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PERFORMING WITH PURPOSE: FINDING VALUE IN STANDARD CLASSICAL VOCAL REPERTOIRE AS A TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY TEACHER-PERFORMER

By
HALLIE BISAGA

A RECITAL PAPER PROPOSAL

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Submitted by Hallie Grace Dineen Bisaga in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Vocal Performance.

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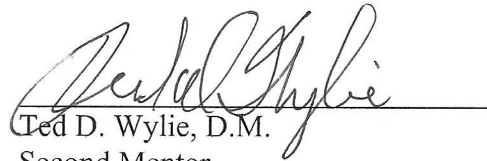
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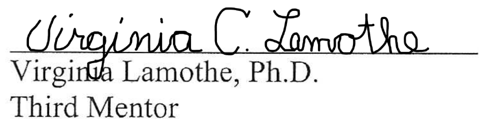
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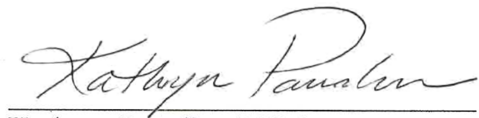
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Introduction

In his book titled *Teaching Kids to Sing*, Kenneth H. Phillips writes the following: "In its many forms, song permits people to experience life as others have found it and to share themselves with others in an expression that transcends the physical and psychological boundaries of life" (1992, 105). The art of singing is one that so many in this world appreciate, yet the way a vocalist achieves masterful artistry is often taken for granted. This task can be particularly daunting and challenging for young vocal students who are passionate about singing but often struggle to connect personally with any of the classical music they are learning, even after memorizing the English translation of the text. As someone who aspires to influence the lives of young people through music education, this is an issue I care about deeply. Classical voice teachers should never neglect the importance of teaching their students technique when choosing repertoire. However, focus on technique should be considered alongside the ability for students to emotionally connect with the music performed, which is equally necessary to deliver a convincing and meaningful performance. Marrying technique and artistry in a program of music is the goal of every competent teacher-performer; I have refined this skill in my program by choosing repertoire which both challenges me technically and inspires me artistically.

Students who sing effectually learn about the world around them. Phillips continues his paragraph by drawing this same conclusion: "A student who sings learns about life. The transmission of cultural heritages, traditions, and beliefs are all part of the singing experience. […] To study singing is to study the world" (106). This is especially true when presenting music from various countries and eras; consequently, the goal of

sharing the "study [of] the world" through the study of singing should be carefully preserved by teacher-performers of classical voice. Vocalists who perform music in foreign languages are obligated to dig more deeply into the value and significance behind each piece performed and how each piece briefly showcases a fragment of the vast cultural history of music it represents. Subsequently, the vocalist can share such profound findings with her audience through her art form, inviting them to "study the world" with her. This is the immense privilege and responsibility of the vocal performer.

The first section of this recital is dedicated to early Italian arias of the Baroque era. In-depth research will be provided on the composers Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676) and George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) pertaining to their influence on vocal music in Italy at the time. Some of the music being examined is now nearly four-hundred years old, but by highlighting its relevance and value today, early music can become more easily accessible to—and more deeply appreciated by—today's artists. When performing this music now, the vocalist must consider how Italy dominated vocal music through much of the Baroque era. He or she must also understand the increasing importance of articulation from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century as the relationship between words and music was enhanced by late Baroque composers, including Handel (Elliot 2006, 53).

Cavalli's and Handel's compositions likely influenced the compositional choices made by the First Viennese School that is well-known for defining the Classical sound. In a book titled *The Art of the Song Recital*, authors Shirley Emmons and Stanley Sonntag give the following advice: "When searching for repertoire for young singers, do not assume limitations that may not in fact exist, especially since young singers respond with

great enthusiasm to songs by the major composers" (1979, 92). Though the instrumental works of Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) may have more known widespread influence, one should not underestimate the ability to effectively connect with young singers—and with audiences of all ages—through their vocal music. All three composers contributed significantly to the early stages of *Lieder* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their art songs are distinguished for how they link piano and voice together to tell compelling stories in original ways.

Beethoven is often considered the bridge between Classical and Romantic repertoire, and in this program, his music plays a similar role to close the gap between Mozart's art song and Gaetano Donizetti's (1797-1848) opera. *La fille du régiment* serves as the introduction to an exploration of French vocal music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the *mélodie* was at its peak, and various major composers of *mélodie* also wrote opera. This will include works by Georges Bizet (1838-1875), Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and Francis Poulenc (1899-1963), all of whom contributed their own individual styles to the overarching genre of French song, thus presenting the performer with different challenges depending on whose music she is singing.

Approaching the second half of the twentieth century, the program shifts in focus to American music, specifically African American spirituals that were written or arranged by female composers. All four pieces in this section were arranged by Margaret Bonds (1913-1972) and Undine Smith Moore (1904-1989). Both women are recognized and esteemed not only for their music, but also for the lives they led and the ways they contributed to making our country a better, safer place for people of color (Brunelle 2004,

39). The styles of improvisation, diction, and articulation change substantially from the earlier classical music presented in this program, while methods of breath support and resonation remain mostly the same for the performer.

The combined strength of all pieces in this program is that they enhance both the singer's pedagogical progress and her performance skills. As a vocalist, I have been challenged to use advanced vocal technique through varying arias, art songs, and spirituals. As a performer, I have been challenged to carefully interpret each piece through my vocal inflection, my facial expression, and my body language. Phillips says in his book, *Teaching Kids to Sing*, "Song is a powerful communicator, especially among the young" (1992, 105). Through my performance, I hope to successfully lead by example and inspire my students to approach their music studies with hard work and passion.

Early Italian Vocal Music

The relevance of a major musical era tends to become increasingly more difficult to recognize with the passage of time, as musicians can feel disconnected from a given era after several hundred years. Students today are less familiar with Baroque techniques of vocal ornamentation and improvisation common to Italian Baroque vocal music. This invaluable part of music history—and of my Italian heritage—is represented in the first section of my program. The vocal works of Francesco Cavalli and George Frideric Handel provide the lens through which to see how teachers and performers alike can and should familiarize themselves with such techniques.

Francesco Cavalli was "the leading figure in the first period of opera at Venice" (Grout and Williams 2003, 93). He received his first instruction in music from his father and was an "unusually gifted boy soprano," a talent which earned him a job singing at the *cappella* of San Marco, Venice, in 1616 (Walker 2001). During the first quarter-century of his activity there, the music was directed by Monteverdi, "with whom he clearly enjoyed a close association, whether or not he ever formally studied with him" (Walker 2001). He married a wealthy woman, giving him financial independence and allowing him to invest in operatic ventures. His début as an opera composer occurred only months after musical theater was introduced to paying audiences in Venice (Walker 2001). Cavalli's "best-known opera was *Giasone* (1649), based on the legend of Jason, Medea, and the Golden Fleece" (Grout and Williams 2003, 93). It was more successful in his time than his previous operas and remains enduringly popular today (Walker 2001). Both

Giasone and *Erismena* (1655) were "[mainstays] of the repertory as opera gained a firm footing in many smaller Italian towns during the 1650s and 60s" (Walker 2001). From the opera *Erismena* come the arias "Speranze, voi che siete" and "Vaghe stelle." The former is an emotionally complex aria in which the character is grasping for hope in a time of despair, while the latter represents a more fast-paced aria, the type of which is somewhat unique to the seventeenth century.

According to Grout and Williams, these arias were "usually quite short, easily singable, mostly in triple meter with rhythmic patterns characteristic of popular dances or songs" (2003, 93). The triple meter of "Vaghe stelle" deceives the listener momentarily into thinking the mood of the piece is more cheerful than it is; while the singer "Aldimira" is not lamenting, she is singing of how infatuated she is with a sleeping man, "her beloved, mysterious knight" (Dalla Vecchia 2001, 311). Her singing is an attempt to wake him, in an aria type described as "the opposite of a lullaby" due to its dramatic function (Dalla Vecchia 2001, 311). The lyrics, "*Vaghe stelle, luci belle, non dormite*," translate in English, "Vague stars, beautiful lights, do not sleep!" The stars are a metaphor for the eyes of her beloved as well as a reference, both to her "star-crossed" state of mind and to the night sky under which the man sleeps.

In a book outlining the history of Baroque music, author George J. Buelow emphasizes how Cavalli and his librettists collaborated to meet the "growing demand of Venetian audiences for a greater focus on the singers' vocal artistry and a diminishing interest in the dramatic content of the text" (2004, 85). Italian operas, especially those written for Venetian opera houses, developed a reputation which lasted centuries for including many virtuosic arias and prioritizing the singer above the rest of the production.

As Cavalli worked to achieve the goal of meeting such demands through his own arias, he relied heavily on his own understanding of the nature of the human voice (Buelow 2004, 86). Buelow uses "Vaghe stelle" as an example when spotlighting Cavalli's talent for voice composition (2004, 86). He writes:

> [Cavalli's] vocal writing is predominantly simple and syllabic but at the same time often remarkably expressive of the affects. […] When melismatic passages occur, they may give emphasis to picturesque words. Others, however, are purely musical and form the lyrical flow and elegant shape to vocal lines, as illustrated by [Vaghe stelle]. (Buelow 2004, 86)

This predominant simplicity in Cavalli's writing is a major clue to vocalists as to how the aria ought to be performed today. One need not overwork the dramatic effects of every passage or line sung by singing with too much weight or volume; the pleasantry and beauty of the flowing vocal lines can serve the audience best if they are not over-dramatized.

