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Scholarly Program Notes

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SCHOLARLY PROGRAM NOTES

by

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A Research Paper
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SCHOLARLY PROGRAM NOTES

By

Ming Wei Neo

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TITLE: SCHOLARLY PROGRAM NOTES

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Paul Transue

This document is a compilation of biographical and musical information that serves to inform the audience about the music presented at the graduate recital of Ms. Ming Wei Neo. The works discussed will include an opera scene from Act I and the arias, “Che gelida manina” and “Mi chiamano Mimì” from *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini; a song cycle, *A Charm of Lullabies* Op.41 by Benjamin Britten; four songs, “Il pleure dans mon cœur”, “L’ombre des arbres”, “Green” and “Spleen” from *Ariette oubliées* by Claude Debussy; *Meine Liebe ist grün, Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht, Botschaft, O kühler Wald*, and *Von ewiger Liebe* by Johannes Brahms; and *Siete canciones populares españolas* by Manuel de Falla.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT.....	i
LIST OF FIGURES.....	iii
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Giacomo Puccini.....	1
CHAPTER 2 – Benjamin Britten.....	12
CHAPTER 3 – Claude Debussy.....	17
CHAPTER 4 – Johannes Brahms.....	25
CHAPTER 5 – Manuel de Falla.....	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	41
VITA.....	43

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1.....	4
Figure 2.....	15
Figure 3.....	15
Figure 4.....	19
Figure 5.....	21
Figure 6.....	31
Figure 7.....	35

CHAPTER 1

GIACOMO PUCCINI (1858-1924)

Giacomo Puccini, the greatest composer of Italian opera after Verdi, was born into a family that had four generations of musicians. He began his musical education in 1874 with his uncle Fortunato Magi and was introduced to the study of orchestral scores, particularly Verdi's, by Carlo Angeloni. His first success as a composer was established in these years with his motet *Plaudite populi* and a Credo. His unusual gifts were discovered and, in 1880, he enrolled in the conservatory in Milan, the theatre capital of Italy, for further studies.

During his first three years in Milan, Puccini established the foundations of his future success, first with the composer and violinist Antonio Bazzini, then with the established opera composer Amile Ponchielli. Puccini learnt the art of *coup de théâtre*, the basic principles of Wagnerian aesthetics from Amintore Galli, and about the French style by attending performances of almost all the major operas of Bizet, Gounod, and Thomas at La Scala and other theatres. His mastery in theatre and experience with the French style later became some of his most distinctive traits.

Puccini's first opera was *Le villi*, which he entered in a competition in 1883 but was rejected by the examiners because the score was illegible. Fortunately, his composition talent was discovered by the publisher Giulio Ricordi, who was influential in raising it for a production, and the opera became a success.¹ Puccini's rise to fame started with his third opera, *Manon Lescaut*, written in 1893. The libretto for it was written by Giuseppe Giancosa and Luigi Illica, who worked closely with Puccini. His next three works used the same collaborators and gave him a worldwide reputation: *La Bohème* (1896), *Tosca* (1900), and *Madama Butterfly*

¹ Michele Girardi, "Puccini, Giacomo". *Oxford Music Online*, Accessed March 30, 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40280pg5>.

(1904). *La Bohème* is a sentimental opera with dramatic touches of realism, *Tosca* is a “prolonged indulgence of lust and crime made tolerable by the beauty of the music”², and *Madama Butterfly* is a story of love and heartbreak in an exotic Japanese setting. In these four operas, the heroines—Manon, Mimi, Tosca, and Butterfly—are destined to die, and another characteristic they share is the rich warmth and melting radiance of the vocal line.³

Puccini uses a kind of perpetual “pregnancy” in the melody, either sung or given to the orchestra as a background for vocal recitative. This “pregnancy” is a melodic phrase that seemed to bring together the whole feeling of a scene in a pure and concentrated moment of expression. He also uses motifs for dramatic function rather than for musical development, simply to recall earlier moments in the opera or to establish a mood through repetition. Puccini had the major requisites for an opera composer and an instinct for the theatre. He had the Italian gift of writing idiomatically and effectively for the singers, an unusually keen ear for new harmonic and instrumental colors, a mind interested in musical progress, and a poetic imagination excelling in the evocation of dreamlike, fantastic moods.⁴

La Bohème, an opera in four acts with the libretto written by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, is based on *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* by Henri Murger. There was an open rivalry between Puccini and Leoncavallo for this opera, with both insisting they had a prior claim to it. However, Puccini’s compositional genius surpassed Leoncavallo’s and from its premiere, *La Bohème* was an important work in the international repertory. Puccini, Giacosa, and Illica established a perfect working method where priority was given to the dramatic structure thus,

² Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera* 4th edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 490.

³ Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera* 4th edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 490.

⁴ Donald Jay Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams, *A Short History of Opera* 4th edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 491 and 494.

giving Puccini his first musical ideas. He gave great importance to poetic metre and often asked his partners to adjust the verse according to what he wanted, which was different from the traditional demands of most 19th-century opera composers.

Puccini was able to compose music that would naturally follow the action of the verse and dramatic qualities of the libretto. He surpassed his contemporaries by introducing this new relationship between close-knit drama and traditional lyrical style. In *La Bohème*, he set everyday action to music in which every gesture reflected ordinary life (realism) while simultaneously creating a higher level of narrative, conveying metaphorically a world in which time is passing, and the young are the protagonists. Puccini loosely combined different types of sound to represent the individual and collective picture of a group of penniless artists – extended lyrical melodies, flexible motives, tonality as a means of relating to different words or symbols, brilliant and varied orchestral coloring. The frame of the action is based on moments when the characters reveal themselves.⁵

La Bohème tells a simple story of a poet named Rodolfo, who happens to meet Mimi, a seamstress he falls in love with. However, due to their frequent quarrels and his jealous nature, he decides to leave her. Rodolfo misses Mimi terribly, and they reunite as Mimi, now dying of consumption, comes to see him. They reminisce about their first meetings and express their love for one another. Mimi then dies in Rodolfo's arms.

This scene from Act I describes when Rodolfo and Mimi first meet. Rodolfo sits down and prepares to write as he hears a timid knock at the door. He asks who is there and Mimi answers, saying her candle has gone out. Rodolfo runs to the door, opens it and sees Mimi, a frail and appealing young woman who has a candle in one hand and a key in the other. Rodolfo

⁵ Michele Girardi, "Puccini, Giacomo". *Oxford Music Online*, Accessed March 30, 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40280pg5>

welcomes her in and she lights her candle with his. As she is about to leave, she collapses with a fit of coughing into a chair. When she tries to get up, her candle gets extinguished, as does Rodolfo's. The room is dark and Mimi tries to find her key that she dropped. Rodolfo finds it and keeps it in his pocket as he searches for Mimi guided by her voice and movements. Their hands touch and he sings *Che gelida manina* (Your tiny hand is frozen), and introduces who he is, what he does as a poet, and what his aspirations are. Mimi, in turn, tells of her life as a seamstress in *Mi chiamano Mimì* (They call me Mimi).⁶

In the scene, Puccini introduces Mimi's theme in the strings as she first appears before Rodolfo, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Mimi
Lento *(off-stage)*
Scu-si.
Excuse me.

Rod.
(disconsolately) *(a timid knock at the door)* *(rising)*
Non so-no in ve-na. Chi è là? U-na don-na!
I'm not in-spired. Who's there? Who can that be?

Mimi
(at the door, holding)
Di gra-zia, mi s'è spen-to il lu-me. Vor-
For-give me. Will you light my can-dle? Al-

Rod.
(Runs to open the door.)
Ec-co. There now.

Mimi's Theme

⁶ Earl Harewood, *The Definitive Kobbé's Opera Book*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1987), 942-948.

