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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Music

Joshua William Donaldson

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

May 2017

A GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

Joshua William Donaldson

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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Joshua William Donaldson

This thesis consists of a vocal performance recital and the accompanying program notes. The recital includes a variety of literature and styles, ranging from the Baroque to the Twentieth Century. The program notes for each selection include biographical information, analysis of the work, poetic analysis (when necessary), and performance concerns.

Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, Kansas

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

Graduate Recital

Joshua Donaldson, Tenor
assisted by
Barbara York, Piano

Saturday, February 4, 2017
Sharon K. Dean Recital Hall
7:30 p.m.

Program

Ombra Mai Fu	George Frideric Handel
from <i>Xerxes</i> , HWV 40	(1685-1759)
from <i>Liederkreis</i> , Op. 39	Robert Schumann
I. In der Fremde	(1810-1856)
II. Intermezzo	
III. Waldesgespräch	
IV. Die Stille	
V. Mondnacht	
<i>Histoires Naturelles</i>	Maurice Ravel
Le paon	(1875-1937)
Le grillon	

Intermission

<i>The Curlew</i>	Peter Warlock
	(1894-1930)
Emilia Cárdenas-Violin I	
Anthony Nelson-Violin II	
Dr. Raul Mungia-Viola	
Daniel Mungia-Cello	
Julie Penner-Flute	
José Salazar Pon-English Horn	
Megan Gabehart-Conductor	
When I Have Sung My Songs to You	Ernest Charles
	(1895-1984)

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Chapter I

OMBRA MAI FU FROM *XERXES*, HWV 40

“Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived...
I would uncover my head, and kneel down at his tomb!”
-Ludwig van Beethoven¹

Composer

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

Born in Halle, Germany, Handel did not grow up studying music. Handel's father opposed a future in music and wanted Handel to study law instead. He allowed him to take lessons from a local church organist despite his aversion to Handel's aptitude for music. Handel finally turned to music as a full-time endeavor after his father died in 1697. Handel joined the second violins of the Hamburg Opera House orchestra by the time he turned 18. It was not long before that Handel rose up and became the keyboardist for the orchestra.²

Handel met someone who greatly influenced his writing, Reinhard Keiser, during his time in the orchestra. Keiser was the conductor of the ensemble, and he was also a composer. Keiser was considered Germany's greatest opera composer at the time; he wrote 100 operas for the Hamburg Opera House alone. It was Keiser's use of instrumentation and florid arias that impacted Handel. He was so impressed that he emulated Keiser's style in his own operas.³

¹ John Paynter, *Companion to Contemporary Musical Thought* (London: Routledge, 1992).

² Joyce Bourne, “Handel,” in *Opera: The Great Composers and Their Masterworks* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 2008).

³ Bourne, “Handel.”

Keiser received a libretto that he was to compose an opera to in 1705. He gave the libretto to Handel after he lost interest, who then took it and created his first opera, *Almira*. He produced it in Hamburg, and within the same year, he produced three more operas. Handel decided it was time to travel to Italy after composing four operas, meeting the composers Arcangelo Corelli and both Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti while there. Handel quickly picked up the Italian style of composition due to his friendship with these men. Handel's operas began to be performed while he was still in Italy. *Rodrigo* was performed in Florence in 1707, and in 1709, *Agrippina* was performed in Venice. Handel was soon considered a genius.⁴

Handel set his sights on England once he decided he had gotten as much out of Italy as he could. He made the decision to move to England after visiting London to see a performance of his work. Handel served Queen Anne, King George I, and King George II from 1712 through 1727, with his annual pension increasing with each successor, solidifying his high reputation.⁵

Handel wrote a plethora of operas while employed as the director of the Royal Academy of Music from 1719 to 1729. He composed 14 operas during this time, which include three of his masterpieces: *Giulio Cesare* (1724), *Tamerlano* (1724), and *Rodelinda* (1725). Handel spent a few years traveling to Italy to listen to operas by his Italian colleagues after the Academy had closed. He moved to the new Covent Garden Theatre in 1734, and one year later he wrote two of his greatest operas, *Ariodante* and *Alcina*. Handel realized the interest in Italian opera was beginning to wane as the years went by, so he decided to do something new and developed the genre of dramatic oratorio.⁶

Handel continued to write operas; however, they were not receiving much public success, and his health began to decline. Handel suffered a stroke and went blind during the last ten years

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bourne, "Handel."

of his life. He continued to compose despite these conditions, and the result was his best known work, his oratorio *Messiah* in 1742. Handel continued to conduct oratorios and revise his scores, with the help of a friend, up until his death in 1759.⁷

⁷ Ibid.

Xerxes, HWV 40

Handel's *Xerxes* was an opera seria in three acts that was premiered in London in April 1738. True to his nature of favoring Italian libretti, the text is based on the libretto of the same name written by Nicola Minato for Francesco Cavalli in 1654. The libretto was adapted by Silvio Stampiglia for Giovanni Bononcini forty years later.⁸ It seemed that Handel knew Bononcini's work well because of some stylistic parallels, including the borrowing of the dramatic structure as well as thematic elements from Bononcini's score.⁹

Handel diverged from the typical formula of opera seria and inserted elements of opera buffa, with the most notable being the aria "Ombra Mai Fu." *Xerxes* steps outside of the box in terms of opera seria and opera buffa due to the interplay of the tragic and comic, the informal structure, and the intensely emotional language, making it ambiguous as to which genre the opera really belongs.¹⁰

Some people believe the opera was ill-received because it does not squarely fit into either category of opera seria or buffa. *Xerxes* was withdrawn from the stage after only five performances. The failure of the opera can be more attributed to the public's changing of taste rather than the performers. The lead role, after all, was performed by the famous castrato, Caffarelli. *Xerxes* was never revived again during Handel's life time. It was not until two centuries later that the opera received a second chance and was presented at the Göttingen Handel Festival, where it then began to receive new interpretations by theatre directors Joachim Herz and Nicholas Hytner.¹¹

The name of the opera refers to the Persian king who ruled from 486 BC to 465 BC, Xerxes the Great, but the story is only loosely based on the life of the king; the historical element is

⁸ George Handel, *Xerxes*, Conducted by Rafael Kubelik, Rec. October 1962, Orfeo International, 1998, *Naxos Music Library*, October 11, 2016.
<http://pittstate.naxosmusiclibrary.com/sharedfiles/booklets/OFO/booklet-C476983D.pdf>.

⁹ "Serse." *Handel and Hendrix in London*, The Handel House Trust Ltd., accessed 12 October 2016, <https://handelhendrix.org/learn/about-handel/opera-synopses/serse/>.

¹⁰ *Xerxes*.

¹¹ Ibid.

diminished to a single scene in Act II when the pontoon bridge over the Hellespont is mentioned. The story is driven more by the human interactions and misunderstandings that occur between the characters rather than historical accuracy.¹²

Plot

The opera begins with King Xerxes singing one of Handel's most famous arias, "Ombra Mai Fu." Xerxes is shown in a beautiful garden, where he is addressing his beloved plane tree as he admires its beauty.¹³ It is revealed that Xerxes is engaged to Amastre, but he falls in love with his brother's fiancée, Romilda, who is one of the daughters of Xerxes's army commander, Ariodate. He ordered Arsamene, his brother, to communicate his feelings to Romilda, where they are rejected. While Arsamene is relaying the message to Romilda, Romilda's sister, Atalanta, overhears the exchange and Romilda's rejection. Atalanta, who is in love with Arsamene, wishes Romilda would leave him for the king so that she would have a chance. Xerxes tries to convince Arsamene to marry Atalanta after being told of Romilda's rejection, but he is not interested.¹⁴

Arsamene's servant, Elviro, felt that Xerxes's fiancée should be made aware of the entire situation, so he informs Amastre of the events. Amastre dresses up as a man and goes to the king in an effort to thwart his intentions. It is then that she overhears Xerxes declare his love for Romilda. Atalanta lies to Romilda soon after and tells her that Arsamene has not been faithful to her, whereupon she declares that she cannot love him if this were true.¹⁵

Xerxes's efforts prove to be unsuccessful, and believing that he is carrying out the king's wishes, Ariodate weds Romilda and Arsamene. Xerxes is crushed, and in his jealousy, he orders his

¹² *Xerxes*.

¹³ Kimball, *Song*.

¹⁴ Bourne, "Handel."

¹⁵ Bourne, "Handel."

brother to kill his wife. Being in the room when the order is given, Amastre throws off her disguise and confronts Xerxes. He repents his deceitful ways and reconciles with her while approving his brother's new union.¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid.

“Ombra Mai Fu”¹⁷

Recitative

Frondi tenere e belle
del mio platano amato,
per voi resplenda il fato.
Tuoni, lampi, e procelle
non v’oltaggino mai la cara pace,
né giunga a profanarvi austro rapace.

Branches tender and beautiful
of my plane-tree beloved,
for you may-shine the fate.
Thunder, lightning, and storms
not you-disturb ever the dear peace,
nor may-arrive to profane you south-wind
rapacious

Aria

Ombra mai fu di vegetabile,
cara ed amabile soave piu.

Shadow never was a plant,
dear and pleasant gentle more.

Performance

Melodically speaking, this aria is very tuneful and easy for the ear to hear. The entire aria is diatonic, with only two chromatic notes in the entire piece. The entire melody is doubled in the violin, so there shouldn’t be any issues in not being able to find a specific pitch. The rhythm is also very simple and straightforward, with nothing being syncopated.

This aria initially seems very easy. The hidden concern is the immense amount of breath support that is required. This piece is relatively slow, and it is to be very legato and lush. The singer must be able to efficiently use their air in order to achieve this feat; even the slightest slip of control could ruin the melodic line. The singer comes in on a sustained C as the aria begins. Being able to shape one note at such a slow tempo can be deceptively difficult. The only other aspect that might be difficult, aside from breath support, would be the few leaps in the melody that seem to come out of nowhere. There are seven leaps that the singer must be prepared for, and they all leap between a perfect fifth and a major seventh. Keeping the timbre of the voice consistent will be the challenge, as well as maintaining the fluidity of the melodic line.

¹⁷ Bard Suverkrop, “Bononcini, Giovanni,” *IPA Source Ombra Mai Fu*, IPA Source LLC, 2016, accessed 12 October 2016.

Chapter II

LIEDERKREIS, OP. 39

“I have composed so much that it almost frightens me, but I can’t help it; I’m having to sing myself to death like a nightingale...The Eichendorff cycle is my most Romantic music ever, and contains much of you in it, dear Clara.”