What the slave Aldimira does not know is that her "beloved knight" is a princess in disguise. "Speranze, voi che siete" is the second half of a two-part aria in which Erismena reveals her emotions since disguising herself as a soldier to fight in battle against her former lover, Idraspe. A strophic piece with embellishment written into the second strophe, "Speranze" is written in a significantly slowed triple meter, and parts of the aria momentarily abandon the pulse of the meter. The cadenzas are more frequent for Erismena, as well as longer and more drawn-out; the overall mood is as though the character is truly pouring her heart out in song. While part of her wants to give up hope, another part of her believes that her fate could change, making it worthwhile for her to "*soffri in amore*" (suffer in love). According to Grove's article on Cavalli, "The lament especially was an important vehicle for expressive eloquence for female characters,

providing them with an outlet for rhetorical power (Heller, 1995)" (Walker 2001). Rhetorical power would be especially vital for the heartbroken princess and heroine Erismena, a woman of power feeling altogether powerless.

While much of Cavalli's music has not survived the performative canon of the singer today, it is not without value. As opera was just beginning to thrive in Western Europe during his lifetime, he contributed substantially to the genre. "[Cavalli's] music has virility and a kind of elemental directness in dramatic expression comparable to Musorgsky – qualities that justify his position in history as the first great popular composer of opera" (Grout and Williams 2003, 98). As a singer of this honored composer's music, "dramatic expression" was critical to my performance, conveyed best through intentional facial expressions and purposeful body language. Emphasizing the drama through the visual elements of my performance reinforces the previously mentioned idea that I do not need to over-dramatize the singing to do Cavalli's great works justice.

George Frideric Handel was one of many opera composers who succeeded Cavalli and were influenced by his work. Handel composed an eighteenth-century opera set to the libretto by Nicolò Minato about King Xerxes I, called *Serse*, after Cavalli had composed *Xerse* using the same libretto in 1654. Whereas Cavalli was an Italian-born composer, Handel was born in Germany and spent much of his career in London. Handel traveled to Italy as a young man in 1706, where he learned how to compose opera in the Italian style. This Italian influence impacted his writing style throughout his career, and his achievements in Italian vocal music are an important part of his contributions to classical music (Knapp 1972, 129).

Though many associate Handel's name with *Messiah* and his other oratorios, Handel spent most of his life as an Italian opera composer (Knapp 1972, 129). *Serse*, composed in 1738, premiered while Handel was in the process of transitioning out of composing Italian opera and into writing oratorios. Grout and Williams provide the following comments regarding this brief period:

> Handel […] did not immediately abandon opera for oratorio. […] After 1737 Handel associated himself with the Swiss impresario Heidegger at the Haymarket Theater and there he staged his final operatic premiers for London audiences. These later works, such as *Giustino* (1737) and the tragic-comic *Serse* (1738), show a tendency toward a more facile kind of music, influenced to some extent by the newer Italian style with which Handel had refreshed his acquaintance on a trip to Italy in 1728-29. (2003, 187)

Evidence of this "newer Italian style" is found first in the combining of tragedy with comedy. While most operas in Handel's era fell into one of two genres—comic (opera *buffa*) or tragic (opera *seria*)—Handel opted to blend the two in *Serse*. "Although Handel showed a preference for the heroic type of opera, he was equally adept at setting librettos that parodied the heroic style" (Grout and Williams 2003, 185). *Serse* falls into this category, "wherein the *buffa* and the *seria* coexist" (185). Handel used a largely comic libretto and added depth to its performance through "moments of real anguish" (Hicks 2001).

This new style is also expressed in a noticeable lack of *da capo* arias, which were both standard and numerous in Handel's earlier Italian operas (Knapp 1972, 131). The aria "Va godendo" is repetitive, but it does not end the same way it began. Instead, it features word painting and musical symbolism, traits which were characteristic of Handel's music throughout his composing career (Knapp 1972, 131). "Va godendo" is performed by the prince's daughter, Romilda, in the King's palace garden. She sings of

the garden's lovely, free-flowing brook as a metaphor for the love she shares with the King's brother, Arsamene (Huang 2018). The vocal line and the accompaniment create playfully melodic exchanges. The pianist often imitates the singer by echoing the melody, helping to convey the story of the moment and reveal the whimsical character of Romilda.

Handel took great care in composing *Serse*, and it is now considered the finest of his late operas, but at the time it only received five performances (Hicks 2001). While *Serse* indicated that Handel was moving in a new direction with his operas, external circumstances led him away from composing opera in the 1740s, and this promise of new direction was never delivered (Hicks 2001). Perhaps it is for this reason that opinions about Handel's operas have wavered, or perhaps it is because his classic status as a composer became "particularly associated with his oratorios" over time (Hicks 2001). Whatever the reasons may be, there is a significant contrast between the way Ulrich Weisstein criticizes Handel in 1964 and how Grout and Williams praise him in 2003. In his book, *The Essence of Opera*, Weisstein declares:

> None of Handel's operas now occupy a permanent place in the repertory, although Oscar Fritz Hagen initiated a Handel Renaissance in the 1920s and a number of works are intermittently revived to display the voice of some prima donna. The reason for their failure to grip modern audiences is largely that the librettos are static – they are little more than gems of arias and ensembles loosely strung together. (1964, 63)

Having been written nearly sixty years ago, this declaration—suggesting that Handel's operas have no place on the contemporary stage—makes sense for its time. The Romantic period in the nineteenth century brought a major indulgence in the dramatic contrasting of moods within a single piece or segment of a larger work. This trend carried well into the twentieth century, changing the trajectory of theater long-term.

However, with the passage of time since Weisstein's remarks has come a newfound appreciation for Handel's style, and the very elements which were once criticized are now viewed as charming. This idea is supported in the following statement from *A Short History of Opera*: "There was a time, not many years ago, when the operas of George Frideric Handel did not loom large in the estimation of his admirers. Over the course of the past fifty years, however, that trend has been reversed, with major opera companies including in their repertoire one or more of Handel's works" (Grout and Williams 2003, 184). The authors defend Handel's stylistic choices further and in more detail:

> [The] music, being free to devote itself to its peculiar function of unmixed emotional expression, expands freely into forms conditioned only by its own nature, unrestricted by requirements of so-called naturalness on the stage. Once this fundamental idea is grasped – and it is difficult only because it happens to be different from modern dramatic principles – then it is easy to perceive that the form of a Handel opera […] is in reality a musical structure of perfect artistic validity, whose restrictions, far from being arbitrary, exist only to assure freedom in essential matters. (187-88)

The main idea supported here is that the very qualities of Handel's operas which seemed unnecessarily restrictive to Weisstein are in fact vital to "assure freedom" in what Handel deemed fundamental: "unmixed emotional expression."

The follow-up question to these contrasting opinions is: How, then, should Handel's operas be performed today? Are performers to honor the wishes of the composer to keep things simple, or ought they to invite modern-day dramatic principles and musical flare into his works? Research suggests that, while many modern performances of the centuries-old stage productions have been greatly modified, musicologists believe the Baroque style ought to be better preserved according to how the composer intended it. In Chapter Three of his book, *Essays on Opera*, Winton Dean

discusses vocal embellishment in a Handel aria, questioning his artistic intentions and methods of work. He writes, “Handel’s embellishments never confuse or deface the vocal line, though they occasionally modify it in detail for expressive purposes” (1990, 25). He concludes at the end of his chapter that thorough analysis of Handel’s arias “gives no support whatever to the wild ornamentation—or all too often recomposition—distressingly common in modern revivals” (29). Dean’s findings indicate not only that Handel intended for his arias to be sung mostly as written, but also that substantially changing the ornamentation could confuse the vocal line and thus hurt the integrity of the performance.

Yet there is evidence that such revivals did, in fact, incorporate “wild ornamentation” in their performances. In 1996, John Von Rhein wrote the following in his review of *Serse* for the *Opera News* journal: “While the vocal lines erupted in a fury of runs and ornaments, Xerxes (Ann Murray) hotly pursued Romilda (soprano Elizabeth Futral) through a formal garden of cacti. Earlier on, Romilda made her entrance like a prima donna entertaining the court with her flashing coloratura” (1996, 46). Rhein did not seem to have any distaste for these choices; his review of Elizabeth Futral and the entire performance was overwhelmingly positive.

However, the integrity of such performances is again questioned in *A Short History of Opera*: “These modern revivals, while revealing a multitude of beauties, at the same time have raised many questions with regard to the proper ‘adjustment’ of these works for present-day audiences” (Grout and Williams 2003, 184). When it comes to the recent performance history of the role of Romilda, there is consistency in a desire for clarity. Two separate reviews of *Serse*, written in different editions of *Opera News*

journal, describe Romilda's voice as a "lush, clear, flexible soprano" (Briggs 1993, 53) and having "freshness and purity of timbre," respectively (Rhein 1996, 46). "Va godendo" is a coloratura aria requiring solid technique for the melody's many runs and melismas; having a lack of purity in timbre or lack of flexibility could prove detrimental to the conveying of Romilda's lighthearted tone. The lyrics repeat, "Goes joyously, charming and lovely, that little brook which flows freely." The melody is meant to imitate this free-flowing brook; therefore free, clear, and well-supported singing will be paramount to this performance.

