the choruses lyrically speak of the promise to stay together and enjoy life through the lines “if it’s you and me against the world, if I’m your man and you’re my girl we’ll win you’ll see if you dance with me.” The final sentiment of the lyric capitalizes on the concept of holding each other’s hearts and standing the test of time together. The loving, devoted lyric story of “Dance With Me” informs the approach vocally and in the choreography so that the recital will reflect a cohesive motive between the vocalists and the dancers as they all encompass the same support and care for one another.

Physical & Vocal Execution

In the artistic interpretation of “Dance With Me,” one male and one female vocalist will sing the respective duet vocal lines while two dancers engage in the physical embodiment of the music. This will allow the vocalists to focus only on the changing rhythmic and phrase structures while vocally maintaining the emotional connection to the lyric. While the vocalists sing, the dancers are tasked with embodying the text and

musical motives through the choreography and physical expression, and all four performers are telling the same story. The combination of two singers and two dancers telling the same story gives the performance a different visual experience than the rest of the program because the audience members observe the story and the promises detailed in the lyric through the dancers while also hearing the song performed by live vocalists onstage. For the vocalists, the harmonies in this song are challenging because the female range moves below and above the melodic contour. In combating this vocal obstacle, the vocalists work alongside one another to compose a new, while still harmonically accurate, male and female part that follows the intention of the song.

Chapter 5

This is a Big World, That Was a Small Town

Historical Overview

Winner of the 2010 Grammy Awards for Best Female Country Vocal Performance and Best Country Song, “White Horse” was written in 2010 by Taylor Swift and Liz Rose about one of Swift’s ex-boyfriends. Rose acted as a mentor to Swift in her early songwriting days and helped Swift to finish writing “White Horse” when she hit a creative block in its composition. Rose and Swift collaborated on many of Swift’s early songs. “White Horse” went on to premiere in TV shows, movies, and live performances, and helped in launching Swift’s solo career. Today, Taylor Swift is one of the top charting pop artists in the world (Swift 2008, 2).

Theoretical Analysis

“White Horse” follows a simple harmonic progression, a straightforward instrumentation, and a standard eight bar phrase structure. Swift and Rose wrote the ballad in a simple 4/4 time signature. The introduction and the verses develop harmonically in a I-IV-vi-IV pattern finishing in a vi-IV-V-V progression before going

into the chorus. In ending on the dominant, the strong harmonic tendency to move to the tonic occurs on the downbeat of the chorus. The chorus then follows a I-vi-IV-V progression that in the third repetition ends on the tonic instead of the dominant. This gives the chorus a sense of finality. The harmonic progression changes in the bridge with a vi-V-IV-IV sequence that is repeated and ends on the lowered seventh chord for the last four bars of the bridge. This leads back into the tonic chord beginning the chorus and then concludes on the tonic giving the song an authentic cadential structure at the end of the choruses. This analysis helps inform the recital as each of these chordal changes and phrasings will be reflected in the recital performance.

The instrumentation opens with a solo acoustic guitar in the introduction, followed by a piano and cello part after the first four bars of the introduction. The lead vocal enters at the start of the first verse with only the solo guitar, but after the first phrase the electric bass plays whole notes underneath the acoustic guitar. One background vocal accompanies the lead vocal in the chorus along with the acoustic guitar, piano, cello, bass, and drums. All of the instrumental parts continue to play in the second verse, and the background vocal layers with the lead vocal on the second line of the verse. The second chorus replicates the first chorus in instrumentation and background vocal. In the bridge, the instruments play their respective parts in quarter note emphases to build tension before playing the final chorus and the outro. In the recital, the instrumentation in this song will include only the acoustic guitar and upright bass to give it a sparse instrumental feel and place the focus on the vocal and lyric delivery.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

Overall, the rhythmic drive of “White Horse” follows the quarter-note beat division observed in the time signature. There is little to no subdivision of the beat in the instrumental performance, and the piano part follows a rhythmic pattern where the third beat is pushed giving the instrumentation rhythmic variety. In the solo acoustic guitar parts, the pushed third beat also becomes a motive used to create interest. When translated and interpreted in physical movement, the sweeping, whole note string parts and the simple delivery of the other instrumental parts suggest either a lyrical storytelling style of solo dancing or the intimate swaying partner style dancing. In the recital format, the movement will take a more subtle approach with the instrumentation and performance done only by the lead vocalist and the solo acoustic guitar and upright bass, and the natural movement of those three performers will encompass the physical aspect of the performance. The focus of the recital delivery of “White Horse” will be in the lyric style and choices detailed in the following section.