Puccini writes music in a way that depicts the dramatic action while always ensuring that the music fits the natural text declamation. For example, the music becomes agitated as portrayed by the string tremolos when Mimi starts to cough, and describing the stairs that exhaust her. Puccini then uses cellos, an instrument of the lower registers, and punctuated diminished chords to suggest the idea of her collapsing into the chair. When Rodolfo sprinkles water on her face to revive her, Puccini uses held notes in the flutes and pizzicato in the violins to portray the water being sprinkled. The arias *Che gelida manina* and *Mi chiamano Mimì* both feature brilliant and varied orchestral colors describing the dramatic action in the text, moments of intense and heightened expression (“pregnancy” in the melodies), and sweeping lyrical lines that stir up emotions, which are the distinctive traits of Puccini that show his genius as an opera composer.

Scene from Act I

Scene from Act I

(Rodolfo closes the door, puts down the light, clears the table a bit, takes an inkwell and paper, then sits down to write, after putting out the other light which had stayed lit. But finding no inspiration he becomes restless, tears up the paper and throws away the pen.)

Rodolfo:
Non sono in vena!

Rodolfo:
I am not in the mood!

(A timid knock is heard at the door.)

Chi è là!?

Who is there?

Mimi:
Scusi.

Mimi: (from outside)
Excuse me.

Rodolfo:
Una donna!

Rodolfo:
A woman!

Mimi:
Di grazia, mi s'è spento il lume.

Mimi:
Please, my light has gone out.

Rodolfo:
Ecco!

Rodolfo: (running to open)
Here I am!

(Mimi at the door with an extinguished candle and a key in her hands)

Mimi:
Vorebbe?

Mimi:
Would you?

Rodolfo:
S'accomodi un momento.

Rodolfo:
Come in for a moment.

Mimi:
Non occorre.

Mimi:
It is not necessary.

Rodolfo:
La prego, entri.

Rodolfo: (insisting)
Please, come in.

(Mimi enters and is seized with choking.)

Rodolfo:
Si sente male?

Rodolfo: (concerned)
Do you feel ill?

Mimi:
No... nulla.

Mimi:
No... nothing.

Rodolfo:
Impallidisce!

Rodolfo:
You're growing pale!

Mimi:
Il respire... Quelle scale...

Mimi: (seized by coughing)
My breath... those stairs...

(She faints and her key and candle fall to the floor. Rodolfo barely has time to support her and ease her into a chair.)

Rodolfo:
Ed ora come faccio?

Rodolfo: (bewildered)
What shall I do now?

(He goes to fetch some water and sprinkles Mimi's face with it.)

Così!

Thus!

(looking at her with keen interest)

Che viso d'ammalata!

What face of a sick girl!

(Mimi comes to.)

Si sente meglio?

Do you feel better?

Mimi:
Sì.

Mimi: (in a faint voice)
Yes.

Rodolfo:
Qui c'è tanto freddo.
segga vicino al fuoco...

Rodolfo:
Here it's so cold,
sit near the fire.

(He makes Mimi get up and leads her to sit down near the stove.)

Aspetti... un po' di vino.

Wait... a little of wine.

(He runs to the table and gets a bottle and glass.)

Mimi:
Grazie.

Mimi:
Thanks.

Rodolfo:
A lei.

Rodolfo: (giving her the glass and pouring)
For you.

Mimi:
Poco, poco.

Mimi:
Just a little.

Rodolfo:
Così?

Rodolfo:
Like this?

Mimi:
Grazie.

Mimi: (as she drinks)
Thanks.

Rodolfo:
(Che bella bambina!)

Rodolfo: (admiring her)
(What a beautiful girl!)

Mimi:
Ora permetta che accenda il lume.
È tutto passato.

Mimi: (rising, looking for her candlestick)
Please allow me to light my candle.
Everything is all right now.

Rodolfo:
Tanta fretta?

Rodolfo:
So much haste?

Mimi:
Sì

Mimi:
Yes.

(Rodolfo lights Mimi's candle and gives it to her without a word.)

Mimi:
Grazie, buona sera.

Mimi:
Thank you, good evening.

Rodolfo:
Buona sera.

Rodolfo:
Good evening.

(He accompanies her to the door, then returns immediately to his work.)

(She leaves, then reappears at the door.)

Mimi:
Oh! Sventata! La chiave della stanza,
dove l'ho lasciata?

Mimi:
Oh! Foolish me! Where have I left
the key to my room?

Rodolfo:
Non stia sull'uscio;
il lume vacilla al vento.

Rodolfo:
Don't stay at the door,
the flame flickers in the wind.

(Mimi's candle goes out.)

Mimi:
Oh Dio! Torni ad accenderlo.

Mimi:
Oh God! Light it again.

(Rodolfo runs with his candle to relight Mimi's, but as he nears the door, his light also goes out [or is blown out by him], and the room turns very dark.)

Rodolfo:
Oh Dio! Anche il mio s'è spento!

Rodolfo:
Oh God! Mine has also gone out!

Mimi:
Ah! E la chiave ove sarà?

Mimi:
Ah! And the key, where can it be?

(Groping her way she finds the table and puts her candlestick down on it.)

(He is near the door and he closes it.)

Rodolfo:
Buio pesto!

Rodolfo:
Pitch dark!

Mimi:
Disgraziata!

Mimi:
Unlucky me!

Rodolfo:
Ove sarà?

Rodolfo:
Where can it be?

Mimi:
Importuna è la vicina.

Mimi: (confused)
Your neighbor is being a nuisance.

Rodolfo:
Ma le pare!

Rodolfo:
Not at all!

Mimi:
Importuna è la vicina...

Mimi:
Bothersome is the neighbor...

Rodolfo:
Cosa dice, ma le pare!

Rodolfo:
What do you say, not at all!

Mimi:
Cerchi!

Mimi:
Look for it.

Rodolfo:
Cerco.

Rodolfo:
I'm looking.

(Mimi looks for the key on the floor, dragging her feet, and Rodolfo does the same.)

Mimi:
Ove sarà?

Mimi:
Where can it be?

(He finds it and puts it into his pocket.)

Rodolfo:
Ah!

Rodolfo:
Ah!

Mimi:
L'ha trovata?

Mimi:
Have you found it?

Rodolfo:
No!

Rodolfo:
No!

Mimi:
Mi parve...

Mimi:
It seemed to me...

Rodolfo:
In verità!

Rodolfo:
Honestly!

Mimi:
Cerca?

Mimi:
Are you looking?

Rodolfo:
Cerco!

Rodolfo:
I'm looking!

(Guided by Mimi's voice, Rodolfo pretends to be looking as he comes closer to her. Mimi bends and searches, groping on the ground. Rodolfo's hand meets Mimi's hand and clutches it.)

Mimi:
Ah!

Mimi: (surprised, getting up)
Ah!

Rodolfo:
 Che gelida manina,
 se la lasci riscaldar.
 Cercar che giova?
 Al buio non si trova.
 Ma per fortuna è una notte di luna,
 e qui la luna l'abbiamo vicina.
 Aspetti signorina,
 le dirò con due parole
 chi son, e che faccio, come vivo
 Vuole?
 Chi son? Sono un poeta.
 Che cosa faccio? Scrivo.
 E come vivo? Vivo.
 In povertà mia lieta
 scialo da gran signore
 rime ed inni d'amore.
 Per sogni e per chimere
 e per castelli in aria
 l'anima ho milionaria.
 Talor dal mio forziere
 ruban tutti gioielli due
 ladri: gli occhi belli.
 V'entrar con voi pur ora,
 ed i miei sogni usati
 e i bei sogni miei
 tosto si dileguar!
 Ma il furto non m'accora
 poichè v'ha preso stanza
 la dolce speranza!
 Or che mi conoscete
 Parlate voi.
 Deh! parlate.
 Chi siete?
 Vi paccia dir!