-Robert Schumann¹⁸

Composer

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Born in Zwickau, Saxony in 1810, Robert Schumann was one of the most prominent figures during the early Romantic period. At an early age, Schumann was influenced by his father, Friederich August Schumann, who was a bookseller and publisher. Because of his father’s profession, he developed a keen literary sense, acquiring a good knowledge for both German and other foreign literature. After his father’s death, he decided to take a more practical approach and study law over music. He attended the University of Leipzig and was said to have not attended a single lecture because he was more preoccupied with reading and playing the piano. It was during this time at the university that he fell in love with the works of Franz Schubert. Schumann started pianistic studies under the pedagogue Friedrich Wieck, who proved to be one of the most significant influences on him.¹⁹

¹⁸ Kimball, *Song*.

¹⁹ George Hall, “Schumann, Robert.” *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed November 3, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6003>.

Schumann eventually transferred to the University of Heidelberg to continue his law studies. During one summer, he travelled to Switzerland and Italy, where he fell in love with Italian opera. It was during this venture that he heard Niccolò Paganini play in Frankfurt, which helped influence him to turn decisively to music.²⁰

When it comes to Schumann's music, he believed that *lieder* was inferior to instrumental music. Despite his belief, however, *lieder* ended up comprising over half of his total output. What set Schumann apart from his predecessors was the fact that he brought in the piano as a full participant in song. No longer was the piano there to just support the voice, but it was there to engage in a dialogue, becoming a true partner. While Schubert is known as the first composer to truly make the piano an equal participant, Schumann was the one who developed this practice in such a way that changed the future of the piano's role in *lieder*.

Overall, Schumann's songs were full of very elegant and lyrical melodies that were accompanied by harmonic material that illustrated the poetry and shared in the dialogue. He was one of the first composers to include extensive use of preludes, interludes, and postludes in the piano accompaniment. Many of his songs have an ambiguous tonal center. In order to achieve this sense of ambiguity, he carefully orders the relationships between the keys that the music progresses through. A common theme in his music is the fact that rhythmic *rubato* is essentially demanded by the performer to bring the piece to life and do it justice.²¹

It wasn't until later in his life that Schumann began composing *lieder*. Specifically, he had an outburst of compositions from 1840-1852. While there is no solid evidence, it is believed that Schumann began composing *lieder* because of what was going on in his personal life with Clara Wieck, the woman who would later become his wife.

Robert and Clara had been in love for years and had even made a secret pledge eventually to be wed, in spite of her father's objections. In the winter of 1839-40, when he began to write songs, their marriage was still far from certain. Furthermore, by no means all the poems Schumann set have to do with happy love, or even with love at all. Finally, and more

²⁰ Hall, "Schumann".

²¹ Kimball, *Song*.

importantly, Clara had already been a constant source of inspiration; he had composed much piano music with her in mind. His feelings toward her cannot logically be advanced to explain a change in genre, though they unquestionably continued to inspire him in whatever he did. But, although rejecting this explanation as facile and sentimental, one may still view Clara as a catalyst; she had been encouraging Robert to compose songs, for example, and he enjoyed hearing her sing.²²

In a letter to Clara on May 22, 1840, Schumann wrote, “By the way, I’ve heard that people are talking a lot about the Heine song cycle [op. 24], and I’m very glad about that. I can promise you, fiancée, that the Eichendorff ones are even more melancholy and happy than the short ones you know. I reveled in these poems—and in your handwriting too.” From this letter alone, it has been gathered that there was a significant connection between Op. 39 and Clara.²³ What has been interpreted from this comment is that Schumann may have been referring to the fact that Clara was the one who selected the poems and gave them to him. Also, Schumann may have also been referring to Clara being his muse and that she was the inspiration behind everything he composed.²⁴

After his compositional outburst, Schumann’s mental health began to decline rapidly. Suffering from a history of mental breakdowns, Schumann reached an all-time low in February of 1854 when he threw himself off of a bridge and into the Rhine. To his dismay, Schumann survived the fall, and when he was rescued, he asked to be put into a private asylum, where he spent the final two years of his life.²⁵

²² Richard Miller, *Singing Schumann: An Interpretive Guide for Performers* (New York: Oxford UP 2005).

²³ Jon W. Finson, *Robert Schumann: The Book of Songs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007).

²⁴ David Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff Liederkreis and the Genre of the Romantic Cycle* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000).

²⁵ “Schumann, Robert Alexander.” *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, ed. Helicon. (Abington: Helicon, 2016), http://library.pittstate.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/heliconhe/schumann_robert_alexander/0

Liederkreis, Op. 39

Liederkreis was composed in May of 1840, and it was first published in Vienna in September of 1842 by Tobias Haslinger Verlag. After revisions, it was republished in 1850 by F. Whistling Verlag of Leipzig.²⁶

All of the poetry for op. 39 was selected from poet Joseph von Eichendorff (1788-1857), with the translations being taken from *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder* by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Different from Schumann's song cycle *Dichterliebe*, *Liederkreis* does not collectively tell a story in the traditional sense of having an overarching plotline. Instead, the cycle is bound together by themes in Eichendorff's poetry that Schumann felt he could respond to on a personal level.²⁷ Because the poetry was not conceived by Eichendorff as a cycle and doesn't relate a chronological series of events, it makes this song cycle all the more exceptional for its overall unity in style. Schumann relies on related thematic material in the poetry between the songs, and the melodies are kindred in the fact that they are all close-interval pitched and are of closely related keys.²⁸ Similar to the *Wanderlieder* cycles of his predecessors and colleagues, such as Schubert, the environment of the forest, and the physical act of wandering provide a backdrop for an emotional journey, progressing from a state of alienation in every sense to the gratification of being in love.²⁹

²⁶ Finson, *Robert Schumann*.

²⁷ Schumann, Robert, and Beaumont Glass. *Schumann's Complete Song Texts: In One Volume Containing All Completed Solo Songs including Those Not Published during the Composer's Lifetime, Duets, Trios, Quartets* (Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2002).

²⁸ Miller, *Singing Schumann*.

²⁹ Barbara Turchin, "Schumann's Song Cycles: The Cycle within the Song." *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 3 (1985): 231-44.

"In der Fremde"

As written by Jon von Eichendorff

In der Fremde

In a Foreign Land

Aus der Heimath hinter den Blitzen
rot
Da kommen die Wolken her,
Aber Vater und Mutter sind lange
todt,
Es kennt mich dort Keiner mehr.
Wie bald, wie bald kommt die stille
Zeit,

From my homeland beyond the
lightning red
the clouds come drifting in,
but father and mother are long since
dead,
now no one remembers me there.
How soon, oh, how soon till that quiet
time

Da ruhe ich auch, und über mir
Rauschet die schöne Waldeinsamkeit

when I too shall rest, and above me
will rustle the lovely, lonely wood,

Und Keiner mehr kennt mich auch hier.

and no one will remember me here.

As interpreted by Schumann

Aus der Heimath hinter den Blitzen
rot
Da kommen die Wolken her,
Aber Vater und Mutter sind lange
tot,
Es kennt mich dort Keiner mehr.

From my homeland beyond the
lightning red
the clouds come drifting in,
but father and mother are long since
dead,
now no one remembers me there.

Wie bald, ach wie bald kommt die stille
Zeit,
Da ruhe ich auch, und über mir
Rauscht die schöne Waldeinsamkeit
Und Keiner kennt mich mehr hier.

How soon, oh, how soon till that quiet
time
when I too shall rest, and above me
will rustle the lovely, lonely wood,
and no one will remember me here.

While "In der Fremde" is now performed as the first song of op. 39, it originally was not even a part of the cycle; a song called "Der frohe Wandersmann" was the original opener. It was not until Schumann decided to revise the cycle that he cut "Der frohe Wandersmann" and replaced it with "In der Fremde". By replacing the song, it alters the overall feel of the cycle because he went from opening the cycle with a cheerful journeyman of the former song to a lonely traveler in the latter. Unlike "In der Fremde," "Der frohe Wandersmann" has a cheerful melody and is like a march. Many opinions exist as to the thought process behind the replacement; however, what the

replacement does do is introduce a number of themes that are central to the development of the cycle.³⁰

“In der Fremde” is the only song in *Liederkreis* in which Schumann alters the form of the poem by repeating phrases of text, rearranging line breaks, and changing the original meter and rhyme scheme in the poem’s second half. Also, this is the only text in the cycle that does not have a stanzaic form, which could be a clue as to why Schumann decided to alter its structure. This is also the only song in which Schumann significantly revised the piano accompaniment. What began as rewriting the accompaniment of one phrase evolved into recomposing phrases in their entirety, resulting in a song with an entirely new formal and tonal structure.³¹

After analyzing the piece as a whole, Schumann decided to emphasize just a few spots to add more character to the song. Out of the entire composition, Schumann takes three phrases from the poem and repeats them: “da ruhe ich auch” in ms.13-15, “die schöne Waldeinsamkeit” in ms.19-21, and “und Keiner kennt mich mehr hier” in ms.23-25. The repetition of the text happens during the second stanza of the poem, and this is significant. During this stanza, the speaker is retrospective, speaking of how he will soon rest, the rustling of the beautiful woods, and of how no one will know him anymore. While one may initially believe he is referring to death, the speaker could be implying how he is now mentally at peace and free from the anxiety he felt from his home-life. Regardless of his reflection, however, the speaker realizes that he will soon be completely forgotten, hence the final repetition of “und Keiner kennt mich mehr hier.”

Performance

³⁰ Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff*.

³¹ Ibid.

While there are virtually no instructions by Schumann as to how this piece should be performed, in regards to articulation, dynamics, and coloring, there are many subtle indications when comparing the music and poetry together. From the beginning, Schumann states “nicht snell”, or “not fast.” In the piano, there are constant sixteenth notes that never stop until the last chord of the piece, which is representative of the inner turmoil and angst of the speaker. The piece cannot be too fast, but it also cannot be too slow; it has to make the performer feel as if they are on the brink of going too fast, but never actually getting there. By performing it this way, the audience will experience how edgy and uneasy the speaker truly is.

At the beginning of the second stanza, Schumann tonicizes E major, implying that the speaker is having a happier moment, looking toward the future. Notice that Schumann never fully modulates to a new key. By only tonicizing E major, Schumann maintains that feeling of instability. After reaching “da ruhe ich auch” in measure 14, the feeling of angst comes back to the forefront for the speaker. It should be noted that because the mood of the entire piece is melancholic and retrospective, it should never get too loud; mezzo-forte would be the loudest dynamic needed to maintain the mood of the piece.

