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...He Loves Me Not: An Extended Program Note

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…HE LOVES ME NOT: AN EXTENDED PROGRAM NOTE

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Approved by:

Dr. Yuko Kato, Chair

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CHAPTER 1

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Ralph Vaughan Williams was an English composer who was born to an affluent family in Gloucestershire, 1872. Williams studied piano and violin from a young age, and eventually attended Cambridge and The Royal College of Music in London. Williams also briefly studied with Maurice Ravel. Many of Williams' early songs had English folk influences, and much of his music has been lauded as quintessentially British.[1] Williams' nine-song set, *Songs of Travel*, was originally conceived for baritone and piano. The texts of the nine songs were taken from the Scottish poet, Robert Louis Stevenson's book of poetry *Songs of Travel and Other Verses*, published in 1896. The premiere of Vaughan Williams' song set took place in London, 1904 by Walter Creighton, baritone, and Hamilton Harty, piano, and excluded number nine – "I have trod the upward and the downward slope," which was published posthumously. The songs were originally fragmented into separate publications, with "Whither as I Wander" released first, followed by two books that split up the remaining seven songs. The set as we know it was not compiled and published in its intended sequence until 1960 by Boosey and Hawkes, after Vaughan Williams' death and the discovery of the final song. [2][3][4] Fascinatingly, Vaughan Williams took liberties rearranging the order of Stevenson's poems for his song set, which

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[1] Terry Blain, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph," *BBC Music*, accessed March 11, 2023. https://www.classical-music.com/composers/ralph-vaughan-williams/.

[2] Atlas Allan, "On the Cyclic Integrity of Vaughan Williams's 'Songs of Travel': One New Question – No New Answer." *The Musical Times* 154, no. 1924 (2013): 5-17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24615737.

[3] Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2005), 365-367.

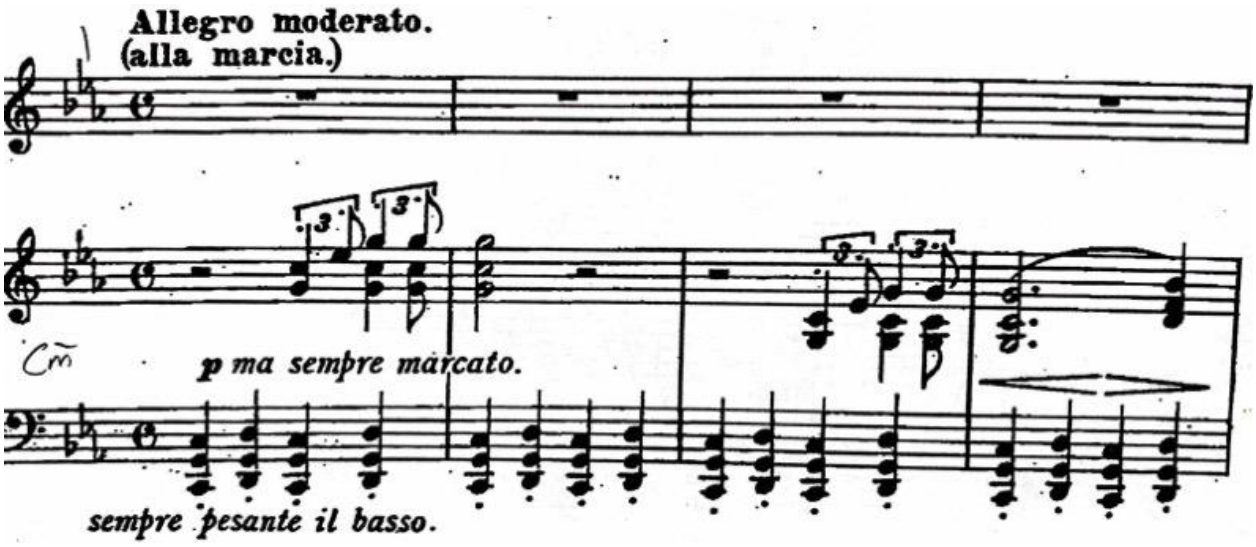
[4] Neil Butterworth, *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 94-95.

hypothetically opens the door for performers to extract and rearrange pieces for their own purposes.