Mimi:
 Sì. Mi chiamano Mimi,
 ma il mio nome è Lucia.
 La storia mia è breve.
 A tela o a seta
 ricamo in casa e fuori.
 Son tranquilla e lieta,
 ed è mio svago far gigli e rose.
 Mi piaccion quelle cose
 che han sì dolce malìa,

Rodolfo: (holding Mimi's hand)
 What an icy little hand,
 let me warm it.
 What is the use of searching?
 We can't find it in the dark.
 But fortunately it's a moonlit night
 And here the moon, we have it near.
 Wait, miss,
 to you I'll tell in two words.
 who I am, and what I do, how I live.
 Would you like that?
 Who am I? I'm a poet.
 What do I do? I write.
 And how I live? I live.
 In my happy poverty
 I squander like a great Lord
 rhymes and hymns of love.
 When it comes to dreams and fantasies
 or for castles in the air
 I have a millionaire's soul.
 At times from my coffer
 all my jewels are stolen by two
 thieves: two beautiful eyes
 They entered here with you just now
 and my dreams familiar
 and the beautiful dreams mine
 quickly disappeared!
 But the theft doesn't grieve me
 because hope has taken
 their sweet place!
 Now that you know me
 You speak.
 Come! Speak.
 Who are you?
 Will you please tell!

Mimi:
 Yes, they call me Mimi,
 but my name is Lucia.
 The story mine is brief.
 On cloth or on silk
 I embroider at home or away.
 I'm calm and happy
 and my hobby is to make lilies and roses.
 I am pleased by such things
 that have such sweet magic,

che parlano d'amor, di primavera,
che parlano di sogni e di chimere-
quelle cose che han nome poesia.
Lei m'intende?

Mi chiamano Mimì.
Il perchè non so.
Sola, mi fo il pranzo da me stessa.
Non vado sempre a messa
ma prego assai il Signor.
Vivo sola, soletta,
là in una bianca cameretta;
guardo sui tetti e in cielo.
Ma quando vien lo sgelo
il primo sole è mio...
il primo bacio dell'aprile è mio!
Germoglia in un vaso una rosa...
foglia a foglia la spio!
Così gentil il profumo d'un fior!
Ma i fior ch'io faccio, ahimè!
non hanno odore!

Altro di me non le saprei
narrare.
Sono la sua vicina
che la vien fuori d'ora a importunare.

that speak of love, of springtimes,
that speak of dreams and of fantasies—
those things that have the name poetry.
You understand me?

They call me Mimi.
The reason, I don't know.
I make my meals by myself alone.
I do not always go to mass
but I pray much to the Lord.
I live alone, all alone,
there, in a white little room;
I look over the roofs and into the sky.
But when comes the thaw
the first sun is mine...
the first kiss of April is mine!
A rose blooms in a vase...
leaf by leaf I observe it!
So delicate the perfume of a flower!
But the flowers I make, alas!
don't have a fragrance!

I wouldn't know what else to tell you
about myself.
I am your neighbor
who comes to bother you at an odd hour.

English translation by Nico Castel⁷

⁷ Nico Castel, *The Complete Puccini Libretti Volume I*, (New York: Leyerle Publications, 2002), 28-38.

CHAPTER 2

BENJAMIN BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Benjamin Britten, a pianist, conductor and composer who dominated English art music in the 20th century, was born into a middle-class family in Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. His father, a dentist, appears not to have encouraged his son's musical life as did his mother, a singer and pianist. Before he was ten, Benjamin wrote plays, explored the piano fervently, and wrote a substantial number of compositions. He had piano lessons with Edith Astle and viola lessons with Audrey Alston, who introduced him to Frank Bridge. Britten started composition lessons with Bridge and he was a great influence on him in teaching him to find himself and staying true to his compositional style. Bridge continued to stimulate Britten and directed his need to compose for several years.

Britten then entered the Royal College of Music (RCM) with a successful scholarship application of some of his compositions. There, he studied piano with Arthur Benjamin and composition with John Ireland, though Bridge maintained a greater influence on him. Living in London allowed him to gain a wider knowledge of repertoire than in RCM. He made notes in his diaries about his reactions to hearing to some works of Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Mahler, and very much preferred the music of Beethoven and Brahms. Mahler, however, later became a major influence on his orchestral technique and sense of compositional irony. During his second year at RCM, he won the Cobbett Chamber Music Prize with his *Phantasy in F minor* for string quartet and he graduated from RCM in 1932.⁸

A gifted and prolific composer, Britten's works include piano pieces, symphonic works, concertos, chamber music, and particularly remarkable contributions to vocal music. He had a

⁸ Philip Brett, "Britten, Benjamin", *Oxford Music Online*, Accessed March 27, 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/46435pg1>

special affinity for words and wrote vastly for the voice in all genres: opera, choral works, cycles for voice and instruments, and solo song. His operas are the most important British contribution to the genre, including his most successful opera *Peter Grimes*. In his approach to texts and word setting, he tries to achieve good recitative by transforming the natural intonations and rhythms of everyday speech into memorable musical phrases.

Britten's long-standing relationship with tenor Peter Pears influenced him to write many vocal works and operatic roles for Pears' voice. His output of songs is extensive and much of his knowledge of writing for the voice was influenced by this close association with Pears. Most of Britten's songs are in sets and cycles and among his most popular vocal music are his arrangements of British and French folk songs.

Britten composed *A Charm of Lullabies* Op. 41, a song cycle of five songs, for Nancy Evans. She created the role of Nancy (named for her) in *Albert Herring*, and also sang the title role in *The Rape of Lucretia* at Glyndebourne in 1946. This is his only vocal work not written for Peter Pears between 1940 and 1965. His diverse choice of poems in this set shows the range of his literary taste. All the songs are lullabies of some sort, greatly varied in musical style and drama, and they are unconventional in that their reflections of meanings and moods are not typically related to cradle songs. A secondary meaning of the word *charm* is to "put to sleep" and it is derived from *carmen* which means song.⁹

A Charm of Lullabies is also a great example of his ability to set music to words, whether the text is a simple dialogue or a formally structured poem. Britten portrays the essence of each poem with a musical atmosphere seemingly a perfect fit for declamation, yet includes surprises

⁹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 392.

and unpredictable twists in the melody, harmony, and rhythm. This work points toward his later vocal style in its clarity and directness.¹⁰

A Cradle Song sets a poem of William Blake. Its linear piano accompaniment provides the lullaby atmosphere. The rocking rhythm of the cradle is established in the left hand and the interval gradually increases chromatically to complement the right hand melody. The chromaticism found in the melody of the accompaniment adds to the unsettledness of this cradle song, which is ironic yet describes the twist in the text: the baby has secret joys and secret smiles, along with cunning thoughts that lie in its sleeping heart. At this point, the accompaniment becomes dissonant through the use of bitonality in both hands, building to a climax before finally resolving to C major. This suggests the sudden outburst of text, “Then the dreadful lightnings break”.

The Highland Balou is based on the poem by the great Scottish poet Robert Burns. The setting of the song is mostly influenced by Britten’s memories of Scottish songs heard in Lowestoft during his childhood, and it features Scottish elements such as the Scotch “snap” and a bagpipe drone.¹¹ These elements run throughout the song, giving the song its folk flavor, as does the vocal line with its dotted rhythms and more tonal melodic contour compared to the first song. Though this song in general sounds more diatonic than *A Cradle Song*, it still features some dissonant harmonies, which is one of Britten’s stylistic traits.

Sephestia’s Lullaby, set to a poem by Robert Greene, is the lament of a single mother, probably unwed, abandoned by the father of her child.¹² Its two alternating sections, ABABA, greatly contrast with one another in terms of mood and speed, with the second section in *Doppio*

¹⁰ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 391.

¹¹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 392.