Lyric Study

The lyric story in “White Horse” follows the laments of a brokenhearted girl who finds her strength and recounts a conversation with her ex-boyfriend where he asks for reconciliation between their relationship. The entire story is told using fairytale references while Swift compares herself to the princess as she says “I’m not a princess. This ain’t a fairytale. I’m not the one you’ll sweep off her feet and lead her up the stairwell... now it’s too late for you and your white horse to come around.” In the verses she recounts her thoughts in how she approached previous situations with her ex-boyfriend and how she was deceived by him through lines such as “I got lost in your eyes

but never really had a chance.” The whimsical, melancholy feel of the lyrics in “White Horse” relate to the listener who regrets their past relationship and chooses to grow into a stronger version of themselves in spite of it. In the recital performance, I will retain the same whimsical and melancholy storytelling pieces of the lyric but change the pronouns so that the story is told from a “fairy godmother” perspective to the girl who relates to the princess. This means that when the original lyric says “I’m not a princess, this ain’t a fairytale... now it’s too late for you and your white horse to come around” instead, I will sing “You’re not a princess, this ain’t a fairytale... now it’s too late for him and his white horse to come around.” This will give the song a more mature delivery and a maternal perspective in telling the story. It also allows the story to resonate in a way that I relate to more than how it was relayed in the original performance.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The important artistic element to keep in mind with this piece is letting the simplicity speak for itself in the solo guitar and subdued melody. This song will act as the “breathing” piece in the middle of the recital, meaning it will allow me to sit, breathe, and deliver the storytelling elements with just my voice, an acoustic guitar and an upright bass. Because the dynamics and instrumentation will decrease significantly compared to the rest of the recital, the subtle choices such as vocal inflections, physical positioning, and choice of movement will make a larger impact. The vocal challenge that this song presents is in the temptation to perform it with a structured classical approach to the melodic line that directly imitates Taylor Swift’s performance. However, the solution lies in the true delivery of this song as it will remain rooted in the lyrical story and speech-like vocal performance, not the mimicking of the original sound recording. Through the

implementation of intentional pronoun changes and an altered motherly perspective to the song, the audience will capture the narrative of the emotion through vocal dynamics, diction, and melodic variance.

Chapter 6

Looking on She Sings the Song

Historical Overview

Born on March 25, 1947, British singer, songwriter, musician, producer, and pop icon Elton John premiered his song “Tiny Dancer” in his fourth album in 1972. It was certified triple platinum on April 26, 2018, and it is only one of many raging successes recorded by John. “Tiny Dancer” was written in conjunction with Bernie Taupin, and although neither of them ever physically wrote sitting in the same place, they co-wrote numerous hits. “Tiny Dancer” is centralized around Taupin’s first impression of American women when he traveled to California for the first time. John and Taupin have a long history of collaborations, and they have gone on to be inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, sell more than 300 million records, and have more than fifty top 40 hits (Mendelsohn 1970, 6).