The first song of the *Songs of Travel*, "The Vagabond," is likely the most famous of the entire set. The song tells of a young, eager traveler who yearns for the scenes and flavors of the outdoors. The protagonist demands a life of sleeping in the forest, dipping his food in the river, the heavens above, and a road to keep walking on. These allures are not without their pitfalls. The protagonist is aware of the dangers of the colder seasons, the biting cold, and migration of fowl, but he refuses to succumb to these obstacles in pursuit of the life he loves. Wealth, love, and kinship hold little merit for this vagabond.

Vaughan Williams evokes an incessant forward motion and a bubbling excitement in the primary melodic theme and left-hand accompaniment. The opening melodic theme is found first in the accompaniment and is promptly echoed by the singer with the words, "Give to me the life I love." It establishes the key of C minor and is made up of a staccato, rising triad that begins on the tonic, repeats the fifth scale degree, and has a triplet feeling. This theme decorates "The

Figure 1, Source: Ralph Vaughan Williams, Songs of Travel, 3.



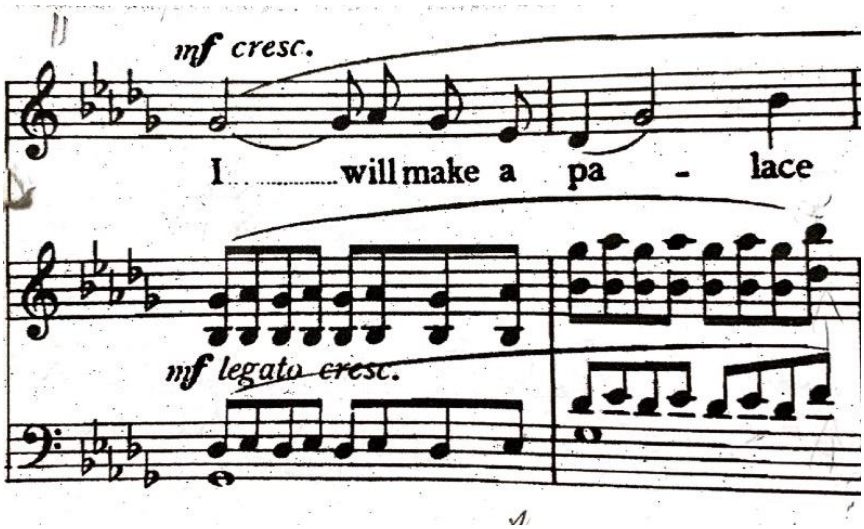
Vagabond," beginning almost every stanza and is employed by the piano in its interludes (Figure 1). In the accompaniment, octaves moving by step and skip in a mostly marcato fashion permeate the piece, conveying an intentional march which propels the protagonist through the landscape. These two primary motives in the beginning of the piece also make appearances throughout the set, particularly in "Youth and Love" (measure thirty-nine) and in "I have trod the upward and the downward slope" (mm.1, 3, and 23-24).

Perhaps the most exciting moment of "The Vagabond" is the modulation to E minor which takes place in mm.43-44, and highlights the poem's shift in tone. Within this short section that spans mm.44-59, Vaughan Williams creates more motion with ascending scalar eighth notes that carry the piece through different key areas. This harmonic acceleration culminates in a climactic return to C minor on m.60, where the original theme is presented at a fortissimo dynamic.

"The Roadside Fire" is the third piece of *The Songs of Travel*, and Stevenson's eleventh in his book of poems. It tells of a man who wants to give everything he can to his lover. Brooches, toys, and palaces are among the things that he promises to craft for her, day and night. He dreams of their fairy-tale life together; he cleans the kitchen as she does laundry and bathes, all while sharing an intimate song of love and compassion. The protagonist intends to continue singing that same song for the long haul and keep their romantic spark alive.