According to Grove online, "Handel's gift for melody is displayed most boldly in arias from his Italian period which are simply unharmonized melodic lines, apart from cadential ritornellos. … The strength of the melody is such that the absence of harmony is not noticed, or perhaps the melody implies the harmony so clearly it does not need to be realized" (Hicks 2001). Rather than pile on embellishments and ornamentation to this aria in an attempt to "make it more interesting," perhaps the best way to perform "Va godendo" is by giving the melody its due attention, focusing on communicating the mood of the piece through the tone and timbre of the voice, and otherwise letting Handel's music speak for itself.

While Cavalli and Handel existed in two different lifetimes, they created music which is now categorized as belonging to a single era. They have also taught the same lesson through their Italian vocal music: one does not need to over-complicate an already beautiful melodic line. The human voice is uniquely capable of singing such melodies in profoundly dynamic ways, and this can change significantly from person to person, since no two voices are the same. The findings of Cavalli's and Handel's compositions reveal

that Baroque music can provide a meaningful interaction between the performer and the audience, where the performer learns how to sing melismatic passages with freedom as well as precision, and the audience learns how to enjoy a centuries-old aria simply for what it is.

The First Viennese School and German *Lied*

In a journal article about Joseph Haydn, H. C. Robbins Landon writes the following statement regarding his art songs: “Among them are many famous works, some witty, some touching, all full of Haydn’s late genius” (1982, 359). Though Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are all universally recognized for their instrumental compositions, the unique and immense talents they all possessed are just as evident in their solo vocal music. Two songs will be analyzed from each composer, comparing and contrasting treatment of text as well as form, which will reveal the evolution of Classical song as it gradually acquires Romantic ideas. The outstanding technique and artistry of each piece will also be observed in detail throughout this chapter as it relates to performance practices.

Carol Kimball defends the necessity of including art songs in one’s vocal repertoire in a recent article titled, “Why Sing Art Songs?” She writes, “Because art songs are a smaller vocal form than operatic arias, the textual images and interpretive requirements tend to be much more compressed than in arias. Including songs in our repertoire offers an opportunity to experience and work with these” (2014, 361). This statement does nothing to negate the significance of studying arias, which, among other things, have much to offer in the areas of expression and vocal versatility. Rather, Kimball highlights two unique qualities of art songs which serve the vocalist just as well or better than arias: a heightened sense of how music relates to its text, and the intent of interpretation (2014, 361).

Not all songs place the same level of importance on textual imagery, especially in the Classical Era when German *Lied* was yet to be popularized. Joseph Haydn, "Father of the Symphony" and a pioneer of Classical instrumental music, was not known to place high importance on text when it came to writing songs (Kimball 2005, 42). Haydn's musical talent was discovered at a very early age when, along with his parents, he would sing folk tunes "with perfect intonation and a beautiful voice" (Geiringer 1946, 10). At six years old, the Austrian peasant boy was sent to Hainburg to receive a "proper" music education (Geiringer 1946, 10). There he stayed until 1740, when the court composer and choirmaster at the famous Cathedral of St. Stephen in Vienna invited young Haydn to come with him and be educated there (Geiringer 1946, 17).

Haydn spent eleven years in Vienna before he became vice-Kapellmeister and later Kapellmeister of the Esterházy court in Hungary (Feder and Webster 2001). From 1766, operatic productions were required at the new castle; over time, opera became "the focus of the entire musical establishment" (Feder and Webster 2001). This resulted inevitably in a shift in Haydn's composition output, from mostly instrumental to primarily vocal works. It was during his time serving this royal family that Haydn met Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and the two became dear friends and admirers of each other's music (Geiringer 1946, 104). When Haydn left for London in 1790, he spent his last day in Vienna with Mozart (Geiringer 1946, 104). "When they said good-bye, the younger Mozart exclaimed with tears: 'I am afraid, Papa, this will be our last farewell'" (Geiringer 1946, 104). This sentimental statement from Mozart was indicative of the close friendship between the two masterful composers, who indeed were not reunited due to Mozart's untimely death in 1791.

The two friends had very different upbringings which naturally influenced their compositional styles, especially as it pertains to writing art songs (Schmid and Sanders 1956, 145). Whereas Mozart only heard folk music indirectly through his father, Haydn was greatly influenced by it (Schmid and Sanders 1956, 148). Haydn's utilization of German folk tunes is evident in his *Lieder*, composed mostly in the 1780s before his move to London (North 2010, 374). It is said that "Haydn's Lieder… are formally and emotionally simple, whereas his English songs, in the next decade, are far more sophisticated" (North 2010, 374). That is not to say that the *Lieder* are inferior to the English songs; in fact, many sopranos are reported to have sounded more comfortable with the former than they are with the latter (North 2010, 374). While the *Lieder* are relatively short and strophic, they are also "varied in mood and exhibit subtle rhythmic and formal construction" (Feder and Webster 2001). Haydn's musical choices often enhance the meaning of the poetry intelligently (Feder and Webster 2001).

Rather than focus on the relationship between words and music, Haydn's priority when writing songs was enhancing the relationship between the voice and the piano. His development of piano accompaniment was remarkably important for future *Lied* composition. "Haydn was one of the first composers to write out his song scores in three staves instead of two, thus paving the way for the development of the piano accompaniment that was to flower in the nineteenth-century German *Lied*" (Kimball 2005, 42). The singer of Haydn's songs does well to listen carefully to how the melodies compliment the accompaniments, and vice versa.

Another important feature of Haydn's songs is his musical personality, the same playfulness and lightheartedness that often accompanies his instrumental works (i.e. "The

Joke" Quartet or the "Surprise" Symphony). Haydn was known to use humor in his compositions, but this was balanced by a sense of earnestness as well in his music (Feder and Webster 2001). The earnestness can be felt in songs such as "Die Landlust," in which the performer sings of a life well-lived, one without regrets. The humor is heard in "Jeder meint, der Gegenstand," wherein the singer exaggeratedly declares that love is blind. Both songs have a cheerful and lighthearted tone, accentuated by the piano accompaniment primarily in the form of trills and grace notes.

In "Jeder meint," several turns are written into the melody. This vocal ornamentation is complemented by the trills written in the accompaniment, when the piano is echoing the melody in the right hand. "Classical music demands significant but well-chosen ornamentation. You must know how to execute small graces written into the music as well as how to add appoggiaturas, trills, and turns in recitatives and other appropriate places" (Elliot 2006, 125). It is imperative to perform these turns in the context of classical music, understanding that the delivery of melismatic passages in Haydn's songs should never sound "commercial" in style. The notes should be sung exactly as they appear without scoops, glottal onsets, breathiness, or any other articulations stylistic of contemporary commercial music. "Optimal production of sustained tones requires a perfect union of airflow and adductory tension" (McCoy 2019, 167). Therefore, the vocalist should strive to maintain a consistent flow of breath management and laryngeal pressure through the phrase.

Both "Jeder meint" and "Die Landlust" were composed in strophic form, with little to no variation in melody or accompaniment for each verse. This makes understanding the meaning of the text, as well as creating variety in singing, especially

vital for performance. The vocalist will keep her audience entertained by depicting the mood of the piece through expressive singing, which is done best when word-for-word translation has taken place. In "Jeder meint," some phrases are repeated as many as three times. Varying the same phrase through dynamic contrast and selective articulation helps to better communicate with the audience, giving listeners a deeper appreciation for the genius of Haydn's musicianship.

Both Haydn and Mozart did not express much interest in the genre of *Lied*, although the songs they did write demonstrate highly sophisticated interplay between the vocalist and the pianist (Kimball 2005, 39). Wolfgang Amadeus' father Leopold educated Wolfgang and his siblings in music, mathematics, reading, writing, literature, languages, and dancing (Eisen and Sadie 2001). Wolfgang proved to be a child prodigy in music, composing at the age of five and touring with his sister, Maria Anna Mozart (1751-1829) whom he fondly called "Nannerl", from the age of six. Mozart continued to compose while traveling, writing sonatas, symphonies, and an oratorio (Eisen and Sadie 2001). He wrote his first opera, *Bastien und Bastienne* (1768), when he was twelve years old (Grout and Williams 2003, 323).

Mozart composed in most of the art-music forms of his time, excelling in all his attempts (Eisen and Sadie 2001). Besides writing a multitude of instrumental works, many of which are now standards of Classical-era repertoire, Mozart wrote several operas that are frequently performed today, including but not limited to *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *Die Zauberflöte* (1791) (Weston 2006, 58). He also composed a few songs, though for him quality of poetry was of little concern. "With the exception of Goethe, [Mozart] did not use the greatest poetry of the day; his oft-quoted statement that 'poetry must be

altogether the obedient daughter of the music' holds true in his songs as well as in his operas" (Kimball 2005, 44). Mozart's lack of reverence for poetry did not keep him from utilizing it in his vocal works to create a kind of music he could not otherwise produce: music with words, the only kind of music that tells the same story every time it is performed.