Theoretical Analysis

Unlike many of the other songs in this recital, “Tiny Dancer” has the most diverse harmonic progression and instrumental growth. Written in a 2/4 time signature, the

introduction and first half of the verse follow a simple I-IV-I-IV harmonic progression with a standard eight bar phrase structure. However, halfway through the verse, the progression changes to a IV-iii-vi- $\frac{ii}{\#IV}$ -ii-III-vi-V followed by a I- $\frac{V}{I}$ -vi- $\frac{I}{V}$ - $\frac{II}{\#IV}$ -V progression. This leads into the pre-chorus section which almost feels like a shift in tonic to the flat sixth chord as it follows a bVI-bVII-v-i-bVI progression. The chorus then harmonically shifts towards the tonal center giving emphasis to the subdominant as it follows a IV- $\frac{I}{III}$ -ii-ii- $\frac{I}{III}$ -IV- $\frac{I}{III}$ -VI_{sus}-I-IV-I-IV. This pattern repeats itself circling back to the verse and concluding the song at the end of the chorus with the repeated final lines of the chorus and then the outro replicates the intro with the I-IV-I-IV pattern. While having such a mobile harmonic progression, the song consistently stays with eight bar phrase structures in each of the sections. These chordal and phrase structures will be reflected in the recital performance primarily in the piano part and also in the other instruments.

“Tiny Dancer” opens with a solo piano line that arpeggiates the harmonic chordal structures followed shortly by the lead vocal in the first verse. The steel guitar enters on the last eight bar phrase of the verse, and in the I-IV-I-IV progression between the first and second verse the bass and drums join the piano and steel guitar. In the second verse, the electric guitar joins the instrumentation answering the lead vocal lines and a background chorus of voices join in the last eight bars of the second verse. In the pre-chorus the instruments all take on a driving subdivided rhythm building into the chorus where all of the instruments and voices play together introducing a string part in response to the lead vocal lines. The first and second verse repeat after the first chorus, however this time all of the instruments are involved, and the strings take on the part that the piano

formerly played in response to the lead vocal line. The pre-chorus progresses the second time in the same way it did the first time bringing the song to a close at the end of the chorus with the repeated I-IV-I-IV outro with the choral background vocals and piano bringing the song to a close. In the recital performance, the piano will still lead the introduction and verses while the electric guitar, electric bass, background vocals, violin (instead of the steel guitar), and drums play the other instrumental sections. Instead of the entire band bringing the song to a close, the solo piano will play the opening line at the end of the final chorus ending the song the same way it began.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

The rhythmic elements of “Tiny Dancer” provide countless translations into physical movement through an analysis of the rhythmic elements. The subdivided rhythm of the piano section in the opening occurs throughout each measure with staccato emphases on beat two. Physically, this could be seen as a walking movement pattern that is emphasized on beat two with a head turn or intentional arm or leg movement. Another rhythmic motive seen throughout “Tiny Dancer” is the downbeat emphasis in the chorus where all of the instruments play together with the strings soaring above the rhythmic instrumental lines. The movement articulations in this section of the song in the recital would include large, sweeping arms and legs with undulating movements that encompass the entire body. Due to the duplicity of the rhythms in “Tiny Dancer,” the dance performance will oscillate between sharp and smooth movements as the rhythm indicates.

Lyric Study

In writing “Tiny Dancer,” John and Taupin recount Taupin’s first impressions of California women in the early 1970’s. The song tells the story of a “piano man” who is in love with a woman he refers to as a “ballerina” due to the graceful way she carries herself. The lyrics recount the experiences that they have together in California walking the streets, playing in the auditorium, waking up together, and more. Lines such as “the Boulevard is not that bad... Jesus freaks out in the streets handing tickets out for God” imply the juxtaposition of what is considered “good” and what is considered “bad” by society, and the ballerina’s response reflects empathy and joy as “looking back she just laughs.” The lyrics paint a picture of carefree joy and youth as they are in love and enjoying the sunshine state in lyrics such as “oh how it feels so real lying here with no one near and only you... hold me closer tiny dancer.” In the recital performance, “Tiny Dancer” will tell the story of the dreams that I had of being like the ballerina that Taupin describes. I used to want to be thin like today’s famous ballerinas, but that could be the impression of the song if one only listens to the chorus. However, I learned that I did not want to be physically smaller, but I wanted to live in the joy that the dancer experiences in the verses of the song. Therefore, in the recital performance the physical response and confidence will communicate this growth in perspective.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The vocal challenge that “Tiny Dancer” will present is in the intentional resistance of reverting the performance to Elton John’s style of singing. Because John’s vocal style is so unique and recognizable to the public, resisting the temptation to emulate his sound and maintaining individual creativity can be solved through altering the