"The Roadside Fire," is laid out in the form AA'Ba. The first section repeats with the same harmonic material but a different articulation in the piano. The final section is a brief recap of thematic material from the first section. The trademark accompaniment in the A section

Figure 2, Source: Ralph Vaughan Williams, Songs of Travel, 15.



contains asymmetrical and oscillating chord patterns that are to be played quickly, softly, and lightly (Figure X). The undulating series of parallel fourths, fifths, and sixths are shimmering, vivacious, and giddy. These oscillating piano passages also serve a literary function as they return in "Youth and Love," mm.52-55, to accompany a fateful message between the lovers. The vocal line, marked *a little playful*, is primarily pentatonic, with occasional passing tones. The contour of the melody is curvaceous, circling around the dominant scale degree and occasionally leading the piece into different harmonic areas. Generally, this vocal theme is repeated with each stanza of the verse with varying degrees of ornamentation. This theme can also be heard again in the accompaniment of "Youth and Love," mm.45-48.

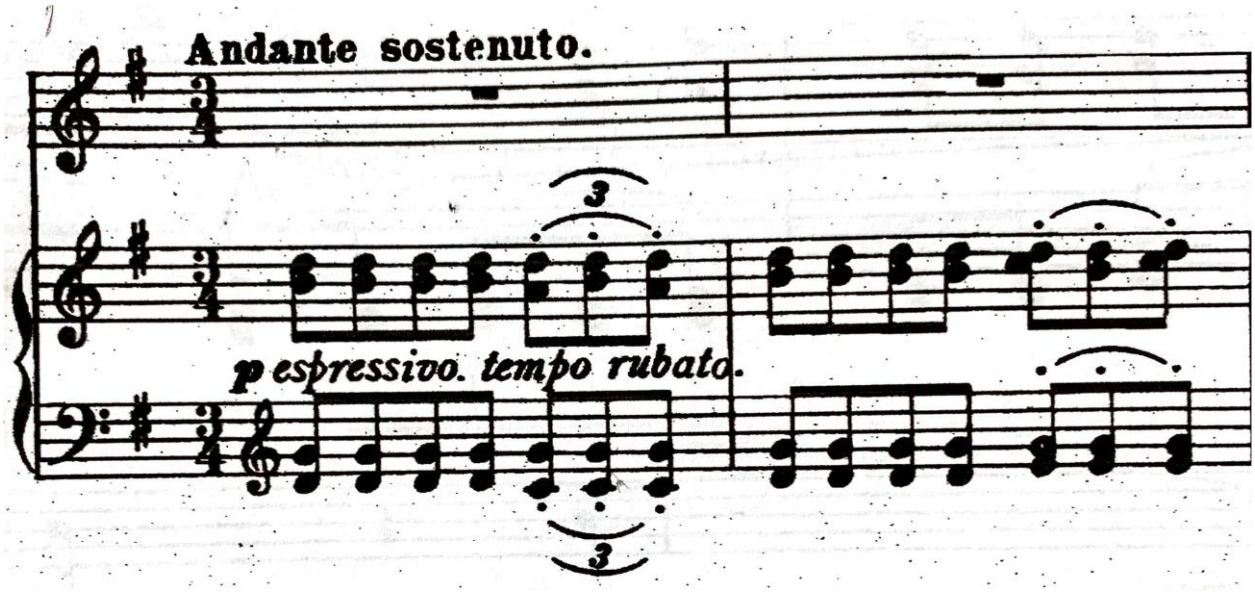
The most remarkable section of "The Roadside Fire" is the B section that begins with a smooth modulation to E major in mm.41 using an enharmonic common tone, A-flat or G-sharp. At this point, the tempo relaxes and the accompaniment emulates a flowing harp roll. This shift in tone carries the piece to its climax in mm.45-48, and is followed by a gradual relaxation of tempo, dynamic, and intensity. Vaughan Williams ends this final stanza with text painting, conveying "the broad road that stretches," with an augmentation of melody and phrase length.

Structurally, the piece begins and ends softly, with the middle containing the moments of heightened intensity, much like the passing of a car on the road.

"Youth and Love" is the fourth of Vaughan Williams set, and the third of Stevenson's book. The protagonist in this story is young and at a crossroads. He looks upon the natural world with warmth in his heart and a desire to seek it out. His domestic life has become dull and mundane, and he yearns for the world outside his garden gate. He watches the stars at night and is filled with passion. He is overtaken with an impulse he deems noble, and in a flash he waves goodbye to his lover, says a quick parting word, and leaves.