Understanding the ambiguous tonality of the piece is crucial for the effective performance of the song. The difference between moving in an implied key and cadencing into an actual key is artistically subtle. If Schumann were to fully cadence into a different key, it would cause the piece to take on a different character. While the song may seem to modulate to another key, the poetry and harmonic analysis suggest otherwise, and that is what the performer needs to understand. With this ambiguity, Schumann is able to create angst, disorientation, insecurity, and even excitement. While the music is melodically simple, it is bringing about the character of the piece that is the true challenge.

“Intermezzo”

Intermezzo

Dein Bildnis wunderselig,
Hab ich im Herzensgrund,
Das sieht so frisch und fröhlich
Mich an zu jeder Stund.

Mein Herz still in sich singet
Ein altes schönes Lied,
Das in die Luft sich schwinget
Und zu dir eilig zieht.

Intermezzo

Your blissful image,
I have deep in my heart,
gazing so joyously
at me always.

My heart sings silently
a beautiful song,
that soars to the sky
and hastens to you.

Setting “Intermezzo” as the second song in *Liederkreis*, the cycle moves from a feeling of loneliness to one of divine love. What sets this poem apart, however, is that there is no direct object of love; it is left completely obscure. When it comes to the analysis of the text, there are two differing opinions; Schumann scholars believe the object of love is the speaker’s distant beloved while Eichendorff scholars believe it to be a religious poem with the object of affection being the Virgin Mary. Delving deeper into the text, the latter seems to be more on point because the first half of the second strophe alludes to prayer. Regardless of who the recipient is, her identity is absent, and it is this absence that is the most important element of the poem. The speaker sees her image within his heart, and it is his heart that responds. Eichendorff enhances the theme of intangibility by not giving any reference to the characters involved or the setting or the essence of the communication between the two. For Eichendorff, affections of the soul are on a higher pedestal than the external world, and he portrays that idea through his poem.³²

³² Ferris, *Schumann’s Eichendorff*.

Performance

Of all of *Liederkreis*, “Intermezzo” is considered one of the hardest songs in the cycle. Initially, there is no downbeat, making it practically impossible to determine the meter of the song. Thusly, Schumann neglects an initial bass note, making the tonality ambiguous until he clarifies both the meter and tonality by placing a G on the downbeat of the second measure. What he continues to do, however, is syncopate the accompaniment with the vocal line, creating a pulsating tension that remains throughout most of the song.

In regards to melody, Schumann has written a very wide tessitura of C#4 to E5. Being able to smoothly transition between registers is critical in maintaining the legato line. One of the most challenging melodic lines is the entire second stanza; the singer traverses a major ninth, beginning from a D4 on the word “Herz” to an E5 on the word “Luft.” Not only does he use melody as a way to bring the text to life, but his tempo indication, “nach und nach schneller und schneller,” is intended to depict the song soaring through the air and quickly flying to his beloved. Throughout the entire poem, this is the only instance in which Schumann utilizes such explicit word painting.

“Waldesgespräch”

Waldesgespräch

“Es ist schon spät, es ist schon kalt
Was reitest du einsam durch den Wald?
Der Wald ist lang, du bist allein,
Du schöne Braut! Ich führ dich heim!”

“Groß ist der Männer Trug und List,
Vor Schmerz mein Herz gebrochen ist,
Wohl irrt das Waldhorn her und hin,
O flieh! Du weißt nicht, wer ich bin.”

“So reich geschmückt ist Roß und Weib,
So wunderschön der junge Leib,
Jetzt kenn ich dich—Gott steh’ mir bei!
Du bist die Hexe Lorelei.”

“Du kennst mich wohl—vom hohen Stein
Schaut still mein Schloß tief in den Rhein.
Es ist schon spät, es ist schon kalt,
Kommst nimmermehr aus diesem Wald.

Conversation in the Wood

It is late, it is cold,
why ride you lonely through the wood?
The wood is long, you are alone,
lovely bride! I will-lead you home!—

‘Great are men’s deceit and guile,
sorrow has broken my heart
the horn sounds here, sounds there,
oh flee! You know not who I am.’—

So richly decked are steed and lady,
so sound and fair of figure is she,
now—God preserve me—I know you!
You are the Sorceress Lorelei!

‘You know me indeed—from lofty rock
my castle gazes silent into the Rhine.
It is late, it is cold,
nevermore shall you leave this wood.’

In “Waldesgespräch”, this is the first time Schumann incorporates a poem that has a semblance of a plot line. Based on the German folktale, this poem tells a story of the siren Lorelei:

Long years ago a wondrously beautiful maiden, a water nymph, thought to be an immortal, and one of the daughters of old Father Rhine, was believed to dwell, by day, in her coral-cave palace in the cool depths of the river, near St. Goar, and to sit on a gigantic rock close at hand in the evening singing such entrancing music that passing boatmen, whose ears caught the notes of her song, forgot time and place, and allowed their boats to be dashed to pieces on the sharp, jagged rocks in the salmon-basin whirlpool below, where they perished.³³

According to Scott, it is said in German lore that Lorelei fell in love with a boatman at one point and kept him in her cave so that she could have him to herself for eternity. Regardless, she continued her song night after night. One evening, however, after luring a ship of men to their deaths, one boatman was able to escape. Going back to town, he gathered a group of men to surround her and force her to surrender. To their surprise, however, she was more cunning than they had anticipated when they finally reached her:

Unannoyed, she continued crooning her song and combing her golden hair; then gracefully waved her lovely arms, which act rooted the grim old warriors to their tracks, and rendered

³³ Henry Brownfield Scott, *The Lorelei, and Other Poems With Prose Settings* (Akron: Werner Co., 1910).

them incapable of uttering a sound. Calmly taking off her jewels, the Lorelei dropped them one by one over the edge of the cliff into the Rhine; then whirled about in a mystic dance, muttering some weird chant, until the waters of the Rhine rose to her feet, and a chariot, drawn by white-maned steeds, was swept to her on a great, foam-crested wave. Springing into the car, the siren vanished over the cliff, into the river, which fell to its normal stage with the disappearance of the magical equipage. Since then the Lorelei has never been seen on the cliff, although boatmen and others, chancing to be in that neighborhood late at night, claim they have caught faint echoes of her sweet, bewitching song.³⁴

When it comes to the story of Lorelei, the most famous poem is attributed to the poet Heinrich Heine. Similarly, Eichendorff gives a short introduction to the tale. What he does differently, however, is shroud the tale in ambiguity. From the very beginning, the reader is unsure as to whether the speaker is there to save the woman or seduce her. Initially, he asks her why she is riding alone, but in the second line of the first stanza he reiterates his question as a statement by saying, “du bist allein.” So are his intentions as pure as one might initially think?³⁵

In similar fashion, Lorelei’s response in the second stanza makes one wonder if she is simply explaining her current state or is warning the speaker that she recognizes his true intent. She divulges that she has been a victim of “men’s deceit,” and her reference to the hunting horn alludes to the fact that she may have been sexually violated. By the end of the second stanza, Lorelei reveals that she is not who she appears to be. During the second half of the poem, the speaker and Lorelei’s roles reverse, and suddenly it is the speaker who is the vulnerable one and Lorelei who has all of the power to let him go or ruin him. True to her nature, in the final line of the poem, she sentences him to an eternity of isolation in the woods.³⁶

Something to note in the poem is the speaker’s reaction to discovering the woman was actually Lorelei. While he did express fear, he initially commented on her beauty. This leads to the idea that the real danger is not an external one but an internal one. What is actually keeping the speaker trapped in the woods is his desire to cross into Lorelei’s world. His exclamation, “Gott steh’

³⁴ Scott, *The Lorelei*.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

mir bei!” can be read as more of a plea for inner strength than a plea for protection from a physical threat. Realizing his impure intentions led him to his demise, he is asking for strength to resist the siren’s beauty and not give in to his desires.³⁷

Performance

In terms of difficulty, “Waldesgespräch” is melodically easy. While there are some chromatic passages, the majority of the piece moves in stepwise motion. Rhythmically speaking, the melody works in tandem with the accompaniment and is a far cry from the complexity of “Intermezzo.”

Where the difficulty lies in this third song of the cycle is the character of the piece; being able to portray both characters in the poem is the true challenge. The singer must be able to achieve a slight change in the timbre of their voice to make the distinction between when the speaker is speaking and when Lorelei is. Schumann helps the singer recognize this change by setting the piano in a way that is beneficial to the singer. Marked by strong downbeats and an almost marcato style, the speaker is a strong presence. In contrast, Lorelei’s character is portrayed beautifully in the piano by the rolling eighth notes that seem to bring the siren’s song to life. Switching from the forceful accompaniment to the smooth legato lines helps bring attention to the fact that the speaker has changed. If the singer can transition from a striking melody to an elegant serenade, then this piece will easily come to life.

³⁷ Ferris, *Schumann’s Eichendorff*.

“Die Stille”

Die Stille

Es weiß und rät es doch keiner,
Wie mir so wohl ist, so wohl!
Ach, wüßt es nur einer, nur einer,
Kein Mensch es sonst wissen soll.

So still ist's nicht draußen im Schnee,
So stumm und verschwiegen sind
Die Sterne nicht in der Höh,
Als meine Gedanken sind.

Ich wünscht, ich wär ein Vöglein
Und zöge über da Meer,
Wohl über das Meer und weiter,
Bis daß ich im Himmel wär!

Silence

Not a soul knows or guesses
how happy, happy I am!
Oh, if only one were to know it,
then no other should.

The snow outside's not so silent,
nor so mute and silent
the stars on high,
as are my thoughts.

Would I were a bird
and might fly over the sea,
over the sea and on,
until I were in heaven!

In Schumann's fourth song of *Liederkreis*, we are brought back to the idea of happiness.

Upon first reading the poem, it seems the speaker is suggesting how in love he is, and that love is the reason behind his hidden joy. Because there is no object to whom the speaker is expressing his love, however, it seems he is overcome with specifically joy and not love. On the contrary, the speaker alludes to how he *wishes* he were in love because as of now, he is unable to express it to anyone. Reading it this way, the idea is given that the speaker wishes he were in love so that he would be able to have an outlet to express his emotion. As the poem continues, this idea makes more and more sense because not only is the object of his affection absent, but love altogether is not even alluded to.³⁸

In the second stanza, Eichendorff continues the idea of a hidden joy. With that statement in the first line, “So still ist's nicht draußen im Schnee,” he plants the idea that there is life underneath the snow that is waiting to burst free and feel alive, which is the speaker's internal struggle. During the second half of the second stanza, Eichendorff begins to transition us to not only the idea of a hidden joy, but to the real wish of the speaker: to be set free. Like the stars in the

³⁸ Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff*.

sky, the speaker's thoughts are high above the ground and intangible, and they begin to feel trapped by the physical realm.