After 1775, most of Mozart's songs were written in a through-composed form and began to showcase operatic attributes (Kimball 2005, 44). One such song is "Als Luise die Briefe ihres ungetreuen Liebhabers verbrannte" (Als Luise Was Burning the Letters of Her Unfaithful Lover). The poem to which the song is set was written by Gabriele von Baumberg (1768-1839), an acquaintance of Mozart. According to Kimball,

> "Als Luise…" is a tiny operatic *scena*, intensely dramatic and full of passion. Mozart's treatment of the text is highly theatrical; piano figures illustrate the crackling flames and Luise's emotional state which fluctuates from bitter anger to poignant despair. The form is through-composed but with a musical structure that progresses so naturally and dramatically that it seems perfectly rounded. (2005, 45)

The "theatrical," through-composed nature of "Als Luise…" is a key part of what distinguishes it from Haydn's *Lieder*. Strophic songs like "Jeder meint der Gegenstand" and "Die Landlust" tend to repeat the same idea in each verse; "Als Luise," by contrast, takes both performer and the listener on a journey which does not end where it began. Part of the musical structure which helps the song sound "perfectly rounded" is the piano accompaniment, which plays an arpeggiated theme both at the opening and the closing of the piece. The "bitter anger" is primarily expressed through increased intensity—either by means of higher pitch or louder volume—while the "poignant despair" is typically descending in pitch, softer in volume, and chromatic.

"Als Luise" and "Abendempfindung" were both composed in 1787, the same year in which Mozart composed his famous opera, *Don Giovanni* (Kimball 2005, 45). Though the latter song is not as intensely dramatic as the former, Mozart seems to have written it with Italian arias in mind. Kimball writes,

> An Italianate vocal line crowns this beautiful song. The song's format is through-composed with varied accompaniment figures that point up the dramatic/poetic content. Vocal phrases are long-lined and reminiscent of Mozart's arias; they have a cumulative effect, increasing in intensity and passion of the final measures. (2005, 46)

In these long-lined phrases, the vocalist sings of her final days on earth: the end of her "lifelong pilgrimage" and the beginning of her time in a "land of peace" (taken from the text of the piece), alluding to an afterlife of Heaven. She addresses her friends and implores them not to be ashamed to weep for her at her grave. In the final measures, wherein the vocalist reaches the highest sustained pitches in the piece, she declares that the tears shed for her would be "the most beautiful pearl in [her] diadem" (from text), implying their preciousness to her. The sentiment throughout the piece is generally reflective of happy moments, conveying the performer's acceptance that her life on earth has come to an end.

When it comes to Mozart's vocal works, the amount of ornamentation added to a performance should depend on which language the work was written in. "Styles varied from region to region, with Italian music and singers using the most elaborate and rhythmically flexible ornaments. German works were more restrained and specific, and tended to include more ornamentation composed directly into the music" (Elliot 2006, 110). Since both "Als Luise" and "Abendempfindung" were written in German, and because German was Mozart's native tongue, it seems maintaining their "restrained and

specific" nature is the most appropriate approach to singing these art songs. Therefore, additional ornamentation not written into the score should be limited.

The same rule can be applied to the German songs of Ludwig van Beethoven, though he represents a transitional period from the Classical to Romantic style in his songs, as in other musical forms (Kimball 2005, 46). Beethoven was "the son of an obscure musician in a small provincial town" in Vienna called Bonn (Kerman et al. 2001). It was in Bonn that the young Beethoven's father taught him to play violin and piano, "and did so as a matter of course, just as he had had instruction from his own father" (Burk 1946, 10). In 1779, Christian Gottlob Neefe came to Bonn and became Beethoven's "first important teacher," and it was by his recommendation that Beethoven first traveled to Vienna in 1787 (Kerman et al. 2001). Though this trip was cut short due to the untimely death of his mother, Beethoven would eventually return to Vienna in 1792 and remain there until his death in 1827 (Burke 1946, 21-34).

Around the year 1783, Beethoven began composing solo songs with keyboard (Matthews 1988, 208). His songs more closely resemble Haydn's style than they do Mozart's (Kimball 2005, 46), perhaps because he spent more time under Haydn's instruction during his first year in Vienna (Kerman et al. 2001). The late-eighteenth century did not see a rise in interest for German *Lied*. Like Haydn and Mozart before him, Beethoven "did not display an inspired interest in song" (Gorrell 1993, 95), despite writing almost eighty *Lieder* in total (Matthews 1988, 208).

It is possible that, rather than having a distaste for the art song form, Beethoven's creative genius was simply better manifested in more large-scale forms of music.

> In spite of his predilection for larger instrumental forms, his songs are important for introducing creative ideas that were to flower in the works of Schubert and Schumann. His expanded harmonies and his concept of the song cycle influenced the great Lied composers who followed. (Kimball 2005, 47)

It was Beethoven who composed the first German song cycle, *An die ferne Geliebte*, in the year 1816 (Gorrell 1993, 95). Before being struck with this innovation of the song cycle, he wrote "Zärtliche Liebe" [Tender Love], which later became known by the opening line of the text, "Ich liebe dich" [I love you]. A "short and isolated setting," the song was written in the late 1790s, when Beethoven was otherwise absorbed in instrumental music (Matthews 1988, 210). Evidence of Romantic influence is briefly found in measures 29-31: the harmony modulates, the vocal line swells on a repeating F5 natural, the dynamic marking for both voice and piano changes to forte, and the left-hand accompaniment moves to eighth notes hammered in octaves low on the piano. This moment of seemingly reckless abandon quickly resolves, however, as the melody returns to the soprano's mid-register, and the harmony returns to the home key of G major. The vocal line ends modestly on a G4, and the piece resolves comfortably on a V^7-I cadence.

Intensity of emotion in song is further explored in Beethoven's "Der Kuss," which he completed in 1822 after having gone completely deaf (Kerman et al. 2001). The significance of the text is overshadowed by the priority of musical development in this piece, which Beethoven designated as an *ariette* (Gorrell 1993, 100). "The poem," penned by Christian Felix Weisse (1726-1804), "presents a charming little scene in which the speaker asks Chloe if he can kiss her. She coyly replies that she will scream if he kisses her. He kisses her and she screams – much later" (Gorrell 1993, 100). The lighthearted mood of the through-composed piece is depicted in the piano part from the first measures, wherein the right hand and left hand play cheery diatonic melodies in

back-and-forth motion, as though the lower notes were playfully chasing after the higher notes.

The mood changes very suddenly when the speaker admits that the woman screams after being kissed. “The setting is fresh and tunefully pastoral until Chloe’s scream, which ushers in more reinforced, dramatic accompaniment and an extended explanation” (Kimball 2005, 48). At the same time as the accompaniment intensifies, the vocal line reaches new heights in the piece, and the word “screamed” is sung on a G#5 at a forte dynamic. Immediately after, the dynamic abruptly changes to *piano,* and the vocalist holds listeners in suspense by repeatedly singing, “doch…” (but…) until finally delivering the punchline: “doch lange hinter her” (but long afterwards). The song ends with the singer repeating this phrase multiple times, driving the point home with extensive repetition of the word “lange” (long) on many different pitches.

In “Der Kuss,” Beethoven demonstrates his undeniable love of intensity and passion in music, no matter what the genre. “His magnificent gifts were grounded in his ability to think on a much grander stage than the lied provided; something as short, delicate, and ephemeral as song was not a natural medium for him” (Gorrell 1993, 100). The performer likely cannot overdo the dramatization of this ending, both in vocal expression and in body language. While songs by Haydn do not require grand gestures or full dynamic range, Beethoven’s “Der Kuss” demands expression and characterization to properly convey the composer’s intent. Such was the influence Beethoven had on *Lieder*, and on music in general, making him a key transitional figure for the Romantic movement which was to come.

French Vocal Music in the Romantic Era

The development of French vocal music, beginning with French opera in the nineteenth century and ending with twentieth-century French song, was substantial. Gaetano Donizetti serves as an example of a foreigner successfully writing for the French stage; while songs by Georges Bizet, Claude Debussy, and Francis Poulenc provide the means through which to study *mélodie*. In one section of Carol Kimball's book, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, qualities of French song are detailed and analyzed by the author with historical context. An excerpt from the book reads: "French *mélodie* has definite qualities and characteristics; Debussy wrote that 'clarity of expression, precision, and concentration of form are qualities peculiar to the French genius'" (2005, 157). The technical and artistic heights of each piece examined in this chapter, specifically as it pertains to such qualities pointed out by Debussy, illuminate reason for the tremendous reputation surrounding these composers and their music.

During the Romantic Era, Paris became a cultural "hotspot" for Europe, and music – especially vocal music – flourished well into the twentieth century (Locke 1990, 46). The July Revolution of 1830 in France resulted in the creation of a new government, and the Paris of this time was considered the musical capital of Europe (Locke 1990, 43). This was the same Paris in which many foreign composers hoped to make their fortunes, including Italian-born opera composer Gaetano Donizetti (Locke 1990, 44).

By the time he journeyed to Paris in the 1830s, Donizetti had already confirmed his place as a "leading composer of nineteenth-century Italian opera" primarily through

his romantic tragedy *Anna Bolena* (1830), which was “followed two years later by the ever-popular romantic comedy *L’elisir d’amore*” (Grout and Williams 2003, 390). In the scores of these operas, Donizetti personalized his style in an unconventional but likeable way, setting himself apart from Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) and contributing his own “idyllic, sentimental charm” to the genre (Grout and Williams 2003, 390-91). According to Grout and Williams, “He had a Midas gift of turning everything into the kind of melody that people could remember and sing” (2003, 391). This melodic gift is found in both his Italian operas and his French operas, allowing his success to carry over into foreign territory.