melodic line. I intend to emulate a forward placement in my vocal focus balancing a mixed head and chest register to ensure smoother transitions within phrasing and the melodic line. In translating my intentions physically, this song relates to the dreams that I always had to be smaller in size like the famous ballerinas. In response, the movement will articulate the ballet background either on pointe or in ballet slippers but with more contemporary elements that lean toward the lyric style of dancing. This will look like the precise, articulate movements of ballet blended with the sweeping, unconventional physical text painting seen in contemporary dance. In the structured, ballet sections it will look beautiful, but never quite perfect because I was not meant to fit in that world. However, the sweeping, unconventional ballet choreography will blend and fit the musicality of the song better than the structured ballet section because it takes the musical motives into consideration when creating the choreography and strives to fit the rhythmic articulations.

Chapter 7

Don't Fight It 'Till You've Tried It

Historical Overview

Written by Enrique E. Garcia (born 1955) and Gloria Estefan (born 1957), “Conga” was released in 1985 and quickly became Gloria Estefan’s signature song. It was certified Gold by the RIAA and reached number ten in the *Billboard Hot 100* list in 1986. “Conga” acted as Estefan’s breakout hit and launched her onto an international stage. She has gone on to achieve numerous accolades including a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Kennedy Center Honors, BMI Songwriter of the Year, and has been inducted into the Songwriter Hall of Fame. Estefan continues to contribute her musical talents and performs “Conga” in her solo performances (Nielsen 1993, 34).

Theoretical Analysis

The energy underneath “Conga” mostly comes from the development of the instrumentation instead of the harmonic progression. Written in 4/4, the tempo hovers around 122 beats per minute giving it an upbeat, dance style. Harmonically, the entire

song repeats a vi-V-V-vi rotation with the introduction of horns, drums, piano, shakers, background vocals, guitars, and so many more. The song opens with layered horn part and the lead vocal with background vocals singing the chorus. After the first iteration of the chorus, the piano alongside the drums plays a solo part that is repeated periodically throughout the song. The instrumental section then introduces a fiery horn section alongside synthetic and live drum beat hits. The background vocals and lead vocals reenter and sing the chorus again followed by another drum solo. Shortly after, the lead vocal begins the first verse that is underscored by layers of drums, percussion, and the horns that respond to each sung line. The verse ends with four bars of the drums soloing over the vi-V-V-vi progression and then all of the instruments and background vocals enter at the start the chorus. This progression of instrumentals repeats into the second verse however instead of transitioning into the chorus, there is a long instrumental section that includes piano and drum solos, horn sections, a guitar solo, and it is concluded by two iterations of the chorus. The song ends on another instrumental and a final acapella restatement of the line “c’mon shake your body baby do that conga” punctuated by a final blow of the horn section. In the recital, the drums and horn will open with a solo line that sets the theme and tempo of the song. Shortly after, the piano and other instruments will ramp up the introduction leading into the opening chorus. The song will end with three repeats of the chorus, the first will include the full band, the second including only the lead vocal, background vocals, and drums, and the final chorus finishing with the full band again.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

The rhythmic motives in Estefan's "Conga" remain true to Latin roots and flavors with syncopation, subdivision of the beat, and pushed rhythms. These elements are observed in every instrumental and vocal part. In the horn solo, the syncopation occurs just before the fourth and the first beat of the next measure. In the piano solo, syncopation occurs before the second and the fourth beat. In the drums section, all three are scattered throughout in each instrumental and solo sections. One particular example of these qualities of rhythm being utilized occurs after the first verse leading into the chorus. These rhythmic choices guide the movement considerably as each step, hit, and hip sway coincides with the rhythm. This style of dancing is known to be well grounded and upright with the constant fluctuation between sharp and smooth movements. Due to the nature of the lyrics and exciting rhythmic elements of "Conga," anyone could choose to dance along in a group setting or in a solo performance setting for the purpose of entertainment. For the recital, it will include solo choreography performed by myself and some of the background vocalists and will be detailed further below.