In the third stanza, Eichendorff concludes his poem with the true theme of the poem. The entire third stanza is of how the speaker wishes he were a bird so he could fly until he was in heaven. Eichendorff uses the bird as the image to represent his theme because of its two special abilities: flight and song. Particularly, flight is represented in this poem by giving the speaker a way to escape the physical realm as well as by being a physical manifestation of his happiness.³⁹

What is interesting is the comparison between the second and third stanza; throughout the second stanza Eichendorff discusses the winter night and stars above, and during the third stanza, he introduces one of the world's noisiest creatures. Furthermore, Eichendorff emphasizes this contrast by the simple title of the poem, "Die Stille." It seems the first two stanzas are a metaphor for how trapped the speaker feels and how he longs to be able to express himself. If he were a bird, he would be able to fly toward the heavens and express himself through song, which tends to express that which cannot be put into words.⁴⁰

With "Die Stille," this is the first time there has been a thematic connection of transcendence in Schumann's *Liederkreis*. During the second stanza of "Intermezzo," the speaker's heart sings a song that soars through the sky, making a connection between song and flight. Likewise, the bird in "Die Stille" is an animal that possesses the capability of being able to fly and sing and is a conduit for the speaker's emotions. This thematic connection between the two songs makes them stronger together in the cycle than either would have been if they were to stand on their own.⁴¹

Performance

³⁹ Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff*.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff*.

Melodically speaking, “Die Stille” is accessible with a vocal line that is lyrical, diatonic, and embellished with chromatic notes that are largely used as leading tones. In terms of the rhythmic construction, Schumann has done an impeccable job at writing the music so that it favors the poetic stress. Being written in compound meter, the rhythm of the vocal line is simple and straightforward, with nothing out of the ordinary.

What most singers will find challenging is the high tessitura. Throughout the piece, the singer is singing in the G4 to E5 range. If the singer isn’t maintaining good breath support and a light, buoyant quality to their voice, then the piece could easily tire them. As mentioned, maintaining a light-hearted quality is crucial for the song. Contrary to the accompaniment’s open texture and staccato writing, the melody is relatively smooth, so the singer will need to be able to capture the contrast between the two. While the melody is to be buoyant, it is not to be staccato, which can be a fine line at times.

“Mondnacht”

Mondnacht

Es war, als hätt' der Himmel
Die Erde still geküßt,
Daß sie im Blütenschimmer
Von ihm nun träumen müßt.

Die Luft ging durch die Felder,
Die Ähren wogten sacht,
Es rauschten leis die Wälder,
So sternklar war di Nacht.

Und meine Seele spannte
Weit ihre Flügel aus,
Flog durch die stillen Lande,
Als flöge sie nach Haus.

Moonlit Night

It was as though the sky
had softly kissed the earth,
so that she, in a gleam of blossom,
had now to dream of him.

The breeze ran through the fields,
the ears of corn gently swayed,
the woods rustled faintly,
the night was so starry and clear.

And my soul spread
wide its wings,
flew over the silent land,
as if it were flying home.

According to Ferris, “Mondnacht” is generally regarded as not only the greatest song in *Liederkreis*, but it is also considered one of the greatest masterpieces of the nineteenth century lied repertory. As Schumann moves from “Die Stille” to “Mondnacht,” it is as if the speaker has achieved the transcendence he once longed for. For the first time in *Liederkries*, nature has taken on an active role and seems to be a conscious entity. Not only that, but it seems as if the speaker is merging with the nocturnal world. ⁴²

Eichendorff creates some ambiguity upon the first reading of his poem. First of all, he refrains from divulging from whom the point of view is coming until the third stanza when he finally uses a first-person reference. Second of all, by ending the first stanza with a reference of the sky dreaming of the earth, Eichendorff makes it ambiguous as to whether the second stanza is part of that dream or just a description of the setting. Once the narrative voice becomes clear in the third stanza, however, it then becomes unclear if the scene that has been narrated thus far was a memory of his or part of the sky's dream of the earth.

After closely reading the third stanza, it could be inferred that the speaker is retelling a moment in his life in which his soul was finally at peace. This moment is very important in the fact

⁴² Ferris, *Schumann's Eichendorff*.

that previously, the speaker's heart's song soared into the sky, and later he was longing to be free like a bird. It is with "Mondnacht" that the resolution comes.

Performance

This is the first song in *Liederkreis* in which there is virtually no chromaticism. Being completely diatonic, the melody only uses six chromatic notes. Contributing to the ease of the melody is the fact that it is conjunct with small intervals being used when skipping. Furthermore, this is the most lyrical melody in the cycle yet. Schumann uses very little thematic material in this piece. In fact, the same melodic idea is used almost exclusively throughout the song, with the only variation happening during the B section of the music.

Where the challenge in "Mondnacht" lies is the tempo. Being the slowest piece so far, it requires an immense amount of breath support. If the singer doesn't maintain support throughout the vocal line, the voice will not oscillate and create that ethereal atmosphere that Schumann and Eichendorff have so beautifully created. Adding to the challenge, the dynamic level is never written above *p*. While the performer may stylistically get louder when shaping the phrases, it is advised to never get so loud that the original ambience of the piece gets lost.

Chapter III

HISTOIRES NATURELLES

“Even when Ravel hits you over the head, he does it with overwhelming style and finesse.”
—Eric Salzman⁴³

Composer

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Maurice Ravel grew up in Paris, France to a Swiss father and a Basque mother. In 1882, when Ravel was seven years old, he began taking piano lessons from Henri Gÿhs. It was his father who encouraged him to pursue music, and five years later, he began taking harmony lessons under Charles-René’s tutelage as well.⁴⁴ He was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire and began taking piano from Eugène Anthiôme two years later.⁴⁵ He continued to study at the conservatory until 1895, where he was influenced greatly by the Javanese gamelan, concerts by Rimsky-Korsakov, and also his personal contacts with Chabrier and Satie and Ricardo Viñes. Ravel composed his first few characteristic pieces after leaving the conservatoire, including *Habanera* for two pianos. His time

⁴³ Kimball, *Song*.

⁴⁴ Paul Griffiths, “Ravel, (Joseph) Maurice.” *The New Penguin Dictionary of Music* (London: Penguin, 2006). http://library.pittstate.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/penguinmusic/ravel_joseph_maurice/0

⁴⁵ Don Michael Randel, ed., “Ravel, (Joseph) Maurice (7 March 1875, Ciboure, Basses Pyrénées - 28 Dec. 1937, Paris).” *The Harvard Biographical Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003). http://library.pittstate.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/harvbiodictmusic/ravel_joseph_maurice_7_march_1875_ciboure_basses_pyr%C3%A9n%C3%A9es_28_dec_1937_paris/0

away from the Conservatoire was short-lived, and he decided to return in order to study with Gabriel Fauré and André Gédalge from 1897 until 1903.⁴⁶

Ravel became quite accomplished among his colleagues during his time at the Conservatoire. His compositions were gaining ground, and he was at the head of the pack. It became quite a scandal that he was unable to win the Prix de Rome, which was one of the most coveted awards a musician could win. Ravel continued pursuing the award until 1907, but he never did win. It remains a mystery as to why he was never a recipient, since he was an established composer, with some of his most famous music already published, including his song cycles *Shéhérazade* and *Histoires Naturelles*.⁴⁷

Ravel continued composing some of his greatest masterpieces as the years pressed onward, including his operatic comedy *L'Heure espagnole*, songs and virtuoso piano pieces, and even an orchestral suite. Ravel met and quickly became close friends with Igor Stravinsky after composing his longest work, *Daphnis et Chloé*, for the Ballets Russes.⁴⁸ Stravinsky described him as a “Swiss watchmaker” because he seemed to be detached from his music by using exotic scales and modes, using imitation, and conjuring the past with Baroque gestures and sometimes even a Spanish style. He frequently would repeat a single accompaniment figure, and that became a characteristic of Ravel’s writing.⁴⁹

World War I broke out shortly after Ravel and Stravinsky’s friendship blossomed, and it inspired Ravel’s musical patriotism. Ravel served as a driver and, while serving his country, he composed *Le Tombeau de Couperin* and *Trois chansons* for chorus. In 1917, however, his life was turned upside down with the death of his mother. His mother was his entire world, and he cared

⁴⁶ Griffiths, “Ravel.”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Randel, “Ravel.”

more for her than for any other person.⁵⁰ The only relationship of any substantial nature Ravel had was the one with his mother. To further confirm this notion is the fact that Ravel's love life is an entire blank slate with no information to be found. He has been quoted saying, "The only love affair I have ever had was with music."⁵¹

Ravel's compositional output significantly slowed down after the death of his mother. He still created some iconic masterpieces regardless, including his orchestration of Musorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, which has become a standard of the repertory. He left Paris in 1921 and moved to Montfort l'Amaury. He toured the United States in 1928, from which he came back to write two piano concertos and a set of songs for the film *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée*. The latter was composed during the onset of a disease that eventually incapacitated him. Ravel felt defeated by the end, and he even believed himself to be a failure, asking for a friend's assurance that not everything he had written was totally without worth.⁵²

⁵⁰ Randel, "Ravel."

⁵¹ Ned Rorem, *Settling the Score: Essays on Music* (New York: Doubleday, 1989).

⁵² Griffiths, "Ravel."

Histoires Naturelles

Ravel said, “Prose is sometimes very pleasant to set to music, and there are circumstances in which it is marvelously appropriate to the subject. Thus, I selected several of Jules Renard’s *Histoires naturelles*; they are delicate and rhythmic, but rhythmic in a completely different way from classical verses.”⁵³ Composers of the day were pushing every limit there was to music, and Ravel was leading the way, along with Claude Debussy; music was becoming more about evoking a mood or scene.

The world was not initially accepting of the course music was taking in the transition from classical music. This mentality of not wanting to change how music was composed was the leading reason as to why Ravel’s *Histoires Naturelles* was so ill-received in 1907. Ravel created something new and exciting for music: a conversational vocal style. As Ravel explained, “the text itself demanded a particular kind of musical declamation from me, closely related to the inflections of the French language.”⁵⁴ He took the French language and, essentially, disregarded setting the mute *e*. For example, in the phrase “A-t-il fini? est-elle cassée?” in “Le Grillon”, Ravel only uses eight notes: A–til–fi–ni–est–elle–ca–ssée. The traditional way of setting French would have used ten notes: A–til–fi–ni–est–el–le–ca–ssé–e. This caused an outrage with the audience who experienced the premiere of his work because mute endings had never been left unsung before.⁵⁵ Another item that may have contributed to its hostile reception was that the melodic vocal line is dependent upon the piano. The melody makes no sense if it is not paired with the piano because the piano presents the melody as well as the harmony, and there are many times where the vocal line is a continuation of what is stated in the piano.