In 1838, like Rossini and Bellini before him, Donizetti was invited by the Parisians to compose for their theaters (Grout and Williams 2003, 391). Composing three major works for the genre of grand opera by 1843, Donizetti found success in not only the *Théâtre-Italien*, but also at the *Opéra* and the *Opéra-Comique* (Locke 1990, 56). Donizetti’s works for the *Opéra* “give striking evidence of the impress of Parisian taste: large ensembles are prominently featured, scenes are organized more fluidly, cabalettas are fewer and the orchestration is richer” (Locke 1990, 56). Though the *cabaletta –,* “a fiery allegro with virtuoso vocal effects and a climactic close” – was a common musical form for arias in Donizetti, he had the sense to lessen his use of it in favor of what French audiences preferred: prominent features of large ensembles (Grout and Williams 2003, 391).

Donizetti wrote *La fille du régiment*, his first opera set to a French text, for the *Opéra-Comique* in 1840 (Smart and Budden 2001). While most of his operas fell out of the repertory by the twentieth century, *La fille du régiment* was among a handful of

works which remained popular continually (Smart and Budden 2001). There were several contributing factors to the success of *La fille.* Part of its appeal had to do with Donizetti's blending of national styles. He accomplished an unprecedented assimilation of French and Italian styles, as outlined in author William Ashbrook's book, *Donizetti and his Operas*:

> No other score composed by a non-Frenchman for the Opéra-Comique has come even close to matching the record of *La fille du régiment* on that stage. […] His ready sensibility and his knack for promptly assimilating stylistic elements into his musical vocabulary allowed him to catch the true Gallic tone at many moments in *La fille*, and yet the score remains at heart deeply Donizettian. […] [W]ith *La fille* he created his own international style at his first attempt. (1982, 436)

Parts of the score which hold fast to Donizetti's Italian roots are found in his melodies and rhythms, which have been said to resemble that of Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868). (Grout and Williams 2003, 391). At the same time, various moments and scenes within the opera contribute to its long-lasting fame and favorability among the French. One such scene is when Marie sings the regimental song of France, "Chacun le sait." This aria encapsulates "true Gallic tone" through its consistent emphasis on the lyrics in every phrase, in both syllabic and melismatic passages. For a long time, early French opera was hesitant to include virtuosic singing due to the country's heavy prioritization of "fidelity to articulate language" in music (Taruskin 2010, 97). Donizetti adapted to this national school of thought by maintaining the integrity of the French language used in "Chacun le sait," even while incorporating elaborate cadenzas which were of a more Italianate flavor.

Ashbrook describes the role of Marie as being fit for "coloratura sopranos who have a flair for comedy," and points out her aria "Chacun le sait" as a "moment of prominence" (Ashbrook 1982, 437). Writing a cadenza at the start of the piece which,

sung a cappella, spans the full range of two octaves, Donizetti immediately sets the tone for “Chacun le sait” to be impressively grand, and for the character to be quite confident while performing it as she rallies the troupes. The energy of the aria remains high from start to finish, though dynamic contrasts are featured in the refrain to stress the most vigorous exclamations. The performer of this aria must carry herself and sing as though she is not only herself excited, but also trying to thrill her audience. In the opera, Marie is joined on stage by the soldiers who raised her, who sing as her “chorus” during the interludes of this celebratory piece. Consolidating the performance to a solo voice and piano should not discourage the vocalist from singing with great passion and enthusiasm.

Donizetti made his mark on French vocal music in part thanks to *La fille du régiment*, inspiring many who succeeded him. French composer Georges Bizet also made an important impact on music—especially opera—in his very short life. Being born to two musicians in one of the nineteenth century’s music capitals of the world undoubtedly helped him to succeed as a composer, though this success wavered during his lifetime (MacDonald 2001). His last and most prominently known opera, *Carmen* (1875), became an early opera of unusually high distinction in 1870s Paris by revolutionizing the operatic genre for the French (Grout and Williams 2003, 474). Though Bizet did not live to see this composition’s enormous success, his legacy is still alive today in large part due to that singular opera.

The musical works of Georges Bizet that survive include six operas, some two dozen songs, several choral works, two symphonies, and many piano works, most of which never entered the pianist’s canon (MacDonald 2001). According to Hugh MacDonald, “His early piano works reflect the Parisian virtuoso school and his own

brilliant gifts as a pianist" (2001). It is important to note the skill of Bizet's piano composition because it can be heard in the accompaniments of his *mélodies*. According to author Carol Kimball, "The accompaniments to his songs are filled with sensitive details, and colorful rhythmic patterns" (2005, 170). This is exhibited in songs like "Chanson d'avril" where the accompaniment contains sixteenth-note patterns in both hands for the duration of the song, creating an almost "rushed" or hurried feel to the piece. Meanwhile, the vocalist tells of her urgency to enjoy the beautiful day ahead of her, a sentiment well-captured by the eagerness in the accompaniment.

Bizet's songs as well as his operas reflect the strong influence of his teacher at the Conservatoire, composer Charles Gounod (1818-1893), whose opera *Faust* (1859) became the most popular French opera ever written (Grout and Williams 2003, 381). Bizet told Gounod in later years, "You were the beginning of my life as an artist. I spring from you" (MacDonald 2001). Bizet's song "Chanson d'avril" was written "in the Gounod tradition" (Dean 1965, 153) with its gracefully flowing melody and an accompaniment which, through "subtly changing harmonies" (Cox 1960, 203), avoids harsh dissonance and thus supports the voice well by remaining unobtrusive (Hall 1953, 142-143). Yet "Chanson d'avril" has "a refinement peculiarly Bizet's own," particularly in the way he does not shy away from abrupt modulation such as the change from F major to D-flat major in the refrain (Dean 1965, 153). In taking this risk, Bizet did not compromise the tonality or pleasantry of the song; he merely dramatized the moment by taking it to an unexpected place harmonically, something which became "happily characteristic" of Bizet's writing in years to come (Dean 1965, 153).

"Chanson d'avril" was included in Bizet's set of songs called *Vingt mélodies*, published in 1873. The authors of *A French Song Companion* suggest that this song is a standout in Bizet's repertoire, calling it "delightfully fresh…with its wonderful tune" (Johnson and Stokes 2000, 30). The melody begins in the soprano's mid-range, but it moves quickly and soars into the *secondo passaggio* as the word "*amour*" is repeated with passion and emphasis in both the first and second strophe. Hints of Bizet's taste for dramatic music are evidenced in these moments, which permit the voice to crescendo with more intensity and vibrancy than is typical when singing a *mélodie*. This lack of classical restraint in only specified parts of the song produce a "blossoming" effect, where the performer's voice seems to shimmer with extra resonance for just a moment before returning to the *mezzo-forte* dynamic range later in the piece.

Incorporating theatrical sound in *mélodie* was somewhat unique to Bizet's song composition. In an overview of Bizet's songs, authors Johnson and Stokes defend the composer's choice to incorporate theatrical moments within his *mélodies.*

> If music of this quality is hackwork, it is a pity that there is not more of it to be found in French song. The same genius which delights and moves us in *Carmen* can be heard at work here. […] Bizet simply places most of his mélodies in something of a dramatic context, for this is how his mind works as a composer for the stage. (2000, 29)

Part of the "genius" of "Chanson d'avril" is that, while there is some evidence of this "dramatic context," the entire song is not written as though it should be treated like an aria. Much of the words, which emphatically urge the listener to "get up" ("lêve-toi") and take advantage of a dewy spring morning, are to be sung with energy and expression, yet not without restraint; the dynamic markings only reach *forte* in a couple of opportune

moments within the song. This "blossoming" effect of the voice is quite pleasurable to the listening ear and perfectly appropriate for a song of spring.

According to author James Harding, nineteenth-century composers like Bizet "paved the way" for younger composers like Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) to "reaffirm the supremacy of French art" (1990, 123). A firstborn son to two French natives in St. Germain-en-Laye, Debussy was not born into a musical family; his father wished to "make a sailor of him" (Lesure and Howat 2001). It was his father's sister, Clementine, who arranged Debussy's first piano lessons (Lesure and Howat 2001). Possibly the most influential piano teacher in Debussy's early life was Madame Antoinette Mauté de Fleurville (1823-1883) (Johnson and Stokes 2000, 93). She was the mother-in-law of Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), a poet to whose texts Debussy later wrote many songs (Lockspeiser 1962, 23). It was thanks to Mme Mauté that Debussy was admitted to the Conservatoire by age ten, where he could work to further develop his own piano style (Johnson and Stokes 2003, 93).

Mme Mauté is said to have studied with Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), who spent much of his later career in Paris (Nichols 1992, 96). This connection between the two composers likely plays into their similarities in piano composition. "[T]he creation of the Debussyan piano stands out, like the creation of the Chopin piano, as a unique artistic phenomenon in the history of music, radically changing the musician's whole conception of what the instrument can be made to convey" (Lockspeiser 1962, 158-9). While Chopin's virtuosity was confined to the piano alone, Debussy's unique talent extended to composing for the voice and piano together.