This tender and melancholy piece has a form for ABA', and contains unique themes and themes from two previous pieces, "The Vagabond," and "The Roadside Fire." The song's unique theme begins plaintively in the piano with a rhythmic shifting of duple and triple eighth notes that evoke a swaying or rocking motion (Figure 3). The accompaniment chords are inverted and generally contain four voices, which move slowly back and forth by step on the triplet figures. As the protagonist opines, passion briefly overcomes them in m.12 – where a sudden crescendo

Figure 3, Source: Ralph Vaughan Williams, Songs of Travel, 19.



to forte and an excerpt from “The Vagabond” theme plays underneath – and in m.24 – on the words “call him with lighted lamp.”

At the exact midway point of “Youth and Love”, the B section begins, and a complete shift in texture and tonicization of E major occurs. This middle section, which spans mm.33-55, contains the escalation and climax of perhaps the most exciting passage in the entire set of songs. The piano now plays triplets in the right hand and duplets in the left hand with a descending, twinkling melody that conveys the thickness of the stars that the singer describes. Following the words, “pleasures assail him,” the piece jets into a *forte* dynamic and unleashes a *risoluto* statement of the very first theme from “The Vagabond.” The accompaniment continues its dramatic use of left-hand tremolos and sonorous bass octaves, which support the lyrical recollection of the primary vocal theme from “The Roadside Fire” in the right hand. The thematic quotes from “The Roadside Fire” continue into m.53 though the dynamic abruptly recedes to *pianissimo*. The original thematic material returns in m.56, as the protagonist quietly confirms what has been foreshadowed. The piano resumes its inverted chords once more, gradually slower and softer, bringing the piece to a quiet, definitive end.

“In Dreams” is the fifth of the *Songs of Travel* and the fourth of Stevenson’s poems. Both Vaughan Williams and Stevenson seem to agree that this text directly follows the events that transpired in “Youth and Love.” The protagonist of this story recalls images from his dreams that resemble a lost love, and a once gleaming visage has become sullen and dim. Time has aged them, and they are crying. The protagonist recalls his parting in third person, detaching himself from his choices, and wonders if she has forgotten him. He admits that he left with a smile, while she likely wept, but that he will never forget her.

“In Dreams” seems to differ from every other piece in the set in its dense chromaticism

and complex harmonic content. The first notes from the piano accompaniment demonstrate an offbeat rhythmic ostinato on C that permeates much of the piece. The ostinato is joined and surrounded by the singer in m.2, who swirls around what seems to be G harmonic minor. The tonality quickly shifts in m.6, as the ostinato sinks down to B-flat. This section seems almost suspended in time, as the ostinato evokes a ticking of the clock, or an unending trudge enveloped by a viscous harmonic landscape. The ostinato returns in m.17 and is now a dissonant major second that reflects the lamentations of the protagonist. The vocal melody contains a metronomic rise and fall followed by falling chromatic lines that sink almost like clocks in Dali's "Persistence of Memory." The ostinato that begins the piece also ends it, stretching and dying away into oblivion.

"I have trod the upward and the downward slope" tells of an aged traveler who has seen much of the world. His experiences have seen him hardened and without hope, but he has endured. Even with its many challenges, his life has seen love and he has lived it fully. In reflecting on all that he has known, it is now time for him to close the door.

There are many conjectures as to the conceiving and subsequent withholding of this final song in the set. Considering the piece was discovered amongst his papers after his death, perhaps Vaughan Williams had no intention of allowing this piece to be performed for an audience. Nevertheless, the final song of *The Songs of Travel* contains thematic material from three other pieces throughout the set, serving as an operative denouement to the opus. Much of the melodic material in the accompaniment hearkens back to numbers seven and eight of the set, "Whither Must I Wander," and "Bright is the Ring of Words," respectively. Most relevant to this discussion is its clear restatement of the opening theme found in the initial song, "The Vagabond." Beginning in D minor, mm.1-3 one and three recall the primary theme that

dominates “The Vagabond.” The open octaves of the left-hand accompaniment conjure a stark and burdensome image. In m.8 a shift in tone is accompanied by a parallel modulation to D major. A sensation of lifting rises out of the piano’s ascending parallel thirds that frame the protagonist’s reflections on a full life. The singer’s final utterance comes to rest on the note D, which is the same pitch as the climax of “Youth and Love.” The lush piano accompaniment underneath this final statement ascends with the voice. After the singer releases this final note, the piano descends through sonorous chords over a pedal D in the bass. The final three measures recall the very first plodding whole steps from the “The Vagabond,” bringing the piece to a fulfilling and poetic close.