⁵³ Kimball, *Song*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

It was not only the general public that refuted Ravel's treatment of the French language. Both Debussy and Gabriel Fauré were unimpressed. Debussy is quoted saying that Ravel was "acting like a conjurer, a fakir, a snake-charmer, who can make flowers grow around a chair," while Fauré was startled that "such things should be set to music."⁵⁶

The result of Ravel setting prose in this way is something similar to vocal recitative; the music takes on a very conversational, almost speech-like, quality. Make no mistake, however, that nothing is to be spoken and everything is to be sung. Performing the music in this way creates the striking contrast with some of the sentences that are more speech-like.⁵⁷

Pierre Bernac, who worked with Ravel on these mélodies, makes a point in *The Interpretation of French Song* to say that the most important aspect for the singer and pianist is to perform the music with absolute musical precision. There should be no rhythmic subtleties or alterations of tempo unless specifically noted by Ravel. Instead, the singer is to give the *impression* that the text is being improvised. The prose in this cycle is very humorous and ironical; however, nothing should be overly done. Dry humor is the mood of the entire cycle, and that is what should come to the forefront above all else.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Kimball, *Song*.

⁵⁷ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song* (New York: Norton, 1978.)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Le Paon

Il va sûrement se marier aujourd'hui.
Ce devait être pour hier.
En habit de gala, il était prêt.
Il n'attendait que sa fiancée.
Elle n'est pas venue.
Elle ne peut tarder.
Glorieux, il se promène avec une
allure de prince indien
et porte sur lui les riches
présents d'usage.
L'amour avive l'éclat de ses couleurs
et son aigrette tremble
comme une lyre.
La fiancée n'arrive pas.
Il monte au haut du toit et regarde
du côté du soleil.
Il jette son cri diabolique: Léon! Léon!
C'est ainsi qu'il appelle sa fiancée.
Il ne voit rien venir et personne ne
répond.
Les volailles habituées ne lèvent
même point la tête.
Elles sont lasses de l'admirer.
Il redescend dans la cour, si sûr
d'être beau
qu'il est incapable de rancune.
Son mariage sera pour demain.
Et, ne sachant que faire du reste de la
journée,
il se dirige vers le perron.
Il gravity les marches, comme des
marches de temple,
d'un pas | officiel.
Il relève sa robe à queue toute
lourde des yeux
qui n'ont pu se détacher d'elle.
Il répète encore une fois la cérémonie.

The Peacock

He will certainly be married today.
It should have been yesterday.
In his gala attire he was ready.
He was only waiting for his fiancée.
She has not come.
She cannot be long.
Magnificent, he walks with the
demeanor of an Indian prince
bearing about him the customary
rich gifts.
Love enhances the brilliance of his
colours
and his crest trembles like a lyre.
The fiancée does not come.
He mounts to the top of the roof and
looks towards the sun.
He utters his fiendish cry: Léon! Léon!
It is thus that he calls his fiancée.
He sees nothing coming and no one
replies.
The fowls who are accustomed to
him never even raise their heads.
They are tired of admiring him.
He descends again to the courtyard,
so sure of his beauty
that he is incapable of resentment.
His marriage will take place tomorrow.
And not knowing what to do for the
rest of the day,
he turns towards the flight of steps.
He ascends as though they were the
steps of a temple,
with an official tread.
He spreads open his tail, heavy with
all the eyes
that could not leave it.
Once more he repeats the ceremony.

⁵⁹ Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

“Le Paon” describes the daily routine of a peacock. The bird strolls around everyday with his beauty on display. He awaits his fiancée, but she never comes. After climbing to the rooftop, he calls to his fiancée and returns to the courtyard to bask in his own beauty and repeat the routine.

Ravel’s musical setting exudes nobility and pompousness with the continual dotted rhythms that pervades the mélodie. Those same rhythms paint the exaggerated gait of the peacock. Not only does his setting depict the peacock’s arrogance, but it also depicts his beauty. He begins to strut up the steps as if to a temple toward the end of the song. He stops at the top, and a glissando from the piano symbolizes the majestic event of the peacock unfolding his tail.

Performance

This piece is very advanced for many reasons, and there are many ideas to consider when performing this mélodie. First of all, the long piano prelude gives the performer time to imagine the bird coming closer with the crescendo and then walking away with the diminuendo. It is the performer’s job to envision not being the peacock itself but being an observer. The remarks come to the performer’s mind as the peacock is observed; being an outsider looking in is the only way to maintain the intensity of the song.

The melody, on its own, does not make sense; it is only with the piano accompaniment underneath that it melts into one cohesive unit. Being able to hear and perform the many leaps and chromatic passages throughout the melodic line will be achieved if the performer has a firm grasp of the piano accompaniment. Ravel treated the piano melodically and harmonically, and a vast majority of the time, the vocal line is continuing a melody that the piano has introduced.

Ravel treated the language like no one had done before and made it very conversational. There are very specific places where liaisons and elisions do and do not occur. Furthermore, the final, unstressed *e* is generally not acknowledged. It is highly suggested that the performer consult Pierre Bernac’s *The Interpretation of French Song* for a complete dissection of the language.

“Le Grillon”⁶⁰

Le Grillon

C'est l'heure où, las d'errer, l'insecte
nègre revient de promenade

et répare avec soin le désordre de
son domaine.
D'abord il ratisse ses étroites
allées de sable.
Il fait du bran de scie qu'il écarte au
seuil de sa retraite.
Il lime la racine de cette grande
herbe propre à le harceler.
Il se repose.
Puis il remonte sa minuscule
montre.
A-t-il fini? est-elle cassée?
Il se repose encore un peu.
Il rentre chez lui et ferme sa porte.
Longtemps il tourne sa clef dans la
serrure délicate.
Et il écoute:
Point d'alarme dehors.
Mais il ne se trouve pas en sûreté.
Et comme par une chaînette dont la
poulie grince,
il descend jusqu'au fond de la
terre.
On n'entend plus rien.
Dans le campagne muette, les
peupliers se dressent
comme des doigts en l'air et
désignent la lune.

The Cricket

This is the hour when, tired of
wandering, the nigger-brown
insect returns from his outing
and carefully tidies the disorder of
his home.
First he rakes his narrow sandy paths.

He makes some sawdust which he
spreads on the threshold of his retreat.
He files the root of this tall grass
likely to annoy him.
He rests.
Then he rewinds his tiny watch.

Has he finished? Is it broken?
He rests again for a moment.
He goes inside and shuts the door.
For a long time he turns the key in
the delicate lock.
And he listens:
Not a sound outside.
But he does not feel safe.
And as though by a little chain with
a creaking pulley,
he lets himself down into the
bowels of the earth.
Nothing more is to be heard.
In the silent countryside, the poplars
rise
like fingers in the air pointing at
the moon.

“Le Grillon” takes the listener to a quiet countryside where a cricket is busily working on his tasks at home. He comes home after a tiring stroll and begins to tidy up his house. Every task he performs is done with the utmost care, no matter how small it may seem. The cricket seems to get startled for no reason at times, but it does not keep him from finishing his chores. He finally descends into the depths of the earth, leaving the listener with the image of poplars reaching to the sky on a warm summer night.

⁶⁰ Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

“Le Paon” suggests what the peacock does as it is being watched; in “Le Grillon”, it is by listening to all of the sounds that the cricket is portrayed. Everything the small cricket does is vividly captured in the accompaniment of the piano. It isn’t until the ending when the cricket gives way to the quiet evening that the piano expands to a fuller texture.

Ravel’s setting of the text does something that alters our perception of the cricket’s activities. Upon first reading the text, the crickets obsessive nature is continuously read, without much thought given to what he may be doing. Ravel spaces the text in the music in a way that forces the performer to pause. No reader, for instance, would make such a long pause as Ravel’s writing commands when the cricket rests (“il se repose”). It is with these deliberate pauses that the listener is able to identify with and sympathize with the little cricket.⁶¹

Performance

The challenge for this *mélodie* is incredibly small dynamic range. The loudest the performer is to be is *p*, while the softest is *ppp*. Singing at such a dynamic level requires immense breath support from the performer so that the intensity does not die. Diction is of utmost importance and must seem almost speech-like. Ravel writes in this way to help with the portrayal of the cricket. In this selection, the performer is listening to the cricket; any loud noises or movement would undoubtedly scare the cricket away.

⁶¹ Roger Nichols, *Ravel* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011).

"Le Cygne"⁶²

Le Cygne

Il glisse sur le bassin, comme un
traîneau blanc, de nuage en nuage.
Car il n'a faim que des nuages
floconneux qu'il voit naître,
bouger, et se perdre dans l'eau.
C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire.
Il le vise du bec, et il plonge tout à
coup son col vêtu de neige.

Puis, tel un bras de femme sort
d'une manche, il le retire.
Il n'a rien.
Il regarde: les nuages effarouchés
ont disparu.
Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé, car
les nuages tardent
peu à revenir, et là-bas, où
meurent les ondulations
de l'eau, en voici un qui se
reformé.
Doucelement, sur son léger coussin de
plumes, le cygne rame et
s'approche.
Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets,
et peut-être qu'il mourra
victime de cette illusion, avant
d'attraper un seul
morceau de nuage.
Mais qu'est-ce que je dis?
Chaque fois qu'il plonge, il fouille
du bec la vase nourrissante
et ramène un ver.
Il engraisse omme une oie.

The Swan

He glides on the lake, like a white
sleigh, from one cloud to another.
For the only hunger he feels is for the
fleecy clouds that he sees appearing,
moving, and vanishing in the water.
It is one of these that he wants.
He takes aim with his beak, and
suddenly plunges his snowy neck
into the water.
Then, like a woman's arm emerging
from a sleeve, he draws it back.
He has caught nothing.
He looks: the startled clouds have
disappeared.
He is disillusioned only for a moment,
for the clouds are not slow
to return, and yonder, where the
undulations of the water are
dying away,
there is one which is re-forming.
Softly, upon the light cushion of
feathers, the swan paddles and
draws near.
He is exhausted by fishing for empty
reflections and perhaps he will die
a victim of this illusion, without
having caught a single
piece of cloud.
But what am I saying?
Each time he plunges in, he burrows
in the nourishing mud
and brings out a worm.
He is growing as fat as a goose.

"Le Cygne" portrays a swan who is floating on the water's surface, entranced by the reflection of the clouds on the water. He strikes at the clouds, unaware that they are mirror images of the sky above. The clouds disappear as he strikes at them, but they quickly reappear as the ripples in the water subside. The swan floats to the newly reformed cloud, and the listener realizes that the swan was never interested in the clouds at all; every time he plunges his neck into the water, he retrieves a worm.