¹² Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 393.

movemento. Britten signifies the weeping and grief with a sighing, dissonant sounding figure in the piano accompaniment right at the start of the song, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The musical score for Figure 2 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the voice, starting with a whole rest followed by a melodic line with lyrics: "Weep not, my wan-ton, smile up-on my knee;". The middle and bottom staves are for the piano accompaniment. The left hand plays a dissonant, sighing figure marked "piangendo", while the right hand plays a more melodic line. The tempo is "Lento" and the mood is "p dolce".

As it transitions into the next section, he uses the same pitches from the motive and turns it into grace notes with a syncopated off-beat accompaniment to give the song its rhythmic drive, as shown in Figure 3. The song is therefore unified by these pitches.

Figure 3

The musical score for Figure 3 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the voice, starting with a whole rest followed by a melodic line with lyrics: "Mo-ther's wag, pret-ty boy,". The middle and bottom staves are for the piano accompaniment. The left hand plays a syncopated off-beat accompaniment with grace notes, marked "pp". The tempo is "Doppio movimento (allegretto)" and the mood is "leggiero".

A Charm, set to a poem by Thomas Randolph, is a lullaby menacing in tone, describing the efforts of a frustrated nurse to force the child to go to sleep.¹³ With the text “Quiet, sleep! or I will make. . .” followed by a series of threats made by the nurse of what awful things will happen to the unfortunate infant if he does not go to sleep, Britten depicts the desperation of the nurse in the music with two very contrasting sections that alternate. The first section is marked by dissonant tremolos suggesting the temperament of the nurse, who has become irritated and

¹³ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 393.

frustrated with the baby, before breaking out into an outburst of anger and a series of threats in the second section – a fiery passage marked by *staccatissimo* chords in the right hand alternating with a leaping bass line that creates a feeling of “hopping with anger”. Interestingly, Britten unifies the song, as in *Sephestia’s Lullaby*, by using the same few pitches in both sections.

The Nurse’s Song, set to a poem of John Philip, shows the nurse finally coming to terms with her duty to coax the baby to sleep using a gentle tone. The atmosphere of the song is that of a garden-variety lullaby, beginning with three unaccompanied short vocal phrases, with the rocking rhythm first hinted in the vocal part.¹⁴ The piano then establishes the rocking rhythm and imitates the vocal melody at one point. The song goes through a series of modulations created in part by the rising and falling arpeggiated runs across two octaves of the keyboard. The lullaby ends with the beginning phrases of the melody, unaccompanied, giving the song a cyclic whole.

¹⁴ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 393.

CHAPTER 3

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Mostly known for his associations with Impressionism, Debussy is one of the most important musicians of his time and his harmonic innovations had a significant influence on generations of composers. He created new sounds and revealed a range of harmonic and tone color previously unheard of in works for piano and orchestra.

Debussy grew up in a modest family. His grandfather was a wine seller and his father was a marine who opened a china shop with Debussy's mother. During the Franco-Prussian war, his family sought refuge with his father's sister, and it was then he received his first piano lessons with the Italian musician, Jean Cerutti. Debussy was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire in 1872, where his first teachers quickly realized that he had a good ear and was an able sight-reader. Between 1875-7, he won small prizes for solfège and piano, but failing to win a *premier prix* for piano, he had to give up the dream of becoming a piano virtuoso. He won his only *premier prix* as an accompanist.

Debussy started to compose *mélodies* in 1879, on texts by Alfred de Musset, and he supported himself as an accompanist. It was then he met his first love, Marie Vasnier, and wrote *mélodies* for her based on poems by Théophile Gautier, Leconte de Lisle and Théodore de Banville. In 1884, he won the Prix de Rome with his cantata, *L'enfant prodigue*. He was greatly influenced by Wagner when he went to the Bayreuth in 1888 and 1889, and he realised that he must break free from his influence. He became fascinated with the Javanese gamelan at the Paris Exhibition of 1889, and came into contact with Stéphane Mallarmé, who introduced him to the

poem of *L'après-midi d'un faune* which he then set it to music.¹⁵ Debussy's association with the Symbolist poets and external influences such as exoticism and orientalism helped pave the way to his distinctive harmonic language later.

Debussy composed a total of 87 songs, including some that are unfinished and unpublished. He wrote idiomatically for the voice and was masterful at translating poetic nuance into musical expression. His music is entirely dictated by the poem itself – it is not just accompaniment but a play of light and shade which creates around it a mood, a landscape, and the reflection of the landscape or of the mood.

Debussy had highly refined taste for literature and he maintained an active role in the literary and artistic circles of his time. He was known for his associations with painters and poets, who gave him most of his inspiration. He set most of his music to the poetry of his contemporaries, notably Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, and Verlaine was the first and most influential poet in his life.

Ariettes oubliées (Forgotten Airs), a group of six songs written in 1885-7, is based on poems of Paul Verlaine and it is Debussy's first important set of mélodies. In this set, his mature style starts to form. These songs consist of subtle musical responses to poetic elements and a refining of harmonies and vocal writing that closely tie the text and music together. The title was originally *Ariettes*, but it was changed to *Ariettes oubliées* fifteen years later when the set was reprinted after his critically-acclaimed opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*.¹⁶

Il pleure dans mon cœur is probably the best known of all the poems of Paul Verlaine. According to Pierre Bernac, the poet, in his vague and inexpressible melancholy, is at his

¹⁵ François Lesure and Roy Howat, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude", *Oxford Music Online*, Accessed March 20, 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353>

¹⁶ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 190, 192.

window listening to the falling rain and the music describes the rain's monotonous patter.¹⁷ This accompaniment pattern of an alternating 16th-note figure gives the song an underlying rhythmic drive and occurs throughout most of the song. The middle part of the song is marked by a recitative-like section of long note values and a descending minor 2nd melodic motive to suggest the "sighing" of the character as he starts to look inward and ask why he has unexplained sorrow in his heart. Debussy uses a recurring melodic motive throughout the song, taking it through different keys and at times switching the motive between both hands of the piano. This motive appears in the first part of the phrase of the left hand. The first part of the phrase consists of a whole-tone scale, and the second part consists of a chromatic descending line, both of which Debussy likes so much that they became distinct traits in his music. Figure 4 shows the accompaniment pattern as well as the recurring melodic motive with which Debussy unifies the song.

Figure 4

The image shows a musical score for a piano and voice. The tempo is marked "Allegro non tanto". The piano part is in the left hand, marked "PIANO." and "PP con sordine.", and features a repeating 16th-note figure. The vocal line is in the right hand, marked "P" and "un peu en dehors.", and features a recitative-like section with long note values and a descending minor 2nd melodic motive. The lyrics are "Il pleure dans mon cœur".

¹⁷ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1997), 164.

Il pleure dans mon cœur

Il pleure dans mon cœur
Comme il pleut sur la ville,
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon cœur?

Ô bruit doux de la pluie,
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie,
Ô le bruit de la pluie!

Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce cœur qui s'écœure.
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Ce deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon cœur a tant de peine.

Tears fall in my heart

Tears fall in my heart
like rain upon the town,
what is this languor
that pervades my heart?

O gentle sound of the rain
on the ground and on the roofs!
For a listless heart,
O the sound of the rain!

Tears fall without reason
in this sickened heart.
What! No perfidy?
This sorrow has no cause.

Indeed it is the worst pain
not to know why,
without love and without hate,
my heart feels so much pain!

English translation by Winifred Radford¹⁸

L'ombre des arbres features a quotation from Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*: "The nightingale sits on a branch of a tall tree thinking she is drowning in her reflection in the water beneath." The poet likewise, lamenting in the high branches of the tree, has his hopes drowned as he sees his reflection in the pale landscape.¹⁹

This song has a dark, mysterious mood set by the first two measures with a tritone movement of the melody in the first measure as well as in the movement of harmony from the first measure to the next. The motives found in both measures unify the song, and the second motive found in the second measure resembles a bird call. Figure 5 shows the movement, in melody and harmony, and the motives.

¹⁸ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1997), 164.

¹⁹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 193.