CHAPTER 2

RICKY IAN GORDON

Ricky Ian Gordon was born in 1956 and has spent most of his life in New York. He studied piano, composition, and acting at Carnegie Mellon University, and is now of the foremost living vocal composers in America. A great number of his art songs are set to poetry by Langston Hughes, as are "Port Town," and "Joy." Gordon had this to say about Langston Hughes' poetry: "I think he is the most terse, economical… and wise American poet."[5] Gordon uses perfect fourths and fifths in these pieces to convey an open, exciting, and inviting quality that is characteristic of the protagonists' intentions. In both songs, the protagonists gush with love and lust for their companions. In Port Town, the protagonist attempts to woo the sailor boy with booze and claims of love. In Joy, the protagonist beams with pride for the love of the butcher boy.

"Joy" is from Gordon's cycle, *Genius Child*, which was written for and performed by Harolyn Blackwell. About the song, Gordon said: "Joy ends the cycle in the way I saw Harolyn or any artist as gifted, ending it – in an explosion of life and movement, celebration, and joy."[6] The piece opens on the protagonist in a search for joy, which she describes as "slim, dancing, gay, [and] laughing." The protagonist proclaims that she's found love in the arms of the butcher boy, and states that her love keeps great company.

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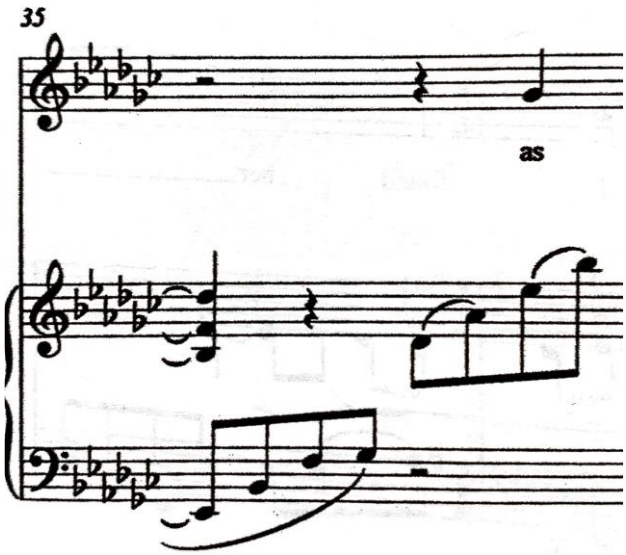
[5] Gordon, *Genius Child*, 3.

[6] Gordon, *Genius Child*, 3.

Figure 4, Source: Ricky Ian Gordon, Genius Child, 46.



"Joy" contains two primary sections that repeat, giving it a form of ABA'B'. Throughout the piece, Gordon uses quartal and quintal harmonies – or perfect intervals – to add a lush, soaring quality in moments of heightened emotion. The melody often contains leaps of a fourth – such as in mm.12-13 and m.21 – or phrases that span a fourth – such as mm.15-17 and mm.18-20. One of the most exciting uses of quintal harmony in "Joy," occurs at m.25, 35 (Figure 4), and 43. Here, Gordon uses ascending perfect fifth intervals to create a sense of sweeping, and an anacrusis to the following harmony. These ascending fifths are often playful and warm and are scattered throughout the left-hand accompaniment of the entire B section. Gordon also uses quartal harmonies in moments of major transition, especially in the beginning and ending of the piano interlude that spans mm.47-63. In m.47, the chord marked forte gives an exciting feeling of anticipation before diving into the theme introduced in the B section. In mm.61-62, Gordon uses a series of quartal chords to modulate back to the tonic key of B-flat major. The final climactic use of perfect intervals happens in the closing measures, where the singer leaps up from E-flat to B-flat on the highest note of the piece in mm.95-96.