Lyric Study

The lyric pictures that Estefan and Garcia paint describe a tropical island paradise with an alluring culture and inviting musical atmosphere. Lyrics such as "feel the rhythm of the island and like sugarcane so sweet" encourage the listeners to engage in the music and understand the culture. Overall, it is a very dance driven song with lyric lines that raise spirits and boost confidence to join in the communal island dancing through phrases such as "Everybody gather round now, let your body feel the heat. Don't you worry if you can't dance, let the music move your feet." This theme continues in the chorus telling

listeners not to “fight it till you try it” and to “feel the rhythm.” The lyrics pair well with the upbeat rhythms and instrumental drive through tempo and dynamics creating a lighthearted, fun, free song. These lyrics inform the lighthearted, fun style of performance that will be seen in the recital.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The undeniable challenge in this song will be clearly articulating the lyrics when paired with the Latin rhythm and tempo. Articulating all of the words with clear understanding and without losing breath on top of expending energy in movement will be a cardiovascular obstacle course. However, this can be accomplished through periodic breaks in choreography allowing me to catch my breath, and vocal doubling in the background vocals so that the lyrics are clearly pronounced. In the movement approach, I intend to stand at the microphone stand and choreograph specific arm, hand, shoulder, and leg movements with the background vocalists to execute during the vocalized parts. During the instrumental sections, I will step away from the microphone and arrange solo choreography that centers around the flamenco, conga, salsa, and cha-cha dance styles.

Chapter 8

Never Know How Far We Could Fall

Historical Overview

From the 2017 breakout film *The Greatest Showman*, “Tightrope” was written by Benj Pasek (born June 9, 1985) and Justin Paul (born January 3, 1985). It was recorded for the movie by the actress portraying P.T. Barnum’s wife Charity (played by Michelle Williams) and occurs when she discovers her husband’s supposed infidelity. The song details the agreement she made in marrying Barnum and how difficult it has been to remain married to him. Pasek and Paul are a well-known composition team for musical theater, film, and television. Pasek and Paul studied music together at the University of Michigan and wrote a song cycle in 2005 entitled *Edges* that went on to open doors for them in composing musicals on Broadway. They are known for the 2012 musical *Dogfight*, the 2012 musical *A Christmas Story: the musical*, and the 2016 Broadway musical *Dear Evan Hansen* which went on to win the Tony Award for Best Original Score in the 71st Annual Tony Awards in 2017. Together they composed the music for the 2016 critically acclaimed motion picture *La La Land* and later in 2017, *The Greatest*

Showman. They both continue to work closely and compose music for Disney and other production companies.

Theoretical Analysis

“Tightrope” involves an intriguing harmonic progression and a fanciful instrumentation that encompasses the whimsical and waltz-like nature of Pasek & Paul’s composition technique. The introduction starts with a I-I-IV-V progression that leads into the I-iii-IV-ii-V-I-vi-V in the verses, and the chorus continues in a I-V-vi-IV-V progression that closely resembles the outro which follows a I-V-vi-I-IV-V harmonic progression. To give the song a waltz-like rhythm, it is written in 3/4 and in the recital, it will rest at around 155 beats per minute.

The introduction opens with an ethereal solo piano line that is quickly joined by the lead vocal for the first verse. Halfway through the first verse, the drums begin playing light brushes which lead into the chorus where the piano part is enhanced with electronic synthesizers creating a reverb effect on both parts. On the third line of the chorus, the strings begin playing and are joined lightly by the acoustic guitar. All of these instrumental parts continue into the second verse welcoming the addition of a larger bass part. Each section grows dynamically reaching its climax in the second chorus, and at the conclusion of the chorus, all of the instruments stop playing and only the lead vocal continues. Slowly, the piano, strings, and drums re-enter and swell into the seventh measure of the outro before dissipating and the song concludes with only the lead vocal and piano part. In the recital, the opening line will be played by a solo acoustic guitar, followed by the drums in the first verse. At the midpoint of the first verse, the viola will begin in response to the lead vocal lines. The piano will enter at the downbeat of the first

chorus alongside the upright bass. In the second verse the bass will play an arpeggiating line to add a different element to the instrumental performance while all of the instruments swell into the final chorus. Dynamically, the recital performance will follow similar swells and rests as the original recorded performance.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