Figure 5

The musical score for 'L'ombre des arbres' is presented in a standard format. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staves. The tempo is marked 'Lent et triste'. The piano part includes two distinct motives, 'Motive 1' and 'Motive 2', which are highlighted with brackets. The lyrics 'L'ombre des arbres dans la ri.' are written below the vocal line.

The mood of the song is generally dark and subdued until it reaches a climax at the text “Et que tristes pleuraient” with a huge chord marked *sfp* which describes the intensity of the sadness and weeping. Chromaticism is a prevalent feature of this song and Debussy uses it to contribute to the unsettled feeling of the poetry.

L'ombre des arbres

L'ombre des arbres dans la rivière embrumée
Meurt comme de la fumée,
Tandis qu'en l'air, parmi les ramures réelles,
Se plaignent les tourterelles.

Combien, ô voyageur, ce paysage blême
Te mira blême toi-même,
Et que tristes pleuraient dans les hautes
feuillées, Tes espérances noyées.

The shadow of the trees

The shadow of the trees in the misty river
dies away like smoke,
while on high, among the real branches,
the doves sing their plaint.

How much, O traveler, this wan landscape
wanly reflected yourself,
and in the high foliage how sadly
wept your drowned hopes.

English translation by Winifred Radford.²⁰

Green is one of several poems of Verlaine to which he gave English titles. *Green* and *Spleen* are subtitled *Aquarelles* (Watercolors), which is interesting since Verlaine usually saw his poems in terms of music instead of painting. In *Art poétique* however, his key statement on poetry is “De la musique avant toute chose, Pas la Couleur, rien que la Nuance!” (Music before

²⁰ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1997), 165.

all else, No Color, nothing but Nuance!).²¹ This song is filled with youthful passion and it describes an ardent youth dashing impulsively through the early morning dew to his beloved as shown in the text “Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des feuilles et des branches”, in a burst of brightness, enthusiasm, and tenderness.²²

The song is in ternary form with the first section filled with brisk, leaping octaves in the right hand, which sets the light and fleeting mood of the song while also describing the breathlessness and spontaneity of the enthusiastic arrival of the young lover, flowers in his arms. The second section is marked by cascading arpeggios as well as florid runs across the registers of the keyboard, suggesting the ever enthusiastic lover. The final section has the same material from the first section, but the tempo slows down at the end of the song, describing the young lover finally resting his lover’s arms.

Green

Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des
feuilles et des branches,
Et puis voici mon cœur, qui ne bat
que pour vous.
Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux
mains blanches,
Et qu’à vos yeux si beaux l’humble
present soit doux.

J’arrive tout couvert encore de rosée
Que le vent du matin vient glacer à
mon front.
Souffrez que ma fatigue, à vos pieds
reposée,
Rêve des chers instants qui la
délasseront.

Sur votre jeune sein laisser rouler ma tête,

Green

Here are fruits, flowers, leaves and
branches,
And here too is my heart that beats
only for you.
Do not destroy it with your two
White hands,
And to your lovely eyes may the
Humble gift seem sweet.

I come still covered with dew
That the morning breeze has chilled
on my brow.
Let my weariness, resting at your
feet,
dream of dear moments which will bring
repose.

On your young breast let me rest my head,

²¹ Barbara Meister, *Nineteenth-Century French Song* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 318.

²² Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 194.

Toute sonore encore de vos derniers baisers;	still ringing with your last Kisses;
Laissez-la s'apaiser de la bonne tempête, Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.	let it be appeased after the good tempest, that I may sleep a little as you rest.

English translation by Winifred Radford²³

Spleen, subtitled, *Aquarelles II*, is of a mood that is unsettled and unpredictable. The definitions of the word “spleen” range from ill temper and melancholia to hatred, malice, dejection, spitefulness and irritability. These are the figurative description of moods, thought to be caused by the internal organ known as the spleen.

The character of this poem is in a very dark frame of mind, fearing that his beloved will flee from him and, finally, he is weary of everything but her. The darkness and unpredictability is represented in the four measures of piano introduction; the beginning phrase suggests melancholy while the second phrase suggests a sudden mood change with an unexpected movement in the harmony of a tri-tone as well as a marked *sf* chord that lends itself to sounding “open”. The voice enters on a monotonous tone, creating a sense of the character talking to himself about the roses being all red and the ivy quite black (“Les roses étaient toutes rouges, Et les lierres étaient tout noirs”). The first phrase of the piano introduction forms the melodic motive which recurs throughout the song but is treated differently each time in terms of accompaniment, rhythm, intensity of mood, and texture. The song ends on a chord of F minor, which finally settles the key and ambiguity with which it began, bringing everything to a close.

²³ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1997), 168-169.

Spleen

Les roses étaient toutes rouges,
 Et les lierres étaient tout noirs.
 Chère, pur peu que tu e bouges,
 Renaissent tous mes désespoirs.

Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre,
 La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux.
 Je crains toujours, ce qu'est
 d'attendre!
 Quelque fuite atroce de vous.

Du houx à la feuille vernie
 Et du luisant buis, je suis las,
 Et de la campagne infinie,
 Et de tout, fors de vous, hélas!

Spleen

The roses were all red,
 and the ivy quite black.
 Dearest, if you so much as move
 all my despair returns.

The sky was too blue, too tender,
 the sea too green and the air too soft.
 Always I fear, such is the consequence
 Of waiting!
 some pitiless abandonment by you.

Of the holly with its glossy leaves
 and of the shining box tree, I am weary,
 and of the boundless countryside,
 and of everything but you, alas!

English translation by Winifred Radford²⁴

²⁴ Pierre Bernac, *The Interpretation of French Song* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1997), 170-171.

CHAPTER 4

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Johannes Brahms was one of the great composers of the 19th century and one of the major composers of *Lieder*. His early music education included lessons on the piano, cello, and horn, and his first documented performance as a pianist was in a chamber concert in 1843. He gave piano lessons, performed, accompanied, as well as wrote arrangements to make a living. It was in these arrangements that the influence of folk and popular music first had its roots and became apparent in his compositions.

In his formative years, Brahms immersed himself in the poetry of German romantics—Eichendorff, Heine, and Emanuel Geibel—the novels of Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffman, and the music of Bach and Beethoven. He also had a love of folklore, including folk poetry, tales, and music, and began collecting European folksongs. His exposure to the *style hongrois*, a blending of Hungarian musical gestures and gypsy performing style, gave rise to his lifelong fascination with the irregular rhythms, triplet figures and use of rubato in his music.²⁵ Brahms considered himself a self-taught composer and his mastery of the musical techniques and forms of the past allowed him to create his unique style. There are four important elements of his style – musical asymmetry, flexibility of form, systematic construction of movements, and economical motivic development.²⁶

Brahms composed about 380 songs for one, two, three, and four voices, as well as approximately 100 harmonizations or arrangements of folk songs and children's songs. His interest in folk music and classical forms is prominent in his songs. Unlike Robert Schuman, for

²⁵ George S. Bozarth, "Brahms, Johannes", *Oxford Music Online*, Accessed March 6, 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg1>.

²⁶ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 103.

example, Brahms did not aim for a perfect combination of poem and music in his songs, and though the music is always related to the text, he was more concerned with the formal development of the music. Apart from a few settings of Goethe, Heine and Tieck, his song texts are taken from lesser-known poets such as Daumer, Groth, Lemcke, Wenzig, Uhland, and Hölty.²⁷

Poetry was a source of inspiration for Brahms and careful text declamation was considered important to him. His songs usually feature romantic themes such as love (particularly lost love), nature both on its own and as a symbol of the poet's state of mind, reverence for the past, and childhood memories. Some prominent characteristics in the lieder of Brahms include: disjunct melodies that cover a wide range; no lengthy piano introductions, postludes, and interludes; piano accompaniments both musically difficult and challenging although subordinate to the voice; piano accompaniments often based on triadic figurations, recognizable forms in his songs although he tried to create variety; the use of pedal point, counterpoint, augmentation, and contrapuntal techniques, the use of syncopation and hemiola, his preference for topics of sadness and melancholy and of the lower voices.²⁸

Meine Liebe ist grün, Op. 63 No. 5 and its companion piece, *Wenn um den Hollunder*, Op. 63 No. 6, written in 1873, are sometimes grouped as the *Junge Lieder* and both are settings of unpublished poems by the eighteen-year-old Felix Schumann, who was the son of Robert and Clara Wieck Schumann and Brahms' godchild.²⁹ The poem speaks of passionate youthful love. The songs of Op. 63 are based on themes of youth and love, including old age recalling youthful emotions.