"Port Town" is a part of Gordon's cycle, *Only Heaven.* In the score's foreword, Gordon says: "Port Town, I wrote while visiting my parents on their little ranch in Florida. The Strange menagerie of animals, the balmy breezes, and the swaying palm trees all contribute to the playful, yet slightly turgid atmosphere of the song."[7] In this song, the protagonist attempts to woo a sailor boy who's just come in from the sea. She describes an electrifying imagery as she offers cognac, wine, and boldly declares that she loves him.

"Port Town" is laid out in two major sections, with material from the first section repeating near the end; thus, the form is ABA' Coda. Gordon employs perfect intervals throughout the piece in subtle and overt ways, beginning with the first two notes in the right-hand accompaniment. Melodically, the singer's phrases often begin and end a perfect interval apart, as in mm.5-6. One melodic motive found throughout the piece is built on ascending fourths, and is found in mm.17, 25-26, and 29-30, among others. These ascending fourths often communicate a sense of longing and desire or a feeling of unresolved tension.

Another notable motive using perfect intervals periodically decorates the left-hand accompaniment, which is two notes that descend a perfect fifth, and end a phrase. This motive is often articulated with a staccato first note and a tenuto second note and is found as early as m.2 (Figure 5) and m.4, and as late as m.44. Like "Joy," Gordon uses chords built on perfect intervals to transition between sections, or as punctuation to end major phrases. In mm.27-28, a quintal chord begins the modulation back to the tonic, A major; in m.47, a quintal chord sets up the beginning of the coda.

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[7] Gordon, *Only Heaven*, 5.

Figure 5, Source: Ricky Ian Gordon, Only Heaven, 26.

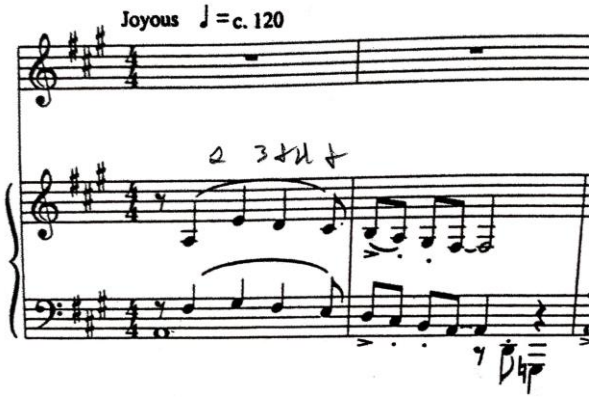
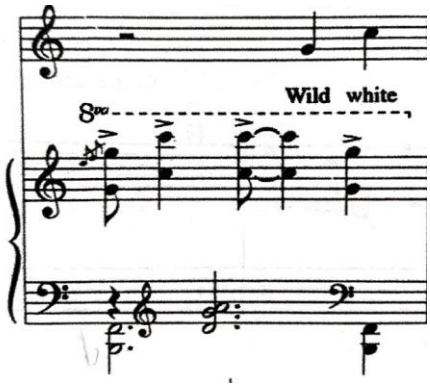


Figure 6, Source: Ricky Ian Gordon, Only Heaven, 28.



One chord seems incongruous with the rest of the piece. The left-hand accompaniment in m.25 contains a tritone (Figure 6), which produces an unsteady foundation under the line "solid land kid." An email correspondence with Ricky Ian Gordon confirms that this note is indeed a publishing error, and the lowest note should be a B-flat. The composer's website now reflects this erratum to prevent further misunderstandings. [8]

[8] Ricky Ian Gordon, email message to author, September 24, 2022.