⁶² Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

The third song in this cycle was dedicated to Misia Edwards, the half-daughter of a rich and successful Russian family. One idea is that the depiction of the swan gliding across the water is likened to the luxurious yacht *Aimée* sailing through the canals of northern France and Belgium. Another idea is that Misia is the swan herself, “gliding through society with her eye firmly on the main chance.”⁶³

Ravel does a brilliant job depicting the the swan floating atop the water with the legato arpeggios in the piano. These figures continue throughout the *mélodie* until the swan plunges its beak into the water, creating a stark contrast in comparison to the preceding music. The vocal line also changes and gives way to an almost recitative like delivery, accompanied by staccato chords in the piano. Both interruptions signal the narrator that the tranquillity of the scene is all an illusion, and the swan is more concerned about food.

Performance

Similar to “Le Paon”, the performer is a mere spectator, describing the events as they happen. The performer has to be able to accurately portray the tranquility of the swan and initial illusion in order to make the contrast of the ironic text effective. This can be achieved by maintaining the smooth legato line as the swan floats across the pond. Having sufficient breath support is crucial in this movement because it is not only the slowest movement thus far, but it also has a smoother vocal line to deliver than the preceding *mélodies*.

⁶³ Nichols, *Ravel*.

“Le Martin-Pêcheur”⁶⁴

Le Martin-Pêcheur

ça n’a pas mordu ce soir, mais je
rapporte une rare émotion.
Comme je tenais ma perche de
ligne tendue,
un martin-pêcheur est venu s’y
poser.
Nous n’avons pas d’oiseau plus
éclatant.
Il semblait une grosse fleur bleue au
bout d’une longue tige.
La perche pliait sous le poids.
Je ne respirais plus, tout fier d’être
pris pour un arbre
par un martin-pêcheur.
Et je suis sûr qu’il ne s’est pas envolé
de peur,
mais qu’il a cru qu’il ne faisait
que passer
d’une branche à une autre.

The Kingfisher

Not a bite this evening, but I had a
thrilling experience.
As I was holding out my fishing rod,
a kingfisher came and perched
on it.
We have no bird more brilliant.
He seemed like a big blue flower on
the end of a long stalk.
The rod bent under the weight.
I held my breath, quite proud to be
taken for a tree
by a kingfisher.
And I am sure that he did not fly
away out of fear,
but believed that he was only
passing
from one branch to another.

The fisherman describes a thrilling experience when he was fishing one evening. He did not catch any fish; however, he was mesmerized by a kingfisher that perched upon his fishing pole. The awestruck angler was so entranced that he could not help but compare the bird to a beautiful blue flower at the end of a long stalk. He did not dare to breathe as the rod bent under the bird’s weight; he so delighted to be mistaken for a tree. The bird finally flew away, as if moving from branch to branch.

Ravel’s musical setting gives an extraordinary impression of the poetry, which makes this mélodie the gem of the entire cycle. The opening chromatic chords prepare the audience for a profound lyrical statement; instead, they are given a phrase of slang that receives no reaction from the piano. It was during this very moment during its premiere that members of the audience stood up in outrage; the beauty of the song was then ruined because of the mood of the audience.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

⁶⁵ Nichols, *Ravel*.

The slow tempo encourages the performer to count in six. It is crucial that the performer sing *mp*, much like “Le Grillon.” The two mélodies are kindred in that they both focus on being stationary and quiet in order to not frighten the animal. Once the performer has sung “un martin-pêcheur est venu s’y poser,” and after the proceeding piano accompaniment, the performer must give the impression of stillness, as if afraid to frighten the bird away.⁶⁶

Ravel indicates *on ne peut plus lent* (one cannot be slower) as the tempo for the piece. The phrase does not give an indication to tempo but more-so an indication that the tempo must remain the same throughout. The only exception, admitted by Ravel himself, is the last six measures of the piece. Maintaining the slower tempo will give a better portrayal of the motionless state of the fisherman.⁶⁷

Performance

The rhythm of this mélodie is significantly easier than its predecessor, as is the melody itself. These two facts raise an argument to Pierre Bernac’s statement that his mélodie is “the most difficult of the set, both musically and in its interpretation.” The harmony is sophisticated, but the melody makes more sense in the accompaniment than the melody in “Le Cygne” does.

Bernac was correct in the idea that the interpretation of the mélodie is what makes it the hardest of the set. The reason behind that is because the performer must sing the melody in a breathless manner while still breathing deeply. Conveying this breathlessness can be tricky for even the most seasoned performer, and it must not be taken lightly. The breathlessness and stillness can be relaxed after the bird has flown away, and the fisherman is concluding his final thoughts. If it is possible, the last phrase should be sung in one breath for maximum effect.

⁶⁶ Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

La Pintade

C'est la bossue de ma cour.
Elle ne rêve que plaies à cause de sa
bosse.
Les pools ne lui disent rien:
Brusquement, elle se précipite et
les harcèle.
Puis elle baisse la tête, penche le
corps, et de toute la vitesse
de ses pattes maigres, elle court
frapper de son bec dur,
juste au centre de la roue d'une
dinde.
Cette poseuse l'agaçait.
Ainsi, la tête bleuie, se s barbillons à
vif,
cocardière, elle rage du matin au
soir.
Elle se bat sans motif, peut-être
parce qu'elle s' imagine toujours
qu'on se moque de sa taille, de
son crâne chauve
et de sa queue basse.
Et elle ne cesse de jeter un cri
discordant
qui perce l'air comme une
pointe.
Parfois elle quitte la cour et
disparaît.
Elle laisse aux volailles pacifiques un
moment de répit.
Mais elle revient plus turbulente et
plus criarde.
Et, frénétique, elle se vautre par terre.
Qu'a-t-elle donc?
La sournoise fait une farce.
Elle est allée pondre son œuf à la
campagne.
Je peux le chercher si ça m'amuse.
Et elle se roule dans la poussière
comme une bossue.

The Guinea-Fowl

She is the hunchback of my courtyard.
She thinks of nothing but fighting
because of her hump.
The fowls say nothing to her:
suddenly she sets on them and harasses
them.
Then she lowers her head, leans
forward, and with all the speed
of her skinny feet, she runs and smites
with her hard beak
the exact centre of a turkey's tail.

This poseur provoked her.
Thus, with her head bluish, her
wattles lively,
fiercely aggressive, she rages
from morning to night.
She fights for no reason, perhaps
because she is always imagining
that they are laughing at her
figure, at her bald head,
and her mean low tail.
And incessantly she utters her
discordant cry
which pierces the air like a
needle point.
At times she leaves the courtyard and
disappears.
She gives the peace-loving fowls a
moment of respite.
But she returns more boisterous and
more peevish.
And in a frenzy, she wallows in the earth.
Whatever is the matter with her?
The crafty creature has played a prank.
She went to lay her egg in the open
country.
I may look for it if I like.
And she rolls in the dust like a
hunchback.

The final song in the cycle portrays the behavior of a guinea hen in a farmer's courtyard. She is constantly tormenting the other fowls, whom say nothing to her in return. She starts by jumping

⁶⁸ Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

the hens, and then she charges the turkey with her sharp beak. Her aggressive behavior is a mystery because she has not been provoked. She believes that the other fowl are laughing at her for her size, bald head, and low tail. The other fowl enjoy a moment of peace while she leaves the courtyard. It is short-lived, though, because she returns even more agitated than before. She is a nuisance because she lays her eggs in the open country, creating a scavenger hunt for the farmer.

Ravel paints the picture of the guinea-fowl perfectly; the vileness of the guinea-fowl is suggested by the ferocious attacks in the piano accompaniment. The staccato chords following the introduction portrays the guinea-fowl strutting about the courtyard, knowing she is the queen of the coop. As she charges the turkey, the rhythm of the text becomes agitated, giving the illusion of an *accelerando*. The song continues with the piano embodying the fowl itself. Both performers get a break during the *très lent*; the music significantly slows down and there is less verbiage, depicting that there is peace while she is gone. The guinea-fowl is heard in the distance as the piano introduces an agitated rhythmic figure at *pppp*. The piece concludes with a reintroduction of the original material that appeared in the introduction of the *mélodie*.⁶⁹

“La Pintade” is arguably the most entertaining *mélodie* of the cycle. The piece has the greatest amount of word painting of the *mélodies*, and the irritation in the performer’s portrayal of the farmer adds to the effect. Similar to “Le Martin-Pêcheur,” the performer takes on an active persona of a character in the narrative, as opposed to being a bystander like the other three; this helps make this the most lively and humorous *mélodie* in *Histoires Naturelles*.

Performance

The melody is written in a way that fits nicely with the accompaniment. It is written with the same rhythmic style as the other four *mélodies*, which should prepare the performer very well for this final performance. The only difference, rhythmically speaking, in this *mélodie* is that Ravel

⁶⁹ Bernac, *The Interpretation*.

uses compound meter more frequently. As long as the performer realizes that the eighth note pulse remains the same, the rhythmic lines should come quite naturally.

The hardest part in performing the final song in the cycle is, like its predecessor, the portrayal of the text. This *mélodie* is textually heavy, and the majority of the song is performed in an agitated state; close attention to diction will help in this endeavor. All of the consonants must be performed with intent, especially those that are final. The phrase “et, de toute la vitesse...” that begins in measure 16 will need the most attention. In order to give the illusion of an *accelerando*, the text must be delivered in a very crisp manner, almost as if the performer is spitting the words out toward the audience. There are very precise directions in the deliverance of the language as well as the tempo of specific sections of this *mélodie* that can be found in Pierre Bernac’s *The Interpretation of French Song*; peruse his book to perform the *mélodies* with Ravel’s specific expectation.

Chapter IV

THE CURLEW

“The most extraordinary thing, indeed, about that extraordinary man is the tenacity of his survival
in the minds and memories of those who knew him...
In the memory of his friends, he is as alive now as he ever was when he trod the earth,
and so he will continue to be until the last of us are dead.”
-Cecil Gray⁷⁰

Composer

PETER WARLOCK (1894-1930)

Peter Warlock was born as Philip Heseltine in October of 1894 in London, England. Not only was he a talented composer, but he was also a skilled writer and music journalist, editor of early music, and also a significant supporter of other composers. Heseltine published all of his musical endeavors under the pseudonym “Peter Warlock” to keep his musical compositions and his scholarly writings separate. Heseltine composed over 100 songs altogether, and all of them were written between the end of the First World War and his death in 1930.⁷¹

Heseltine was, for the most part, self-taught. It was easy for his professors to see where his talents were while he was in school. He began to receive musical encouragement after he met the

⁷⁰ John Talbot, “The Collected Letters of Peter Warlock Edited by Barry Smith. the Boydell Press, 4-Volume Set, £200.00.” *Tempo* 60, no. 235 (01, 2006): 59-61.
<http://library.pittstate.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/899221562?accountid=13211>.