²⁷ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 103.

²⁸ Lorraine Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1993), 265-279.

²⁹ Virginia Saya and Richard Walters, ed., *The Lieder Anthology High Voice* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2003), 28.

Meine Liebe ist grün is in strophic form with two stanzas of the poem having the same musical material. Within each stanza, there is great harmonic variety as it modulates through several keys. Brahms begins the song deceptively in the relative minor and withholds the tonic until the end of the first stanza.³⁰ The piano accompaniment is difficult and musically challenging, but it interacts closely with the voice. The bass line features a sweeping melody built on broken chords, and the right hand is filled with brisk, syncopated activity along with the vocal melody doubled. The syncopation is a rhythmic trait of Brahms, and in this particular song, it creates the mood and suggests the adrenaline of young, innocent and passionate love. The postlude at the end of the stanza creates rhythmic variety with the use of triplets and the use of inner voices in this song, giving a contrapuntal texture.

Meine Liebe ist grün

Meine Liebe ist grün wie der Fliederbusch,
Und mein Lieb ist schön wie die Sonne;
Die glänzt wohl herab auf den Fliederbusch
Und füllt ihn mit Duft und mit Wonne.

Meine Seele hat Schwingen der Nachtigall
Und weigt sich in blühendem Flieder,
Und jauchzet und singet vom Duft berauscht
Viel liebestrunkene Lieder.

My love is green

My love is green as the lilac bush,
and my sweetheart is fair as the sun;
that shines down on the lilac bush
and fills it with fragrance and with bliss.

My soul has wings like the nightingale.
and sways in the flowering lilac,
and exults and sings, enraptured by the
fragrance, many a love-intoxicated song.

English translation by Eric Sams³¹

Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht, Op. 96 No. 1, published in 1884, is set to a poem of Heinrich Heine. The mood and serious atmosphere of this song is linked to the third of the *Four Serious Songs*. Brahms captured the resigned melancholy and resignation of Heine's verse in an unobtrusive setting, as night draws near and the nightingale's song of love is heard in a peaceful dream. This song is possibly the best example of Brahms' successful marriage of text and music.

³⁰ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 108.

³¹ Eric Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 203.

Brahms uses a little text painting – the syncopated rhythm in the music creates a soothing effect which describes the ‘cool night’, and the right hand melody in the top voice of the middle section represents the nightingale’s song. He also uses harmonies to achieve the text painting by taking us through unexpected key changes such as at “mich schläfert, der Tag hat mich müd gemacht” which translates as “I feel drowsy, the day has wearied me”.

Der Tod, das ist kühle Nacht

Der Tod, das ist kühle Nacht,
Das Leben ist der schwüle Tag.
Es dunkelt schon, mich schläfert,
Der Tag hat mich müd gemacht.

Über mein Bett erhebt sich ein Baum,
Drin singt die junge Nachtigall;
Sie singt von lauter Liebe,
Ich hör es sogar im Traum.

Death is the cool night

Death is the cool night,
life is the sultry day.
It is growing dark already; I feel drowsy;
the day has wearied me.

Over my bed rises a tree
wherein the young nightingale is singing;
she sings of sheer love,
I hear it even in my dreams.

English translation by Eric Sams³²

Botschaft, Op. 47 No. 1, published in 1868, is set on the poem by Georg Daumer after Hafiz, who was a 13th-century Persian poet popularized in 19th-century Germany.³³ The poem is interesting in the way it is set. The male character sends a message to his lover through the wind, instead of a handwritten message that is the norm. Brahms cleverly uses the piano accompaniment to ‘paint’ the wind in his use of thirds in the right hand and a melodic contour that rises and descends suggesting the movement and unpredictability of the wind.

The song is in three sections with the first and last section having similar material. Brahms gives the second stanza a thinner texture and a singing melodic line in the bass to possibly signify the change of perspective from his lover’s point of view. The use of thirds and

³² Eric Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 288.

³³ Eric Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 138.

sixths, the contrapuntal texture, and the use of cross rhythms such as duplets against triplets are some distinct characteristics of Brahms found in this song.

Botschaft

Wehe, Lüftchen, lind und lieblich
Um die Wange der Geliebten,
Spiele zart in ihrer Locke,
Eile nicht, hinweg zu fliehn!

Tut sie dann vielleicht die Frage,
Wie es um mich Armen stehe,
Sprich: ‘Unendlich war sein Wehe,
Höchst bedenklich seine Lage;

Aber jetzo kann er hoffen
Wieder herrlich aufzuleben,
Denn du, Holde,
denkst an ihn.’

A Message

Blow, breeze, gentle and loving
about the cheek of my beloved,
play tenderly in her locks,
be not swift to fly away.

If then she should ask
how things are with poor me,
say: ‘Infinite has been his woe,
most critical his state;

but now he can hope
gloriously to revive,
for you, sweet one,
are thinking of him.

English Translation by George Bird and Richard Stokes³⁴

O kühler Wald, Op. 72 No. 3, published in 1877 has an accompaniment that starts off in steady quarter notes, creating a serene mood. Brahms’ use of harmonies in this song supports the voice very well, and at times helps to paint the text. For example, the harmonies at the end of “versteht?” and a little after are unresolved, as if to portray the question. At “Im Herzen tief”, the harmonies take an unexpected turn and even the rhythm seems to come to a standstill, possibly trying to convey the “deep in my heart” moment where it rests. As the melody from the beginning returns, the accompaniment subdivides into eighth notes, creating variety and a sense of novelty.

O kühler Wald

O kühler Wald, wo rauschest du,
In dem mein Liebchen geht?

Cool Wood

Where do you whisper, cool wood,
in which my beloved walks?

³⁴ George Bird and Richard Stokes, trans., *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 76.

O Widerhall, wo lauschest du,
Der gern mein Lied versteht?

Where do you listen, echo,
who likes to understand my song?

Im Herzen tief, da rauscht der Wald,
In dem mein Liebchen geht,
In Schmerzen schlief der Widerhall,
Die Lieder sind verweht.

Deep in my heart whispers the wood,
in which my beloved walks,
the echo has slept in sorrow,
the songs are all blown away.

English translation by George Bird and Richard Stokes³⁵

Von ewiger Liebe, Op. 43 No. 1, published in 1864, is through-composed, a form that Brahms uses infrequently. This song and the next in the same collection, *Die Mainacht*, Op. 43 No. 2 are his most frequently performed solo songs. They both feature a similar mood and style in poetic atmosphere and intensity of musical treatment.³⁶

Brahms chose certain keys for expressive purposes – the melodrama of B minor is used in *Von ewiger Liebe* to suggest the dark and intense mood of a text which talks of darkness in the wood and field, yet light is nowhere to be seen.³⁷ Brahms' decision to place the melody in the lower register of the piano in the left hand also contributes to that mood. Against that melody is a syncopated rhythmic figure in the accompaniment which also adds to the melodic content and rhythmic intensity of the piece. The accompaniment pattern changes midway into broken chords at the text, "Leidest du Schmach", and the melody is intensified, now in mostly 6ths or octaves. The climax of the song happens at the end of that section with a huge build-up created by both hands getting busier, especially with the melody in the left hand moving faster rhythmically than before. That particular section describes suffering for their love, thereby projected by the drama of the song which is intensified in the music. Figure 6 shows the climax of the song, the use of

³⁵ George Bird and Richard Stokes, trans., *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 310.