CHAPTER 3

AARON COPLAND

Aaron Copland was born in 1900 to two Russian-Jewish immigrants in Brooklyn, New York. Copland studied with a Manhattan music teacher, Rubin Goldmark, for a couple of years in his adolescence before traveling to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger.[9] Copland's contributions to the musical canon have given him a legacy as the premiere composer of American music. Strange that a Russian immigrant from Brooklyn was capable of capturing the spirit of the American Midwest! Aaron Copland completed the first volume of *Old American Songs* in 1950, which contained five songs derived from different sources. Copland showed off these first songs to his friends, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, who were delighted by them. Pears remarked: "They will, as singers say, prove a most useful addition to my repertoire!"[10] Ironically, Britten and Pears went on to present the debut performance of the set in June 1950 at the Aldeburgh Festival in England. Copland and bass-baritone William Warfield performed the American premiere a few months after in January, 1951. The reception of the first set of *Old American Songs* was great enough to warrant a second volume of five songs, which Copland and Warfield premiered the second set in July 1953.

All the *Old American Songs* come from a variety of sources. The bulk of them were found in the Harris collection of American Poetry and Plays at Brown University – including two minstrel songs – with several others being found in the Lomax collection of folk songs and recordings. The last bit of songs were found in hymnal, spiritual books, or were given to Copland

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[9] Vivian Perlis, "The Man Behind the Music," Biography, Accessed March 11, 2023, aaroncopland.com.

[10] Neil Butterworth, *The Music of Aaron Copland* (London: Toccata Press, 1985), 167.

by colleagues. The unifying thread of the songs is their origins as American folk songs that conjure pastoral, rural, spiritual, and seafaring images of the common man.

"The Boatmen's Dance" is the first of the *Old American Songs*. It was a minstrel song, a "banjo melody" composed by Dan D. Emmett in Boston, 1843. The source material for this song can be found in the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays at Brown University.[11] The song details a few scenes and shenanigans of life as a boatman on the Ohio River. The boatmen dance, sing, spend their cash freely, constantly seek female companions, and pull pranks on each other.

The song is in a verse-chorus form, beginning with the chorus, and then alternating throughout. The chorus of the song is almost suspended in time, marked *freely*. The tessitura is high for a baritone singer in the chorus, and the accompaniment contains sweeping, harmonic gestures – marked "crystalline" in the score – that punctuate the rhythmically amorphous refrain. The mood of the verses in starkly contrast the freeness of the refrain. The accompaniment is as fast and loose as the boatmen are described in the stanzas, and these verses always include a steady accelerando and quick passagework in the piano. The verses always end with the same tag, the boatmen going "home with the gals in the morning." The song is in E major throughout, and uses a predictable progression of harmonies, sticking to tonic, dominant, and subdominant with little to no exploration.

"The Dodger," is the second of the *Old American Songs*, and has its beginning in the 1880s during the presidential campaign of Grover Cleveland and James Blaine.[12] The first stanza

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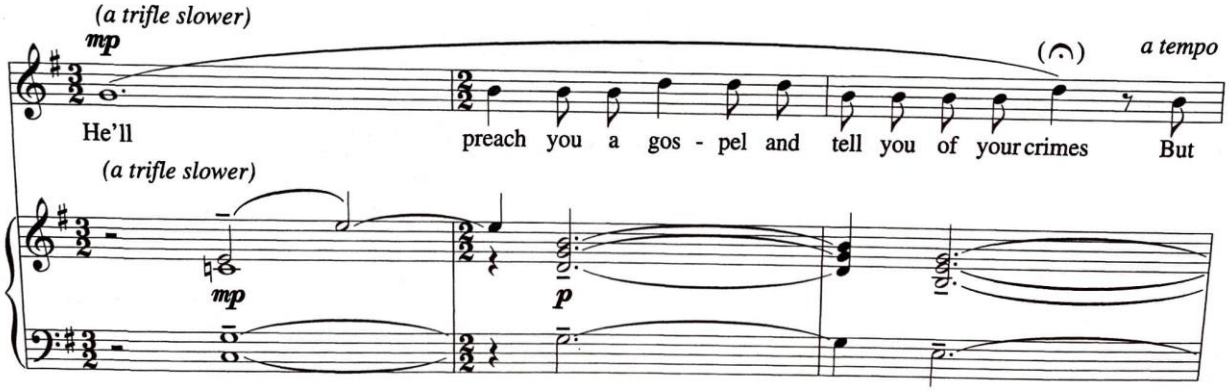
[11] Butterworth, *Copland*, 132.