Debussy is so well known for his piano works that one could easily forget he also wrote a successful opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), and many beautiful *mélodies*. As in his piano compositions, evidence of revolutionary ideas is found in his *mélodies*. In this case, Debussy changed the musician's conception of what the voice and piano can convey when working together to tell a story. Debussy composed the *mélodie* "Paysage sentimental" along with a series of other songs between 1880-1883, just before winning the Paris Conservatoire's *Prix de Rome* and finding clearer direction with his compositions (Vallas and O'Brien 1973). These earlier songs indicate that Debussy was not always unconventional in his musical style, as stated by author Edward Lockspeiser:

> Reminisces of Borodin […] and also of Massenet float through these early evocations of nature, the style of which is more fluent than independent. […] Harmony and vocal writing are still orthodox, but there is a noticeable sensitiveness to the poetry's underlying associations. (1962, 121-2)

The poetry and its relationship to music is what Debussy is known to have a keen sense about. This set him apart from other composers of song from the beginning of his career (Bernac 1970, 154). It has been said that "Debussy's love of music and love of nature were one and the same" (Trezise 2003, 151). This is evidenced in a multitude of his songs written to texts about nature, often telling a story about life as scenes of nature are described in detail. "Paysage sentimental," a setting of a poem by Paul Bourget (1852-1935), has its own category within this trend; as the singer paints a mental image of a lifeless, cold, wintry scene, a story of death and bittersweet memories is implied. The mood of the piece is best depicted by a line from the song: "heureux melancholiquement" (happy in a melancholy way).

Composed in ABA form, the B section gives way to the melancholy of the text, while the A section begins and ends with a happier tone. In the A section, the vocalist

recalls a pleasant winter memory, likely of romance, while the melody ebbs and flows over a wide range of notes, covering the span of D-flat4-F5 in a single phrase. The accompaniment sounds almost dance-like in rhythm, repeating a mostly pentatonic melodic theme in F major until the B section begins. In the B section there is modulation throughout, and the tempo alternates between slowing down and speeding up. The subject of mortality is introduced to the text in this section, while uncertainty of tone in both the melody and the accompaniment implies that the performer has not entirely made peace with the fact that her memories are of things that are no more.

When the A section returns, the lyrics reveal that the person the performer has fixated on exists only in her memories. Remembering this person nevertheless gives her a happiness "buried deep within her soul" (from the text of the piece). Perhaps the most striking part of Debussy's composition is the ascending melodic line in the A section, which reaches a sustained A5 while the vocalist decreases in volume to pianissimo. Both times this is sung, the performer sounds as though she is floating gracefully above the heartache she feels by reminiscing on these pleasant memories.

The overall effect of this intricate musical storytelling is part of what makes Debussy such a prominent composer, as is highlighted by the authors of *A French Song Companion*:

> If there is one composer who seems to encapsulate both the most delicate and passionate aspects of the *mélodie*, whose command of literature ranges from the lyrics of the salon to the greatest of French poetry, […] and whose musical mastery is equal to the demands of the greatest texts, it is this mysterious man. (Johnson and Stokes 2000, 92)

Though such "delicacy" can be produced by most musical instruments, it is possible that Debussy recognized the human voice as one which could uniquely astound the listener

when it is performing in a way that seems to defy human nature. If the vocalist maintains breath support very low in the body, sings a pure vowel, and avoids any tension in the tongue or jaw, the softest singing in the *voce di testa* range can still produce a resonance which rings throughout the performance space (Miller 1996, 143).

For concluding thoughts on Debussy, I will borrow from Pierre Bernac (1899-1979), composer and author of *The Interpretation of French Song*: “No musician…had greater mastery in creating the mysterious alloy of music and poetry than Debussy. […] In Debussy’s vocal works…it is easy for the singers…to serve the musician first, without betraying the poet” (1970, 154). As a singer of his vocal works, my focus will be on bringing out the dynamic contrasts composed into the melody, trusting that in doing so, I will appropriately convey the expression of the text.

Debussy had several contemporaries who joined him in the quest to write French *mélodie*, including Erik Satie (1866-1925), of whom Debussy was a friend and admirer (Kimball 2005, 204). Eventually, they were succeeded by a new group of French composers who became commonly known as *Les Six*: Georges Auric (1899-1983), Louis Durey (1888-1979), Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983), and Francis Poulenc. Poulenc is considered by many to be the “last great proponent” of French art song (Kimball 2005, 225). Born in 1899, he was privileged to learn from the works of Donizetti, Bizet, and Debussy. Poulenc wrote a few operas and composed songs throughout his career, totaling about 150 *mélodies* (Kimball 2005, 225).

When placing a Poulenc song immediately after a Debussy song in a program, there are a few things which need to be considered by the vocalist. One of these is the

changes in the vocal line. Debussy used chromaticism far more than Poulenc in all his compositions, and many of Debussy's melodies move consistently throughout the piece, whether fast or slow; Poulenc, on the other hand, has some melodies which seem to linger on every note, exposing the performer's intonation and diction. While achieving the correct melodic line in a song by Debussy can be challenging, it is not necessarily more difficult than singing a Poulenc *mélodie*, as vulnerability of the voice and intent of expression are often enhanced in the latter.

Poulenc was born into a wealthy family and "attributed his artistic heritage" to his mother's side, a family of artist-craftsmen (Chimènes and Nichols 2001). It was his mother who introduced Francis to the piano when he was five years old, though he tragically lost both his parents by the end of his teenage years (Chimènes and Nichols 2001). His teacher and "spiritual mentor" during these years of loss (from 1914 to 1917) was Ricardo Viñes (1875-1943), whose influence Poulenc affirmed "determined his career as pianist and composer" (Chimènes and Nichols 2001). From Viñes, he learned "a clear but colourful style of piano playing," and much of his piano music was composed in the early 1930s, "a time when he was reappraising the materials of his art" (Chimènes and Nichols 2001).

It was also during the 1930s that Poulenc formed a duo with the composer and baritone Pierre Bernac, for whom two-thirds of Poulenc's songs were composed (Kimball 2005, 225). His song cycle *Fiançailles pour rire* was written as a setting of poems by Louise de Vilmorin (1902-1969). Bernac points out in his book that, with *Fiançailles pour rire*, "Poulenc was attempting to write a work for a woman's voice comparable to *Tel jour, telle nuit*" (1977, 137), which is characterized as Poulenc's finest cycle (Kimball

2005, 227). "Fleurs" is the last song in this cycle and stands on its own as deeply profound with or without the preceding songs.

The significance of "Fleurs" can be attributed in part to its poignant mood, and to how the composer's music intentionally depicts such a mood through texture and lyricism. Author Carol Kimball writes the following regarding the piece:

> An ineffable melancholy permeates this song. A woman burns souvenirs from a romance that is finished, but at the same time lovingly remembers the relationship. The moment is a microcosm – a world of memory capsulized. […] The piano accompaniment is a characteristic Poulenc "sound print" of stacked chords, reminiscent of "Dans l'herbe." Voice and piano are closely linked through the singer's melody, which appears simultaneously within the chords of the piano, creating a closely knit texture that is beautifully effective. (2005, 229)

The chromaticism which is so prevalent in Debussy's "Paysage Sentimental" does not show prominence in Poulenc's song. Rather, the "closely-knit texture" and color of the stacked chords played amid the primarily tonal vocal line are what give the *mélodie* a contemporary edge. According to Roger Nichols, "Poulenc never questioned the supremacy of the tonal-modal system" (Nichols 2001). A letter written by the composer in 1942 presents this idea as a definitive statement: "I know perfectly well I'm not one of those composers who have made harmonic innovations like […] Debussy, but I think there's room for new music which doesn't mind using other people's chords" (Nichols 2001). Perhaps it was Poulenc's keen sense of intuition for song composition that made this more traditionalist approach work so well for him. The plaintive and passionate "Fleurs" feels completely natural to sing, and unlike in Bizet's "Chanson d'avril," the words are set to music in a way that does not force the singer to think too hard about which syllables should be stressed.

The song does not have an accompaniment introduction; it begins right away with both voice and piano, who remain closely linked until the last few measures of the piece, when the accompaniment finishes the song. The music is set to the text in such a way that the emotion behind the text can be instantly felt through the music. In his *Diary of my Songs*, translated by Winifred Radford in 1985, Poulenc notes that “Fleurs” “should be sung with *humility*, the lyricism coming from within” (56). To convey expression of emotion in this way, the performer should try to connect with the sentiment behind the song in a personal way. “Ineffable melancholy,” as Kimball put it, can come from a variety of experiences. The kind described in the poem to which “Fleurs” is set comes from acknowledging something wonderful has ended, while at the same time refusing to succumb to the notion that one must regret it ever happened. I ended my first long-term relationship while I was still in love, and the emotional pain I experienced for a long time afterwards felt truly impossible to describe. We had written each other many letters over the course of a year, and I saved as many as I could until about three months after the relationship ended. I remember burning each one in a fire in my backyard one day, realizing that I needed to move on; as I did, only loving memories flooded my mind. This experience is what I dwell on when performing “Fleurs.”

Following the death of Poulenc in 1963, “the *mélodie* ceased to have any significant impact as a vocal form” (Kimball 2005, 158). One could argue that the song form reached its culmination of everything it stood for through Poulenc and the other members of *Les Six*. Through this group and through the many French song composers who preceded them, including Gounod and Fauré, there is a common thread of intentionality behind their marrying words with music, voice with the piano, and the art

of poetry with the art of song. “French song blends precision with lyricism and demands that the performer be able to communicate with both elegance and wit” (Kimball 2005, 158). Communicating with elegance and wit, then, will be my primary goal while performing this section of the program.