³⁶ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 104.

³⁷ Eric Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 11-12.

sixths and the use of cross rhythms, particularly 2 against 3, which are characteristics of Brahms' writing.

Figure 6

The image shows a musical score for a song in B major. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef and has the lyrics "ei - ni - get sind." written below it. The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. There are dynamic markings such as *f* and *dim. e ritard. poco a*. The score is divided into two systems, each with four measures.

The last section of the song in B major, portrays the maiden of the poem, and has a sweet, “rocking” feel created by the rhythmic figures and change in meter from 3/4 to 6/8. She reassures her lover that their love is as strong as ever and that it will endure forever, bringing the song to an emphatic close at the word “bestehn”, still in the key of B major—showing their love triumphing against all odds. There is the use of hemiola toward the end of that section, and also the use of 2 against 3 in the middle section, which are again, prominent traits of Brahms.

Von ewiger Liebe

Dunkel, wie dunkel in Wald und in Feld!
Abend schon ist es, nun schweiget die Welt.
Nirgend noch Licht und nirgend noch Rauch,
Ja, und die Lerche, sie schweiget nun auch.

Kommt aus dem Dorfe der Bursche heraus,

Of Eternal Love

Dark, how dark in wood and field!
Evening it is, now silent the world.
Nowhere a light still, nowhere smoke,
yes, and the lark is now silent too.

Out of the village comes the boy,

Gibt das Geleit der Geliebten nach Haus,
Führt sie am Weidengebüsche vorbei,
Redet so viel und so mancherlei:

walking his beloved home,
he leads her past the willow copse,
talking much and of many things:

“Leidest du Schmach und betrübest du dich,
Leidest du Schmach von andern um mich,
Werde die Liebe getrennt so geschwind,
Schnell wie wir früher vereinigt sind,
Scheide mit Regen und scheide mit Wind,
Schnell wie wir früher vereinigt sind.”

“If you suffer insult and are troubled,
suffer insult from others for my sake,
let our love be sundered so swiftly,
so swiftly as earlier we were united;
with rain depart, with wind depart,
as quickly as earlier we were united.”

Spricht das Mägdelein, Mägdelein spricht:
“Unsere Liebe, sie trennet sich nicht!
Fest ist der Stahl und das Eisen gar sehr,
Unsere Liebe ist fester noch mehr.

Says the maiden, the maiden says:
“Our love won’t be sundered!
Steel is strong, and iron is very,
even stronger is our love.

Eisen und Stahl, man schmiedet sie um,
Unsere Liebe, wer wandelt sie um?
Eisen und Stahl, sie können zergehn,
Unsere Liebe muß ewig bestehn!”

Iron and steel may be forged anew,
our love, who can change it?
Iron and steel, they may melt,
our love must endure forever!”

English translation by George Bird and Richard Stokes³⁸

³⁸ George Bird and Richard Stokes, trans., *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 390.

CHAPTER 5

MANUEL DE FALLA (1876-1946)

Manuel de Falla, an important composer of 20th century Spanish music, began his early music education studying piano with his mother and attending chamber concerts in Cadiz. Besides music, he also had an interest in writing short stories and wanted to become an author. However, by the mid 1880s, he decided to be a composer and eventually enrolled in the Madrid Conservatory, where he won several honors, including the first prize in piano in 1899.

Though he was a skilled pianist, he never achieved the virtuoso status of Granados, Albéniz, or Viñes and could not make a living by composing and performing salon music in Madrid. However, his association with Felipe Pedrell, a highly regarded composer, critic, teacher, and musicologist, was a positive influence on his life. In 1905, Falla won a composition competition with his Spanish opera, *La vida breve*, which displayed his first explorations of Gypsy *cante jondo* (deep song), along with *verismo* elements and themes. With his subsequent works, he tried to elevate traditional Gypsy music to the highest level while preserving its roots.

Falla moved to Paris in 1907 and befriended Ravel, Stravinsky, Florent Schmitt, Debussy, Diaghilev, Albéniz, Dukas, and the pianist, Ricardo Viñes. During this time, he was introduced to their works of Spanish influence and it made an impression on him. It significantly changed his harmonic thinking, resulting in the use of non-functional 7th and 9th chords, whole-tone chords and remote key relationships.³⁹ Forced to move back to Madrid during the breakout of World War I, his reputation in Spain was assured through the successful production of a revised *La vida breve* in 1913. He also started work on his most popular set of songs, *Siete canciones populares españolas* (Seven Spanish Popular Songs) and completed them in Paris.

³⁹ Carol A. Hess, "Falla, Manuel de", *Oxford Music Online*, Accessed February 25, 2012. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09266>.

Falla's music has an intellectual approach consisting of tonality, modality, and neoclassicism combined with the sensuous charm of Spanish music, resulting in an appealing mixture of authentic Spanish flavor and classical style. An important influence on all of his work was the *cante jondo*, meaning "deep song" or "grand song" of Andalusia, which is the most primitive source of Spanish Moorish music and the purest form of flamenco.⁴⁰

Siete canciones populares españolas contains folk melodies from various parts of Spain – Murcia, Asturias, Aragon, and Andalucía, all arranged by Falla with beautiful piano accompaniments that are brilliantly pianistic but yet preserve the spirit of folk music.⁴¹ Falla created a unique sound in these songs by using a harmonic language rich with non-diatonic chords, dual tonalities, modes, and tonal ambiguity as well as diverse rhythms with frequent syncopations, ostinati, and polyrhythmic textures. The texts in these songs are short poems of three, four, or five lines called *coplas* and the subject matter is personal and emotional, generally expressing pain, death, grief, loneliness, or unrequited love.

El Paño Moruno features an amazing guitar-like accompaniment with the use of *punteado* (style of guitar playing in which individual strings are plucked), dissonant staccato and legato chords, quick triplet and five- and six- note flourishes.⁴² The song is very rhythmic with the occasional use of hemiola, and the meter of the song is based on the malagueña, in 3/8 time with two 3/4 measures mixed in. According to Suzanne Rhodes Draayer, the description of the stained fabric in the song can be seen as a young woman who has lost her virginity, and the exclamation of "Ay" may be an "alas!" from either a man singing the song or from the young

⁴⁰ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 502.

⁴¹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 502-503.

⁴² Suzanne Rhodes Draayer, *Art Song Composers of Spain: An Encyclopedia* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 310.

woman.⁴³ Falla makes use of major and minor 2nd intervals in his harmonies to create the tension, intensity and passion that suggest the flavor of Spanish music. Figure 7 shows one of many instances in this song with the extensive use of minor and major 2nd relationships though often times carefully spaced out so as to create the virtuosity of the accompaniment through the leaps in its flourishes.

Figure 7



El Paño Moruno

Al paño fino, en la tienda,
una mancha le cayó;

Por menos precio se vende,
Porque perdió su valor.
¡Ay!

The Moorish Cloth

On the delicate fabric in the shop
there fell a stain.

It sells for less
for it has lost its value.
Ay!

English translation by Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes⁴⁴

Seguidilla Murciana uses the *seguidilla*, dance from the south of Spain which is in quick triple time. The vocal line consists of a series of repeated notes with melismatic phrase endings, against the quick changing harmonies in the accompaniment. The Spanish guitar is suggested in the accompaniment with the repeated “plucking” action of the running triplets that continues

⁴³ Suzanne Rhodes Draayer, *Art Song Composers of Spain: An Encyclopedia* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 310-311.

⁴⁴ Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes, *The Spanish Song Companion* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 112.

throughout the whole song before finally ending in a big, strongly colored F chord.⁴⁵ The excitement of the accompaniment and the dissonant harmonies created mainly by the use of 2nds convey the unsettled, somewhat accusatory tone of the character in the song, blaming her lover of being promiscuous, as implied in the text.