The rhythmic patterns in “Tightrope” vary within melodic motives however they primarily align with the time signature. In the underscoring, the 3/4 time signature drives the piano and drum sections to place the stress on the downbeat during the verses and the chorus. In the introduction and instrumental sections, the piano and string parts play the melodic motive where the first, third, fifth, sixth and seventh measures are played as pedal tones over dotted half notes and the second and fourth measures are quarter notes only played on the second and third beat. This rhythmic variance will allow for a coinciding choreographed section that stresses movements on the second and third beat of the second and fourth measure in the recital. Overall, the waltz style of “Tightrope” will include choreographed movements such as ballet waltz turns, balancés, and pas de bourrées. Due to the rhythmic structure and melodic motives, ballet style choreography and long sweeping gestures will drive the movement quality in the recital.

Lyric Study

In a pivotal turning point of the story, Pasek & Paul wrote the lyrics to “Tightrope” to encompass the inner struggle that Charity felt while her husband traveled and the risks that they took together but never compromising on their love for one another. Charity grew up in a safe, affluent lifestyle so when she sings the lyrics “some

people long for a life that is simple and planned...but I'd follow you to the great unknown... off to a world we call our own," she is referencing the life she grew up in and how she would rather live a life spent with her husband regardless of the lifestyle that they live in. She goes on further to say that she'd "risk it all for this life we choose... hand in my hand and we promised to never let go." The undying devotion and love that Charity has for her husband becomes clear through the lyrics that Pasek & Paul crafted in "Tightrope," and these motives inform the vocal and physical performance in the recital.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The triple meter presents a technical challenge where there is a strong tendency to sing in time with the natural pendulum-like swing. By embodying the swinging feeling physically within the choreography, the vocal motive can focus on the lyric delivery in the recital. The other technical challenge in the recital will be in the shifts in vocal registers transitioning from the chest placement into the head placement. With continued practice and careful placement, the register shifts become easier and more natural allowing the song to take on a full, rounded vocal support. The construction and storytelling elements of the song leave room for artistry and interpretation because the melodic and harmonic progressions do not change. However, a natural build can organically develop through changing vocal dynamics and the gradual introduction of instruments while the physicality increases in size and expression alongside the instruments.

Chapter 9

You've Already Won the Battle

Historical Overview

Written and recorded by Francesca Battistelli, “Free to Be Me” was released as the second single in her debut album *My Paper Heart* in 2009. The song follows her inner struggle and eventual release of pressure to attempt at “being what someone else wants [her] to be.” It was nominated for three Dove Awards in 2009, and Battistelli has gone on to win numerous Grammy and Dove Awards. Now a mother of five children, Battistelli continues to tour and write music in the Contemporary Christian genre (Brooks, 2014).

Theoretical Analysis

The harmonic progression and instrumental development in “Free to Be Me” follow consistent patterns that create opportunities for vocal and instrumental melodic alterations. Written in a 4/4-time signature, the song will rest at 90 beats per minute in the recital performance. The introduction, verses, and the bridge follow a I-IV-I-IV pattern that moves into a ii⁵-IV progression. The chorus progresses over a I-IV-vi-V pattern with

the entire song ending on an unresolved IV chord. The original recording includes an electric keyboard, drums, electric guitar, bass, and doubled vocals. In the recital performance, these instrumental parts will look similar in style but different in purpose, and the performance will also include two extra instruments; an acoustic guitar and viola that will add warmer tones and have solo lines that serve as responses to the lead vocal line. The drums, bass, electric guitar, keyboard, and background vocals will encompass the lighthearted groove and pop style of “Free to Be Me” similar to the original recording, however the electric guitar melody will instead be played by the piano while the electric guitar performs a responsive solo part in the introduction and instrumental sections.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