Spirituals by African American Female Composers

Approaching the second half of the twentieth century, the program shifts in focus to American music, specifically spirituals that were written or arranged by composers Undine Smith Moore (1908-1989) and Margaret Bonds (1913-1972). Pedagogically speaking, there are many benefits to singing music within this genre. Most of the songs are written in English by American composers, so the singer can devote her attention to improving vowel integrity and articulation. Additionally, the melodies are usually written in an approachable manner to be learned quickly by various communities of singers. The vocalist can put less work into overcoming melodic challenges and spend more time improving breath management, phonation, and resonation.

African American spirituals are significant for many other reasons besides improving vocal performance skills. Students performing spirituals should first and foremost develop an awareness about the oppressed people from whom these songs originated. Slaves in America, who were primarily imported from West Africa beginning in 1619, sang their own religious songs a cappella to "[give] voice to the deep sorrow experienced in slavery and to the longing and determination for another life" (Turck 2008, 18). Many of these slave songs carried a hidden meaning; they were sung to communicate coded messages to brothers, sisters, and friends who were running away to seek freedom (Turck 2008, 18). When African slaves adopted Christian faith in the Western World, they adopted the belief in a "more direct access to the High God through song and praise," making it possible for them to emerge with a new song for their people

now known as the African American spiritual (Floyd 1995, 39). Though religious services were sometimes banned for slaves, they often met in secret to sing these spirituals (Turck 2008, 18), songs which permitted them freedom of expression like they had in their homeland (Floyd 1995, 39). Later, the songs that gave hope and strength to those in slavery provided the same for people going through the Civil Rights Movement (Turck 2008, 19). These spirituals were passed down orally for a long time, with no written arrangements existing until the turn of the twentieth century, decades after the Civil War and the ratification of the thirteenth amendment in 1865 abolishing slavery in the United States (Bell 2018).

One year after the Civil War ended, Fisk University opened in Nashville, Tennessee. George White (1838-1895) and former slave Ella Sheppard (1851-1914) – the school's music professor and assistant choir director, respectively – were committed to building a university that would welcome Black people (Turck 2008, 45). To raise money for the college, they planned a concert tour using White's own savings with a few Fisk music students who later became known as the "Jubilee Singers" (Turck 2008, 46). These concerts began with classical music and were followed by slave songs and spirituals. "Their spirituals won the hearts of audiences" in Ohio, and eventually, the group raised enough money to support the college despite its continued struggle with discrimination and violent attacks (Turck 2008, 46). Fisk, Spelman College, and Howard University remain among the best known of over one hundred Historically Black colleges today, as students from these schools became leaders in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Turck 2008, 64).

Early efforts to promote turning spirituals into standard music repertoire were led by the author, sociologist, and educator W. E. B. DuBois (1868-1963), who attended Fisk University in the 1880s; and by the composer-performer Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949). DuBois was a pioneer in his field for rejecting the idea of inferiority of Blacks, and for viewing Black people as a "distinctive and creative group" (Morris 2007, 504). He helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909, which continues to support and defend civil rights for Black Americans today (Horne and Young 2001, x). Though his views were not adopted by white sociologists of his day, DuBois pressed forward, compiling a massive scholarly output on race throughout his life (Morris 2007, 510). His voice was heard for fourteen years through his monthly journal, *The Crisis*, demanding full civil rights and complete integration long before the Civil Rights Movement officially took place (Horne and Young 2001, x).

H. T. Burleigh was a composer whose grandfather taught him many songs he had sung while enslaved in Maryland (Bell 2018). With the help of a few important women in his life, including his mother's employer and her friend, Burleigh received the opportunity to meet and share his grandfather's songs with Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904). After hearing Burleigh singing spirituals, Dvořák encouraged Burleigh to preserve the melodies and share them with the world (Bell 2018). Burleigh arranged about fifty spirituals for concert-hall performance and lectured about them throughout the United States (Bell 2018), becoming an "early African-American pioneer of the recital hall spiritual" (Plant 2005). This inspired many American composers in the twentieth century to continue the practice of transporting spirituals to the concert stage, including Undine Smith Moore and Margaret Bonds (Bell 2018).

Undine Smith Moore was a teacher most of her life as well as a composer and arranger (Harris 1976, 6). She was born and raised in southern Virginia during the early twentieth century when one of the only places Black people could perform or study music was in church (Brunelle 2004, 39). She completed her undergraduate college education at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee before continuing her studies in music and piano performance at Columbia University, Manhattan School of Music, and Eastman School of Music (Harris 1976, 6). “Spirituals were among her earliest musical memories,” and her compositional style following her formal musical education is known to be deeply rooted in her Christian heritage (Mattis 2001). In addition to composing and arranging solo spirituals, Moore notated melodies passed down from her grandparents in many choral arrangements, and in her oratorio *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr* (1981), based on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Mattis 2001).

Moore’s arrangement of the spiritual “Come Down Angels” is fast-paced and lively, filled with unexpected dynamic shifts amid a tuneful, simple melody. The fiery energy is appropriate for a song about summoning angels from Heaven; thus, singing with passion is necessary to deliver a strong performance of the piece. Moore’s arrangement takes a unique form; it begins with a double refrain before introducing the verse, then alternates between verse and refrain until the piece culminates in a finale C section. The refrain is repeated four times, with different dynamics notated each time. The verse is more restrained, as the vocal range decreases and the dynamic level remains *mezzo forte*. There are added challenges in the C section toward the end of the arrangement, when vocal acrobatics are required through octave jumps and that require blending the flageolet and head voice registers of the soprano range. The vocalist

repeatedly declares, “Let God’s saints come in!” This lyric ends the song, the vocal line ends on a sustained A5 (the tonic), and the piano plays a grand outro that lands on a prominent A major chord. The combination of lyric and music reinforces a positive theme full of grandeur and majesty.

Moore’s music takes a much more solemn and peaceful tone in the spiritual, “Is There Anybody Here That Loves My Jesus?” Dissonance and color are added to the blocked chords in the accompaniment, as the speaker earnestly seeks an answer to the title question. As in “Come Down Angels,” this arrangement begins with a double refrain (A), introduces a B section, then repeats the refrain with modifiers at the end (AA’). In the B section, the lyrics read, “This world’s a wilderness of woe, so let us all to glory go.” This moment is emphasized by changes in the chord progression and dynamics of the accompaniment as well as in the vocal line, implying that it is a significant line in the piece. It is possible that the intent here is to remind those who suffer on earth that, in the Christian faith, everlasting joy and freedom are offered in the afterlife to all who love Jesus. Moore’s arrangement of the spiritual closes with a declarative statement again reinforced by both voice and piano ending on the tonic, as in “Come Down Angels.”

Undine Smith Moore and Margaret Bonds lived in the same era, though their paths never crossed. Bonds was born in Chicago and began musical studies with her mother, whose home was a gathering place for young Black writers, artists, and musicians (Jackson and de Lerma 2020), including Will Marion Cook (1869-1944) and Florence Price (1887-1953). Both Cook and Price taught her composition in later years, and in 1939 she attended the Juilliard Graduate School for piano and composition after

receiving BM and MM degrees from Northwestern University (Jackson and de Lerma 2020).

In 1933, Bonds became the first Black soloist to appear with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, championing the integration and celebration of Black artists in classical music, which at the time was a nearly all-white domain (Manheim 2003, 22). Throughout the 1930s, she performed, composed, worked as an accompanist, and taught music to several students, including a young Ned Rorem (b. 1923) (Manheim 2003, 22). During this same time, she opened the Allied Arts Academy, a music and dance school aimed at Black Chicago schoolchildren (Manheim 2003, 23). Her lifetime contributions to both classical and popular music genres were substantial, and her spirituals are among her best-known works (Jackson and de Lerma 2020).

Bonds arranged some spirituals that fall into a category of text type known as "Sorrow Songs." According to author Samuel A. Floyd, these spirituals "speak of the past and present trials and tribulations suffered by the slaves and their Savior" (1995, 41). W. E. B. DuBois expanded on this view when he said: "through all the sorrow of the Sorrow Songs (Spirituals) there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things. The minor cadences of despair change often to triumph and calm confidence" (DuBois 1989, 186). This change described by DuBois is exactly what happens in Bonds' arrangement of the Sorrow Song, "Lord I Just Can't Keep from Cryin'" (1946). In every verse, the speaker describes the all-encompassing sorrow within her heart, uncontrollably filling her eyes with tears. In the final cadences of the piece, however, the accompaniment shifts from minor to major, as if after allowing herself to expose her emotions, the speaker finally found relief. It is possible that this is an allusion to the biblical teaching that God

can offer spiritual healing to those who mourn, as in Matthew 5:4 (“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted”) or Matthew 11:28 (“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”).

An encouraging and redemptive theme prevails throughout the spiritual “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hand” (1963). Unlike many spirituals that primarily point to peace in the afterlife, the message of this song provides hope for people on earth today and every day by highlighting God’s sovereignty and care over the earth and its creatures. Bonds’ arrangement begins very simply and continues pleasantly for much of the song, as if the words were being sung to a discouraged child in need of reassurance. In the final verse, when the lyrics shift in focus from the collective to the individual (“He’s got you and me right in His hand”), the intensity of the music is heightened dramatically. The accompanist plays fuller chords which span the range of the piano, while the vocalist sings with greater strength nearly an octave higher than the original melody was placed in the first three verses. In effect, the listener is pulled in a new direction emotionally, from merely admiring the music to resonating with it on a personal level.