⁷¹ “Peter Warlock.” Biography. Boosey & Hawkes, accessed 09 October 2016.

composers Frederick Delius and Bernard van Dieren in 1910.⁷² He began composing arrangements of Delius's works after they became close friends.⁷³

Heseltine only spent one—less than desirable—year at Oxford University in Germany before the country was interrupted by the First World War. He explained that he was considered physically unfit for military service in a letter to Delius.⁷⁴ He objected to this judgement, and he spent the years of war in London, Cornwall, and Ireland. He became the editor of the musical journal *The Sackbut* in 1920. Winthrop Rogers, the publisher of his songs and the one who appointed him editor, quickly fired him after facing public controversy over Heseltine's outspoken editorship.⁷⁵

Heseltine returned to his family in Wales after he was fired. He spent three years writing a biography of Delius's life and compositions, composing his own music, and transcribing early music. It was during this time that his masterpiece, *The Curlew*, was composed (1920-1922). Heseltine and colleague E. J. Moeran moved to Eynsham, just northwest of Oxford, in 1925. It was there that they shared a cottage and drank heavily for three years.⁷⁶

Heseltine began to show signs of manic depression toward the end of the 1920s, with his symptoms becoming more and more prominent as the decade came to an end. On December 17, 1930, Heseltine turned on the gas in his London home and went to sleep on the sofa, never to wake. An open verdict was recorded and, for years, his friends opposed the idea that he had killed

⁷² "Peter Warlock," *Britannica Academic*, accessed 09 October 2016, <http://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/76114>.

⁷³ "Peter Warlock," 2016.

⁷⁴ Frederick Delius, Peter Warlock, and Barry Smith, *Frederick Delius and Peter Warlock: A Friendship Revealed* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

⁷⁵ "Peter Warlock," 2016.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

himself. The unfortunate death of Heseltine clearly cheated English music of one of its most talented composers.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ "Peter Warlock," 2016.

The Curlew

Critics have acknowledged two personae in his compositions: the energetic style of Peter Warlock and the introspective style of Philip Heseltine. The underlying melancholy and desperation that lines his most iconic work leads to the idea that it was Heseltine that created the masterpiece *The Curlew*.⁷⁸

The Curlew is scored for flute, cor anglais, and string quartet. The poetry is by one of the most notable figures in the Irish literary revival at the end of the nineteenth century, William Butler Yeats. Four of his poems were used: “He reproves the curlew,” “The lover mourns for the loss of love,” “The withering of the boughs,” and “He hears the cry of the sedge.” Originally, Warlock had used “The cloths of heaven,” and “Wine comes in at the mouth” when he finished it in 1917; however, he revised the composition in 1922 and replaced the original two songs with “The withering of the boughs.” *The Curlew* is different than most song cycles because it is a continuous piece of work. Warlock said himself, “*The Curlew* should not be regarded as a set of songs but rather as a piece of chamber-music in one continuous movement.” This was his largest scale single movement work because of its continuous form.⁷⁹

Warlock was supposed to have a meeting with Yeats in 1917 when he first finished the composition; he was a great admirer of the poet. Yeats, on the other hand, detested Warlock’s setting of his poetry.⁸⁰ Yeats had a traumatic experience when he heard *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* sung by a thousand boy scouts; ever since that moment, the poet forbade anyone from using his work without his express permission. The poet ended up allowing Warlock’s use after the Carnegie Trust decided to publish *The Curlew*. Adjudicators were quoted saying, “A most imaginative setting of Mr. Yeats’ poems, of which, indeed, it may be regarded as the musical counterpart.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Philip Lancaster, “The Curlew.” Naxos Music Library. Linn Records, 2007. accessed 19 November 2016. <http://pittstate.naxosmusiclibrary.com/sharedfiles/booklets/LIN/booklet-CKD296.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Lancaster, “The Curlew.”

There are four significant motifs that Warlock drew attention to: the opening line heard on the cor anglais, a motif played by the string quartet alone where parallel tenths between the first violin and viola are supported by sustained notes in the cello and second violin, the motif heard at the second entry of the cor anglais, and the fourth motif heard at the end of the flute line in the instrumental section after the second song, which is marked by a falling sequence of minor thirds. Some scholars also believe that the two note figure heard near the opening in the violins and flute is the cry of the curlew and the repeated notes in the flute following briefly after is the cry of the peewit.⁸²

⁸² Ibid.

"He Reproves the Curlew"⁸³

O, curlew, cry no more in the air,
Or only to the waters in the West;
Because your crying brings to my mind
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair
That was shaken out over my breast:
There is enough evil in the crying of wind.

The first two lines of text introduce the speaker pleading for the curlew to cease his cry, and if he must call, he needs to do it toward the waters in the West. The next three lines gives the reasoning as to why the speaker cannot listen to the curlew's call; it brings back painful memories of a woman he once knew. The last line concludes the poem with the speaker acknowledging that even the wind conjures painful memories, leaving him in despair almost every day, so he does not need the curlew's incessant reminding.

"He Reproves the Curlew" does not seem to follow a specific form because it is only comprised of six lines of text. There is a rhyme scheme used of ABCABC; "A" and "B" are specifically end rhymes, while "C" is an eye rhyme, or slant rhyme, because it is the spelling that rhymes and not the pronunciation.

The language of the poem is relatively straight-forward. Yeats uses a metaphor when he speaks of the eyes and hair in line four; the part (eyes and long hair) stand for the whole (woman). The curlew's call represents despair, which is a recurring theme throughout the cycle. Yeats' choice of "crying" and "mind" in line three gives the reader the image that the curlew's cry can be heard by how the long vowel is in both words. The reader can not only hear the curlew's cry, but with the long vowel in "mind," it gives the illusion that the cry is driving the speaker mad with despair. Yeats' use of words in the present tense (cry, crying, brings) creates a sense of urgency. The reader can feel the pain and longing the speaker has for his beloved.

Warlock marries music and poetry so beautifully in this poem that the reader is often given a vivid picture. His musical setting of line three is just one example; he elongates the word "mind"

⁸³ Peter Warlock, *The Curlew* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1973).

over the span of two quarter notes, and it gives the illusion that the cry is driving the speaker mad with despair. The last line of the poem refers to the wind and how it cries. Warlock extends “crying of” at the end of the last line by creating a triplet half-note figure over a measure in 4/4 meter in the vocal line while the instruments sustain a whole note. This delicate use of rhythm perfectly captures the sound of the wind while making it completely effortless for the performer.

Performance

The piece opens with a long introduction in which the performer must maintain character throughout. The opening melody in the cor anglais is the exact melody the voice begins at letter E. The chamber group sufficiently supports the vocalist, harmonically speaking, so the melodic line is relatively easy to find. In the line “Because your crying brings to my mind,” Warlock has notated *agitato*; the agitated feel comes from the deliverance in text, not in a tempo shift. Proceeding this line, there is an abrupt change in tempo for two measures and concludes with a *ritenuto* into the following section.

"The Lover Mourns For the Loss of Love"⁸⁴

Pale brows, still hands and dim hair,
I had a beautiful friend
And dreamed that the old despair
Would end in love in the end:
She looked in my heart one day
And saw your image was there;
She has gone weeping away.

The opening line introduces a speaker referring to someone who appears to be dead because her features are dull and her body is still. The next three lines has the speaker telling the corpse he is in front of that he used to have someone who loved him, and he thought that their relationship would last forever. He admits, however, that he never truly loved her to the fullest extent. As they grew closer, she knew that he loves someone else, and her heart was shattered as she left him.

Yeats uses seven lines in this poem, and by doing so, it seems as if it has been left unfinished. The rhyme scheme, ABABCDC, only further indicates the same idea; the pattern alternates ABAB, and it then continues CDC. It is as if the eighth line of text was omitted. Had he used an eighth line of text, he could have potentially finished the rhyme scheme CDCD, assuming he would have continued the same pattern. Writing the poem in this way leads to a very abrupt end. This could be a reference to death and how abrupt it can be with no forewarning.

At first look, this poem appears to follow the preceding in that it does not seem to follow a specific poetic form; however, it vaguely resembles two possible options: half of a sonnet or an incomplete ballad stanza. The problem with it being considered half of a sonnet is that the lines are not long enough. The rhyme scheme would be allowable for half of a sonnet, and the shortened lines would emphasize the theme of loss. On the other hand, it could be argued that this poem is an incomplete ballad stanza. The problem here is that it would need two quatrains instead of the one and three-fourths that are given. What it comes down to is what specifically is being expressed, loss or love? A sonnet form would be suitable if the speaker were expressing his love, but that does not undeniably shine through. There are aspects of love within the poem; however, the theme of

⁸⁴ Warlock, *The Curlew*.

mourning and of death is what shines the brightest. He emphasizes this theme by his use of language as well as the title being used as a form of indication. An incomplete ballad stanza, therefore, would be more suitable for what Yeats has written.

Yeats' choice of words throughout the poem gives the image that the speaker is at the wake of his beloved's funeral. This idea is enhanced by him describing her lifeless features. Because of the setting and the softness of the text, the reader is given an image that the speaker is leaning in closely to his beloved, whispering to her the tale of a woman that loved him. This enhances the depressive state of the poem by putting the reader in the middle of the scene as he is saying his final goodbye.

Warlock's musical setting of this poem gives the atmosphere a very hushed presence. The majority of the movement is written as *pp*, with a substantial amount written as *ppp*. This can be interpreted as the speaker whispering closely to his beloved how much he loved her and how he never stopped loving her, even if they were not together in a romantic sense.

Performance

There is a relatively long interlude which gives the performer a chance to transition from one mood to another; it must not be an abrupt change of character since the music segues from one movement to the next. This poem maintains a sense of melancholy from the previous poem. It is in compound meter and is slower than the previous. The chamber group plays a harmonious accompaniment, so it is not too difficult to find the melodic line.

"The Withering of the Boughs"⁸⁵

I cried when the moon was murmuring to the birds,
'Let peewit call and curlew cry where they will,
I long for your merry and tender and pitiful words,
For the roads are unending, and there is no place to my mind.'
The honey-pale moon lay low on the sleepy hill,
And I fell asleep upon lonely Ectge of streams.
No boughs have withered because of the wintry wind;
The boughs have withered because I have told them my dreams.