In the original recording of “Free to Be Me,” the beat follows an easy shuffle rhythm with the tempo resting at around 84 beats per minute. The vocal lines rarely begin on the downbeat of their starting measures giving the song a more carefree style that will be integrated into the recital performance. Harmonically, the second chord played in each measure is accented which informs the choreographed portion of the recital as the physicality juxtaposes the vocal lines. This disjointed presentation highlights how the doubtful, faulty discouragement that the lead vocal sings in the verses are not true to herself as it is displayed in the physicality. Then, at the ends of the verses and in the choruses, the vocal lines begin speaking the truth of who she is and the choreography responds to those vocal lines by moving at the same time as the vocal lines. With words such as “dents” or “rips” or “clumsy” the choreography will have sharper movements

while during the lines “free to be me” and “I can see” the choreography will display smoother, harmonious movements.

Lyric Study

The lyric story commands the song as the lead vocalist sings about her personal journey where she discovers herself through God’s eyes and she realizes the authenticity of who she is. These themes are seen in lyrics such as “When I was just a girl I thought I had it figured out... but things don’t always come that easy and sometimes I would doubt,” and “perfection is my enemy and on my own I’m so clumsy, but on Your shoulders I can see I’m free to be me.” These self-reflections and eventual conclusions that the lead vocalist sings through relate to my personal journey of feeling inadequate and impressions from others pushing me to change who I am. Much like Battistelli in “Free to Be Me,” I eventually came to the conclusion that who I am is not perfect, but that doesn’t negate my value or worth. The lyrics in “Free to Be Me” relate closely to my personal journey, and in the recital performance, it will be performed as the penultimate song to serve as a conclusion to where music has brought me thus far in my life.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The technical challenge in the performance of “Free to Be Me” will be the tendency to vocally back phrase and as a result, get behind in the timing and slip out of the rhythmic articulation and downbeat emphasis. Along with the challenge of maintaining the downbeat emphasis, the rapidity of lyrics that must be articulated within the limited amount of time makes a clear delivery of the words difficult. In the recital performance, the vocal focus will be on breath control and the vocal freedom to alter the

melodic line so that the song takes on a new approach. This new approach will include a swung beat and playful instrumentation with the acoustic guitar and viola acting as responding parts to each of the sung vocal lines. Physically, the choreography will have a natural, jazz style groove that is choreographed on the guitar and viola response lines instead of the vocalized lines so that the physicality acts as a natural response to the words that are “setting free” the barriers I previously held in my mind.

Chapter 10

Without a Song or a Dance What are We?

Historical Overview

“Thank You for The Music” was featured in the Swedish band ABBA’s fifth studio album, *The Album* released in 1983. It was written by band members Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus, recorded and released by the band, and was later also recorded in Spanish in 1980. The song and many others such as “Dancing Queen,” “Our Last Summer,” “Mamma Mia,” “Super Trouper,” and more went on to feature in the Broadway Musical *Mamma Mia!* (1999) and later the major motion picture in 2008 with the same name. ABBA continues to perform, tour, and release new music and remastered tracks (Oldham and Calder and Irvin, 209).

Theoretical Analysis

ABBA’s song “Thank You for The Music” follows a distinct harmonic progression and full instrumentation that gives the song a unique style. The verses move in a I-biiidim7-ii-V-I-v7-I7-IV-vi7-ii-V pattern while the chorus follows a I-ii-V-I-vi-V7-III-vi-IV-iv-I-iv-I pattern. The bridge concludes on a V chord leading well into the chorus

which begins on a I chord, and all of these harmonic changes will be reflected in the recital performance. However, instrumentally it will look very different. In the original recording, the song included piano, strings, background vocals, synthetic keyboards, drums, bass, acoustic guitar, and electric guitar underneath the lead vocal. In the recital performance, I will sing the lead vocal line with only the acoustic guitar to create an intimate performance that is given as a gift to the audience instead of it being perceived as a theatrical performance. This song will still retain the harmonic elements but alter the instrumental performance so that it can act as a “thank you” to all who attend.