Seguidilla Murciana

Cualquiera que el tejado
Tenga de vidrio,
No debe tirar piedras
Al del vecino.
Arrieros semos;
¡Puede que en el camino
Nos encontremos!

Por tu mucha inconstancia
Yo te comparo
Con peseta que corre
De mano en mano;
Que al fin se borra,
Y créyendola falsa
¡Nadie la toma!

Seguidilla from Murcia

People who live
in glass houses
shouldn't throw stones
at their neighbour's.
We are drivers;
it may be
we'll meet on the road!

For your many infidelities
I shall compare you
to a peseta [coin] passing
from hand to hand;
till finally it's worn down -
and believing it false,
no one will take it!

English translation by Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes⁴⁶

Asturiana features a recurring alternating octave 16th-note figure in the accompaniment which creates a “weeping” pattern that sustains a mood of melancholy.⁴⁷ The introduction and postlude consist of a somber melody in the left hand, almost modal sounding, which gives the song its darker color. There is an unexpected “twist” in the movement of harmonies in the postlude with a touch of brightness as suggested by the use of a B-flat major chord before leading back to F minor to close the song. Even then, the song sounds unresolved with the use of the E natural in the accompaniment pattern until finally a single low F in the left hand

⁴⁵ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 503.

⁴⁶ Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes, *The Spanish Song Companion* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 112.

⁴⁷ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 504.

unexpectedly concludes all of the tension and sadness. The green pine tree in the text is said to represent a mature, older man who seeks the company of young women in Spanish colloquial terms. The woman in the song is leaning against this man.⁴⁸ There are moments of heightened tension in the text with the dissonant bell-like ringing tones which happen to bring out the peak of the phrase of the vocal line, and possibly a little text painting to highlight the word, “console”.

Asturiana

Por ver si me consolaba,
Arrime a un pino verde,
Por ver si me consolaba.

Por verme llorar, lloraba.
Y el pino como era verde,
Por verme llorar, lloraba!

Asturian song

To see if it might console me,
I drew near a green pine,
To see if it might console me.

To see me weep, it wept.
And the pine, since it was green,
wept to see me weeping!

English translation by Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes⁴⁹

Jota, as the name of the next song suggests, is one of the most widely known Spanish dance-songs, usually accompanied by the guitar, castanets, or other instruments.⁵⁰ There is extensive, soloistic use of the piano with its long introduction and interludes, which feature quite some virtuosity. These include some quick repeated notes overlapping that can only be achieved by using two hands, quick triplet figures that have to sound crisp and clean, and alternating chords in the left hand that give the rhythmic drive and adds to the excitement. There are three contrasting sections, with the entrance of the voice leading us to a slower section of occasional flourishes in the accompaniment which thus matches the vocal melismatic figures. The accompaniment strongly portrays the guitar.

⁴⁸ Suzanne Rhodes Draayer, *Art Song Composers of Spain: An Encyclopedia* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 312.

⁴⁹ Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes, *The Spanish Song Companion* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 113.

⁵⁰ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 504.

Jota

Dicen que no nos queremos
 Porque no nos ven hablar;
 A tu corazón y al mio
 Se lo pueden preguntar.

Ya me despido de tí,
 De tu casa y tu ventana,
 Y aunque no quiera tu madre,
 Adiós, niña, hasta mañana.
 Aunque no quiera tu madre...

Jota

They say we're not in love
 since they never see us talk;
 let them ask
 your heart and mine!

I must leave you now,
 your house and your window,
 and though your mother disapprove,
 goodbye, sweet love,
 till tomorrow.

English translation by Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes⁵¹

Nana is an Andalusian cradle song, a lullaby that sounds oriental in its use of harmony as well as melody, possibly because of Moorish influence. The key alternates between E major and E minor, and there is a tonic pedal in the first off-beats of the left hand. The use of syncopation is prominent, and the descending lines in each individual hand of the accompaniment create a hypnotic lullaby mood. The vocal line is sensuous, sounds improvisatory, and has melismatic turns at the ends of phrases, all of which helps to add to the dreamy mood, to coax the baby to sleep.⁵²

Nana

Duérmete, niño, duerme,
 Duerme, mi alma,
 Duérmete, lucerito
 De la mañana.
 Naninta, nana,
 Naninta, nana.
 Duérmete, lucerito
 De la mañana.

Lullaby

Sleep, little one, sleep,
 sleep, my darling,
 sleep, my little
 morning star.
 Lullay, lullay,
 Lullay, lullay
 sleep, my little
 morning star.

English translation by Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes⁵³

⁵¹Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes, *The Spanish Song Companion* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 113.

⁵² Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 504.

⁵³ Jacqueline Cockburn and Richard Stokes, *The Spanish Song Companion* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1992), 113.

Canción features an ostinato repeated bass pattern in the left hand throughout the song, and creates richness of the chords in the right hand, mainly with added 6ths, in the key of G major, give the song its sweet and gentle flavor. The voice has a graceful, dance-like melody and there are two instances where the piano imitates the vocal melody one measure later. The mood of the song effectively portrays the teasing, playfulness of their love, as shown in the text.

Canción

Por traidores, tus ojos,
Voy a enterrarlos;
No sabes lo que cuesta,
“del aire,” niña, el mirarlos.
“Madre a la orilla.”
Niña, el mirarlos.

Dicen que no me quieres,
Ya me has querido.
Váyase lo ganado,
“del aire,” por lo perdido.
“Madre a la orilla.”
Por lo perdido

Song

Because your eyes are traitors
I am going to bury them.
You don't know how hard it is,
“from the air,” my love, to look at them.
“Mother, to the shore.”
My love, to look at them.

They say you don't love me
You loved me before.
Let go what was won,
“from the air,” for what is now lost.
“Mother, to the shore.”
For what is now lost.

English translation by Josep Miquel Sobrer and Edmon Colomer⁵⁴

Polo, the last song of the set, belongs to the Gypsy world of the flamenco and the *cante jondo*. Both love and sadness are combined in a high-spirited, passionate setting. The rapid repeated-note accompaniment suggests heel-clicking flamenco dance steps (*zapateado*) and the song begins with a brilliant *punteado* with accents that suggest the *palmadas* (hand-clapping) of the spectators. The voice enters with a plaintive cry of Andalusian singers, “¡Ay!”, and features long held notes with dramatic melismas at the end.⁵⁵ The intensity of both the accompaniment

⁵⁴ Josep Miquel Sobrer and Edmon Colomer, *The Singer's Anthology of 20th Century Spanish Songs* (New York: Pelion Press, 1987), 104.

⁵⁵ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2005), 504.

and vocal line portrays the text very well. Tension is brought out by the use of 2nd, 4th and 5th intervals and the use of accents that add to the fury of the song.

Polo

¡Ay!
Guardo una, ¡Ay!
¡Guardo una pena en mi pecho,
¡Ay!
que a nadie se la dire.

Malhaya el amor, malhaya,
¡Ay!
y quien me lo dió a entender.
¡Ay!

Polo

Ah!
I keep, ah!
I keep a sorrow in my heart,
ah!,
And I'll tell no one.

Love be cursed, be cursed,
ah!,
And the one who taught it to me,
Ah!

English translation by Josep Miquel Sobrer and Edmon Colomer⁵⁶

The popularity of *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas* is obvious in its number of transcriptions available for cello and piano, violin and orchestra, violin and piano, solo piano, and for high or medium voice with guitar accompaniment. Falla's friend and pupil, Ernesto Halffter, also orchestrated it.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Josep Miquel Sobrer and Edmon Colomer, *The Singer's Anthology of 20th Century Spanish Songs* (New York: Pelion Press, 1987), 105-106.

⁵⁷ Suzanne Rhodes Draayer, *Art Song Composers of Spain: An Encyclopedia* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 315.

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