I know of the leafy paths the witches take,
Who come with their crowns of pearl and their spindles of wool,
And their secrets smile, out of the depths of the lake;
I know where a dim moon drifts, where the Danaan kind
Wind and unwind their dances when the light grows cool
On the island lawns, their feet where the pale foam gleams.
no boughs have withered because of the wintry wind;
The boughs have withered because I have told them my dreams.

I know of the sleepy country, where swans fly round
Coupled with golden chains, and sing as they fly.
A king and a queen are wandering there, and the sound
Has made them so happy and hopeless, so deaf and so blind
With wisdom, they wander till all the years have gone by;
I know, and the curlew and peewit on Ectge of streams.
No boughs have withered because of the wintry wind;
The bough have withered because I have told them my dreams.

The speaker laments as the moon speaks to the birds, and the peewit and curlew continue their calls. He yearns for the voice of his beloved as he falls asleep under the pale moon on the Ectge of streams. The trees are withering not because of the cold wind but because of his own unhappiness.

The reader is then transported as the natural and supernatural converge as the speaker dreams. The speaker sees where the witches come from while they collect their pearls and wool. The faeries dance on the island lawns as the sun sets and the moon emerges. The reader is reminded that the trees wither because of his own unhappiness.

The reader is once again transported to a sleepy country in the final moments of his dreams. The swans fly above, combined by a golden chain. The king and queen below can hear them

⁸⁵ Warlock, *The Curlew*.

singing, and it makes them radiant. The speaker, along with the peewit and curlew, know that it is not the heavy, cold wind that causes the boughs to weep; it is his own unhappiness.

The third poem consists of three stanzas that are eight lines each, or an octave. The lines are comprised of anywhere between 11 and 15 syllables. There is a rhyme scheme of ABACBD CD in each octave, and each utilizes end rhyme.

This poem takes on a different mood than the ones preceding because nature takes on an active role. The scene is set as the moon “murmurs” to the birds as the speaker is near a “sleepy hill.” This is significant because this is the first time where the reader is transported to a magical realm. The reader can infer that the second and third stanzas are within a dream because the first stanza concludes with the speaker falling asleep. Before being transported to this realm, however, Yeats gives his first nod toward his Irish heritage with the mentioning of the “Echtge of streams.” The Echtge is also known as Slieve Aughty, which is a mountain range that spreads over the western part of Ireland, across County Galway and County Clare.⁸⁶

The reader is transported to an unbelievable and magical realm, full of witches, swans, royalty, and even faeries (“Danaan kind”). It seems like a sight to behold, a pleasant dream when looking upon the surface. The faeries, however, are what should snap the reader out of this illusion. Faeries, by nature, are tricksters; they are beautiful and majestic creatures that can easily tempt mortals away from their earthly comforts. They can promise a spiritual transformation; however, they pose a serious threat because they can also bring with them disillusion and loss of individuality.

In each stanza, Yeats repeats the idea that the boughs wither because the speaker has told them his dream. Including the longing for his beloved as well as the magical faery world can prod the reader to infer that the speaker longs for beauty and immortality. The faeries represent the beauty of which he seeks, and his desperate longing for his beloved is the clue to immortality; were

⁸⁶ “Slieve Aughty Mountains Galway Slieve Aughty Ireland,” Slieve Aughty Mountains Galway Slieve Aughty Ireland, accessed December 08, 2016, <http://gort.galway-ireland.ie/slieve-aughty.htm>.

he and his beloved immortal, they would be able to be together for eternity. His dream is hopeless, though, and the woe of reality causes the boughs to wither away.

It is in the third poem that the audience gets the grandest use of word painting from Warlock. The first stanza is characterized by more calls from the peewit and curlew in the flute and violin, respectively. The second stanza is characterized as a magical witches' ride within the instruments as the vocalist describes the magical realm into which the audience has entered. The final stanza is characterized by a moment of tranquility as the speaker describes the "sleepy country." His serenity is interrupted by the cor anglais, however, as the mood of despair is reintroduced.

Performance

This is the longest and most challenging movement of the entire work. It is not only textually difficult, but the rhythmic line of the melody is more complex. The challenge for the singer is being able to deliver the text in a way that makes it seem like it rolls off the tongue and not be too metrical with the line. With the exception at letter P, the rhythmic line of the singer is independent from the chamber group.

"He Hears the Cry of the Sedge"⁸⁷

I wander by the edge
Of this desolate lake
Where wind cries in the sedge
'Until the axle break
That keeps the stars in their round,
And hands hurl in the deep
The banners of East and West,
And the girdle of light is unbound,
Your breast will not lie by the breast of your beloved in sleep'.

The speaker is walking by the edge of a lake. It is cold outside, and he can hear the wind as it passes through the sedge. He looks into the sky and realizes that he will never again see his beloved in the world of the living; it is not until the stars fall and their light is unbound that he will see her again.

This is a short poem of nine lines that does not follow a typical poetic form. The majority of the lines are made up of six syllables, while lines five and seven use seven syllables, line eight uses nine syllables, and line nine uses fifteen syllables. Yeats uses a rhyme scheme of ABABCDECD, in which end rhyme is exclusively used, with the exception of line seven. There is no end rhyme used in line seven, but there is an internal rhyme with the word "West" in line seven and the word "breast" in line nine.

"He Hears the Cry of the Sedge" is, in a way, an extension of the first poem. "He Reproves the Curlew" ends with "there is enough evil in the crying of wind." The final poem takes the wind's crying a step further and makes the wind even more malevolent. The wind now has its own voice passing through the sedge, and it speaks of the coming apocalypse.

In the first three lines of text, we are introduced to the speaker as well as the setting of the poem: on the edge of a cold, desolate lake. The reader is made aware of the cold temperature by the reference to the sedge, which only grows in cold and wet places. The setting of the poem adds to the overall mood of desolation and loneliness. The next five lines are a reference to the universe. Yeats speaks of an axle that holds the stars together and keeps them in their orbit. This reference,

⁸⁷ Warlock, *The Curlew*.

as well as the “hands” in the preceding line, lets the reader deduce that Yeats believes in a high power or is at least speaking of one. His mentioning of the banners of East and West is a direct reference to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which was an organization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries that was devoted to the study and practice of the occult, metaphysics, and paranormal activities.⁸⁸ This organization is one of the leading influences to what we know today as Wicca. Yeats speaks of the unbinding of the girdle of light, which appears to be some kind of apocalyptic event. This apocalypse, however, is not a horrible life ending event, but it is a positive restoration because with its occurrence, the speaker will be reunited with his beloved.

Warlock enhances Yeats’ mood of sadness and desolation by setting the poem with unaccompanied voice. It seems that Warlock believed there was no better way to drive home the idea of isolation than to leave the vocal line completely alone. It is not until the last line of the poem that the cello, second violin, and viola emerge and slightly support the voice. This is another way Warlock has enhanced the poetry; the entrance of these three instruments is linked to the speaker being reunited with his beloved.

Performance

The final song emerges slowly from the end of an instrumental movement and is largely unaccompanied until the last eight bars when the chamber group provides the final cadence. This is by far the hardest of the movements because it is a cappella. It will be crucial to know exactly where each note lies for the singer because of the heavy use of chromaticism. Warlock further complicates the melodic line by adding in several skips, as well as an A5, the highest note of the entire work.

⁸⁸ David A. Ross, *Critical Companion to William Butler Yeats: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts On File, 2009).

Chapter V

ERNEST CHARLES

Composer

ERNEST CHARLES (1895-1984)

Ernest Charles was born Ernest Grosskopf in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1895.⁸⁹ He was a competent pianist and budding composer, but his true passion was for singing. He studied at California State University with Charles Modini Wood long enough to develop his tenor voice. He had a small career doing revues and recitals in California until he decided to move to New York City.⁹⁰ He changed his surname from Grosskopf to Charles and delved deep into a performance career as a Broadway and vaudeville singer.⁹¹ It was as a composer that he gained recognition, however. Charles was offered a contract from G. Schirmer when the famous baritone John Charles Thomas performed Charles' composition, *Clouds*, at a recital. After signing, he provided the company with a number of art songs that he composed with ease. Charles remained in New York throughout the 1940s while he produced a radio program called *Great Moments in Music* and married a mezzo-soprano. He and his wife decided to move to Beverly Hills in 1953, where he remained until his death in 1984.⁹²

⁸⁹ "Alliance Music Publications Inc. - When I Have Sung My Songs To You." *Alliance Music Publications Inc. - When I Have Sung My Songs To You* (Alliance Music Publications, 2004), accessed 10 October 2016.

⁹⁰ Victoria Etnier Villamil, *A Singer's Guide to the American Art Song, 1870-1980* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2004).

⁹¹ "Alliance," *Alliance*.

⁹² Villamil, *A Singer's Guide*.

“When I Have Sung My Songs to You”

“When I Have Sung My Songs” was written in 1934. Charles not only composed the music, but he also wrote the poetry himself. As Alliance Music Publications Inc. states, “His style of writing bridged the gap between Cole Porter and the more classical art song of the day.” This is arguably Charles’ most famous art song, and it is used to close recitals even now.⁹³

⁹³ “Alliance,” *Alliance*.

“When I Have Sung My Songs To You”

When I have sung my songs to you, I'll sing no more.
T'would be a sacrilege to sing at another door.
We've worked so hard to hold our dreams,
Just you and I.
I could not share them all again I'd rather die
With just the thought that I had loved so well, so true,
That I could never sing again,
That I could never, never sing again,
Except to you!

The speaker is telling the person of their affection how they could never imagine singing to anyone but them. The two have worked and lived together so closely that their dreams are intertwined; it would be a blasphemy to sing to anyone else.

There is a common misconception that the text of this poem is relatively sad; the speaker has lost their one true love, and they have decided to never sing again because they feel that it would be a betrayal. On the contrary, it is a poem and song of undying love and devotion. The speaker is saying that they have spent the best years of their life with this person. The amount of joy they have experienced with their beloved is indescribable. It is not out of sadness that the speaker has decided to never sing again but out of love and contentment. The speaker feels as if they have accomplished everything they could have ever dreamed with their beloved, and it is out of love that the speaker has decided to quit singing. Not only is it a song of affection, but it is also a song of gratitude.

Performance

This is a quintessential love song that should be in any performers repertoire. The flowing melody and lush harmony portrays everything there is to know about undying love and affection. The rhythmic line is straightforward, and the melody is diatonic with only eight chromatic notes throughout the entire song.

What may be tricky for some performers is the range of the song; the majority of the piece has a lower tessitura, but the climax is on a G5. The challenge will be the ease of flipping into head

voice so that the high note is not weighted down with the chest voice; it needs to ring with complete clarity to have the maximum emotional effect on the audience.

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