Rhythmic Application & Interpretation in Music & Dance

Rhythmically “Thank You for The Music” follows a simple 4/4 meter with the tempo resting around 103 beats per minute giving the song a “walking” tempo. Due to the simplicity in instrumentation, any rhythmic embellishments will occur in the acoustic guitar or the voice either in the introduction, verses, or bridge. In the chorus, the acoustic guitar plays a ii-VI-ii progression on the first, second, and third beat of the penultimate measure giving it a different rhythmic pattern than the other measures. In the bridge, the lead vocal sings arpeggiating triplets on the first and third beats of each measure adding anticipation and built into the final chorus. Physically, this song will not include any choreographed elements and instead will be performed from a seated position onstage so that the focus will remain on the lyrics which are detailed below.

Lyric Study

The lyric story tells of a girl who is “nothing special” but how music dramatically impacted her life and how she wants to thank whoever invented music because without it

her life would have significantly less meaning. Lines such as “mother says I was a dancer before I could walk, she says I began to sing long before I could talk” detail how music was a part of her before she could do even the most basic human functions such as walking and talking. She goes on to “wonder how did it all start” and “whoever it was” who invented music “I’m a fan.” The entire chorus declares gratitude for the music, the “joy it brings” and thankfulness for “giving it to me.” These words encompass how I feel towards music and the impact it has on my life, and I want this song to act as a thank you to all who have supported me in music and are therefore at the recital performance.

Physical & Vocal Execution

The artistic challenge in approaching this song will be in simplifying the instrumental performance while still maintaining interest. This song has been a part of my creative journey for years and has been workshopped numerous times by artistic directors, agents, vocal coaches, and music directors, so in the recital performance, it will have a new, fresh performance that is personal and intimate. The performance will include only myself and the instrumentalist playing the acoustic guitar onstage. In performing this way, there are direct connections musically and physically with the audience through eye contact and the removal of musical sounds made by other instruments. This gives the audience members only three things to focus on: my relaxed physical presence, my voice, and the guitar. It removes other distractions that might pull focus from an audience member so that they are able to listen to the lyrics, the timbre of my voice, and the connection I am hoping to share with them. This brings a much larger focus onto my vocal performance; however, I intend to keep a pure tone and conversational style in my vocal execution in order to maintain the casual, intimate

atmosphere without altering the melodic contour. This places the focus on the song, the lyrics, and the “thank you” I am giving to my audience members for coming and supporting me on the day of the performance.

Conclusion

As a daily practice and an entertaining lifestyle, the correlation and participation of song and dance has existed for thousands of years. Primarily the emotional responses link to the performance on a personal level and varies person to person. This is seen in Susan E. Pashman's *When the Music Moves You: Revisiting the Classics in the Company of Neuroscience* through Heinrich Wolffin's theory of sympathetic modeling. This theory follows a "neurobiological model of emotion to establish the mediating links between music and the bodily movements made in response" (Pashman, 2014, 10). These natural, physical responses are expressions of personality, artistry, and interpretation of experiences that an individual has lived. Each of these unique physical interpretations change according to the melody, lyric, beat, and rhythm of a song as these musical elements inform the performance. These links between body, music, and voice are further supported in Émile Jacques-Dalcroze's studies. He was the one who first realized that musical rhythm depends absolutely on motor consciousness for its fuller expression. He went on to create a system of movement that is tied to rhythm allowing the user to "master" the concept and application of musical rhythm. "This system of music education uses the body as the interpreter of musical rhythm and is known the world over as eurhythmics— good rhythm" (Findlay, 1999). While each song in this recital performance encompass a different style of melody, lyric, beat, and rhythm, the physical application through dance will reflect each of these characteristics and how they connect to myself

and my personal experiences. In viewing this analysis in future years, the styles in dance, music, and instrumental interpretation change over time according to the culture, people's personal expression and the application of music in a given time period. However, for the purpose of this recital performance, the application of melody, lyric, beat, and rhythm inform the performance as they evoke emotions from my own personal experiences and connections.

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