In both of Bonds’ arrangements described thus far, there is evidence of jazz influence, likely stemming from her interactions with her composition teacher, Will Marion Cook. Cook composed popular music, Black musical comedies, and orchestral music, “dramatically transforming” these very diverse genres during his career (Carter 2013). He studied composition with Dvořák in 1893 and proceeded to produce Broadway’s first Black musical-comedy sketch, *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk*, in 1898 (Carter 2013). Bonds once wrote, “Even now, when I write something for choir and it’s jazzy and bluesy, spiritual and Tchaikovsky all rolled up into one, I laugh to

myself, 'that is Will Marion Cook'" (1970, 192). In "He's Got the Whole World," evidence of this influence is found primarily in the heavy use of dominant and major sevenths in the accompaniment, including in borrowed chords. In "Lord I Just Can't Keep from Cryin'," there is harmonic dissonance from the beginning, though it is less experimental and more intentional, to provide tension in the piece which dominates the mood until release is found in the shift from minor to major.

In 1963, world-renowned contralto Marian Anderson (1897-1993) performed an arrangement of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" at the Lincoln Memorial for the 1963 March on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famed "I Have a Dream" speech (Jones 2003, 2). Two years later, the internationally acclaimed African American soprano Leontyne Price (b. 1927) performed Bonds' arrangements of "Lord I Just Can't Keep from Cryin'" and "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" in succession at her recital debut at Carnegie Hall. This recital was given in the same year that Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, after campaigns and marches for the right to vote without restriction resulted in many beatings and deaths of Black Americans (Turck 2008, 83-84). Price's decision to close her recital with these two spirituals inspired my decision to do the same, in part due to her outstanding and moving performance.

Price demonstrated full knowledge of the stylistic differences and similarities between performing her operatic repertoire and performing a spiritual. Both are suitable for the classical genre and require skillful negotiation of the head voice register with natural vibrato and efficient breath management. A spiritual, however, often needs to be sung with a special focus on the lyrics and on the emotion or attitude behind them (Plant 2005). Rhythms can be altered slightly, notes can be improvised, and the use of

commercial vocal ornaments such as scoops is more often encouraged. There is also license at times to intentionally mix in chest voice with head voice a bit more when singing in the mid-range of a spiritual.

The purpose of these changes should be to communicate feeling and power within the music, and to try to do justice to the style of the melodies as they were "performed" or sung by those from whom they originated. An article in *The Choral Journal* reads that "the original melodies and characteristic rhythmic vitality found in Mrs. Moore's arrangements…assure us that much of their real import is still present and that fairly authentic performances can be realized" (Harris 1976, 7). The rhythm is indeed a crucial part of these songs, especially because the musical history of West African music is deeply rooted in oral traditions with rhythmic and percussive qualities, including dancing (Turck 2008, 13-14). Syncopations in "Come Down Angels" should not be ignored, nor should sustained notes in "Lord I Just Can't Keep from Cryin'" be rushed or cut short.

In an article about singing African American spirituals in the twenty-first century, author Lourin Plant reflects on racial barriers in classical vocal music and defends the necessity of including spirituals in music education and performance today (2005). After describing in detail how Burleigh and DuBois advocated for the performance of spirituals, she writes,

> Spirituals continue to speak and challenge all singers to seek the emotional center of the truth belonging to those whose spirits first gave up their cries in agony and despair. Spirituals urge us to find hope in every phrase and to express it. These are fitting lessons for all Americans. (2005)

A key phrase in the above statement addresses the matter of seeking truth. Many agree that racism in America is not only a thing of the past, but also something that must be addressed today; yet vastly different solutions are being offered, causing further division

among our nation. Many are seeking a nation which practices what it preaches about equality, but in a pluralistic society, not all are seeking a unifying truth which leads us there. The unifying truth of the Bible says that putting one's trust in God produces a heart of humility, which casts out prejudice and instead considers others to be better and more highly regarded than oneself (Philippians 2:3). This theme of trusting in God, found in all four spirituals in the program, gave those who originally sang them the strength they needed to carry on with faith that they could leave the world better than they found it if they persevered through the agony and despair they experienced.

Such strength and spirit can be found in the music of Moore and Bonds, two courageous women who, through their many contributions to society through music, dared to defy negative stereotypes about Black women in American society during the twentieth century. While they and their heritage were brazenly looked down upon by fellow Americans (Turck 2008, 21), they rose above the hate and became legends in the field of music. By performing their music in my vocal recital, I hope to promote this same message while continuing to do my part to advocate for mistreated people. Plant writes that "all voice teachers should consider singing spirituals on their programs" and charges us to "allow each performance to be part of a conscious effort to reconcile the division in our performing traditions" (2005). This is how I hope to be a light and an example in the lives of my current and future music students.

Conclusion

There is an invisible but necessary string tying this entire program together: from Cavalli to Mozart, from Haydn to Debussy, and from Donizetti to Bonds, each piece in the recital enhances both the singer's pedagogical progress and her performance skills. Though there is not an overarching theme for the program, the music to be performed was not randomly chosen; there was a process of carefully examining each piece to ensure that it met certain criteria. First, the piece needed to encourage the vocalist to use strong, healthy pedagogical practices while performing, such as balanced vocal releases and pure-vowel diction. Secondly, the piece needed to feature something stylistically unique which would allow the vocalist to display a high level of performance skills, such as an emotional cadenza or a dramatic story. With these criteria met, the performer is put in an optimal position to demonstrate throughout the program a mastering of the art of singing.

Whether the vocalist is singing an aria, an art song, or a spiritual, precision in vocal technique is demanded. The types of techniques accentuated by a piece vary from section to section, but the basic principles remain the same throughout. Such principles include proper use of *appoggio* or balanced breathing, free resonance, an optimally low laryngeal position, access to head voice through both the *primo* and *secondo passaggio*, and tension-free articulators that can produce pure vowels during singing. *Appoggio* is achieved by combining the use of primary muscles of respiration (such as the intercostals and diaphragm) with the use of secondary muscles of respiration (postural muscles) to

produce a sound with an ideal amount of support and breath pressure (McCoy 2019, 137). *Appoggio* helps to achieve a clear and resonant tone, while “free resonators” in the human voice such as the vocal tract are used for sound intensification and enhancement (McCoy 2019, 49). Maintaining a low laryngeal position during phonation allows the singer to more easily access the head register, which takes pressure off the laryngeal muscles and relies more heavily on the respiratory muscles to carry sound further and provide intensity control. Finally, since balanced breathing generally results in lower-body support for singing, *appoggio* typically allows the vocalist to avoid unnecessary tension in the tongue and jaw, contributing to a purer resonance with free and natural vibrato.

Whether Handel’s “Va godendo” or Moore’s “Come Down Angels” is being performed, *appoggio* and other classical vocal techniques previously discussed should be applied to the best of one’s ability. There are differences, however, in the pedagogical choices a vocalist makes regarding diction, articulation, and registration. Besides obvious variants in diction that derive from singing in foreign languages, vowel modification changes depending on the pitch being sung, the context of the phrase, and the length for which the vowel is sustained. The vocal performer should avoid believing that she can treat every high note the same way without taking phrasing or diction into account. Similarly, voice teachers should be flexible when teaching methods of vowel modification to students, adapting or adjusting the specific modification for the student as needed.

As a performer, the vocalist will be challenged to carefully interpret each piece through vocal inflection, facial expression, and body language. While there are many

songs in the program which could be categorized as emotionally "sad" or downhearted, the facial expression should not be the same for every piece, nor should the vocalist hold one expression for the entirety of any piece. When singing Cavalli's "Speranze," for example, the vocalist should begin with a look of despair and communicate this emotion through her singing, perhaps by emphasizing certain words such as "partitevi" (depart) when declaring that she does not want to hope anymore. However, when the music and message suddenly change halfway through the strophe, so should the expression. There should be determination and urgency communicated through stronger consonants in the words, through a stronger stance in the body, and through the change in facial expression from despair to hope as the speaker emphatically declares: "I want to live" (from text).

There is no such determination found in the emotion behind Poulenc's "Fleurs." However, though there is bitterness, there is also a noticeable lack of regret, as the speaker is fondly remembering her time with her lost love. Despair should not be reflected either, then, but instead a calm sort of melancholy which communicates that the speaker is at peace with her circumstances, much unlike in "Speranze." This same peaceful sadness is where the vocalist ought to arrive by the end of Debussy's "Paysage sentimental," but only after portraying a journey of emotions which begins by remembering sweet memories and transforms into mourning over the loss of her loved one. Other complex negative emotions are explored in other pieces within the program, including vengefulness in "Als Luise die Briefe," sorrow and deep distress in "Lord I Just Can't Keep from Cryin'," and desperation with longing in "Is There Anybody Here That Loves My Jesus?"

Communicating effectively through music performance is an exceptionally valuable skill, since people of all ages can be touched by it (Phillips 1992, 105). Live music often accompanies important events and holiday gatherings, in part because it has the power to create an environment filled with humanity and dignity, and to encourage solidarity and brotherly love among groups of friends and strangers alike. Creating such an environment requires hard work from the performer as well as genuine passion. The teacher-performer should seek, with diligence and zeal, to inspire young students to approach their music studies in a way that improves and enriches the lives of those around them.

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