[12] Butterworth, *Copland*, 132-133.

confirms its political origins, as the protagonist warns the audience of the candidate's shifty ways. Though they wine and dine you, they are truly out for money and power. The second stanza tells the story of the preacher, who has no problem absolving the sins of those that pay their tithes. The final stanza warns women of lover boys, who can promise the world yet act unfaithfully. Though there are only three stanzas in Copland's setting of "The Dodger," biographer Howard Pollack claims that there were several other stanzas that Copland chose to omit. [13]

The song is strophic with a refrain that follows each verse. The accompaniment is jaunty and is meant to be played in the style of a banjo. The tonality stays solidly in the key of G major throughout the song. The most adventurous harmony comes in the stanzas, with brief A major chords implying a passing secondary dominance. After the first verse – which is delivered with a consistent rhythmic pattern – Copland sets up his punchlines in the following verses with an elongated note halfway through the phrase (Figure 7). In the second verse, Copland elongates

Figure 7, Source: Aaron Copland, *Old American Songs: Complete,* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2009,) 12.



[13] Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Works of an Uncommon Man*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), 469.

the word “crimes,” while the piano sustains a deceptive submediant harmony, before jumping right back into the banjo-like accompaniment, while the singer goes on to tell us what the preacher is really after. Similarly in the third verse, the word “bride” is elongated over the only clear dominant harmony in the song. Copland saves this dominant harmony for the end to signal that the point is about to be driven home, and the song is coming to an end. Following this final fermata, the singer exposes the lover’s deceit and promptly rockets into the final, most bombastic iteration of the refrain.

The fifth song of *Old American Songs* is the playful children’s song “I Bought Me a Cat,” which utilizes a series of onomatopoeic animal sounds as it tells the story of a man with a habit of buying farm animals. The song has ties to the rural Midwest, as it was presented to Copland by the playwright Lynn Riggs, who grew up with the song in Oklahoma.[14] Copland is responsible for arranging the most well-known version of the song. When preparing this song with Copland, William Warfield thought the sound for the cow shouldn’t be “bah, bah,” and said, “It doesn’t sound right to me - I think it should be “moo, moo.” [Copland] grinned and said “okay,” and that’s the way we recorded it.”[15] The Hal Leonard edition of this song contains “baw, baw” for the cow, but Copland seems to approve of changes to the sounds agreed upon by the musicians.

The song is a series of strophes with an increasing tag. Each verse introduces a new animal and adds their sound to the list, comically making the singer rattle off several animal noises in succession by the end of the song. The final comedic zinger comes in the last verse,

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[14] Butterworth, *Copland*, 133.

[15] Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: Since 1943*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 168.

when the singer tells us that he's bought himself a wife, and he imitates her as well. There are six animals in total – seven if you count the wife! The piano accompaniment is bouncy and jaunty, and mimics the elaboration of the list of animals. The music begins simply with a boom-chick in the piano that covers the standard tonic-subdominant-dominant harmonic progression, but each subsequent verse adds a new rhythmic and/or melodic layer to the piano accompaniment. By the end of the song, the piano accompaniment is quite active and ornamented, while maintaining the spirit of the first stanza. When it comes to the animal noises, Copland wrote the piano harmonies to imitate the sounds made by the singer, such as dissonant minor seconds to imitate the duck and low quartal harmonies to represent the cow. The song ends in a flurry of repeated notes on the piano, a cacophony of animal sounds by the singer, and a dramatic crescendo from mezzo forte to triple forte (Figure 8).

"The Golden Willow Tree" is the third song in the second set of *Old American Songs*. It is actually an old English-American song, recorded in 1937 by Justus Begley of Hazard, KY for Alan and Elizabeth Lomax. The song's title is the name of a large ship that plays a role in the story. An alternate title of the song – and an alternate name for the ship – is The Golden Vanity.[16] [17] This discrepancy in the title is likely a result of its spreading and subsequent evolving through oral tradition. The song tells of a young carpenter boy who enters into a deadly deal with the captain of the Golden Willow Tree. The boy promises to sink a British ship to help

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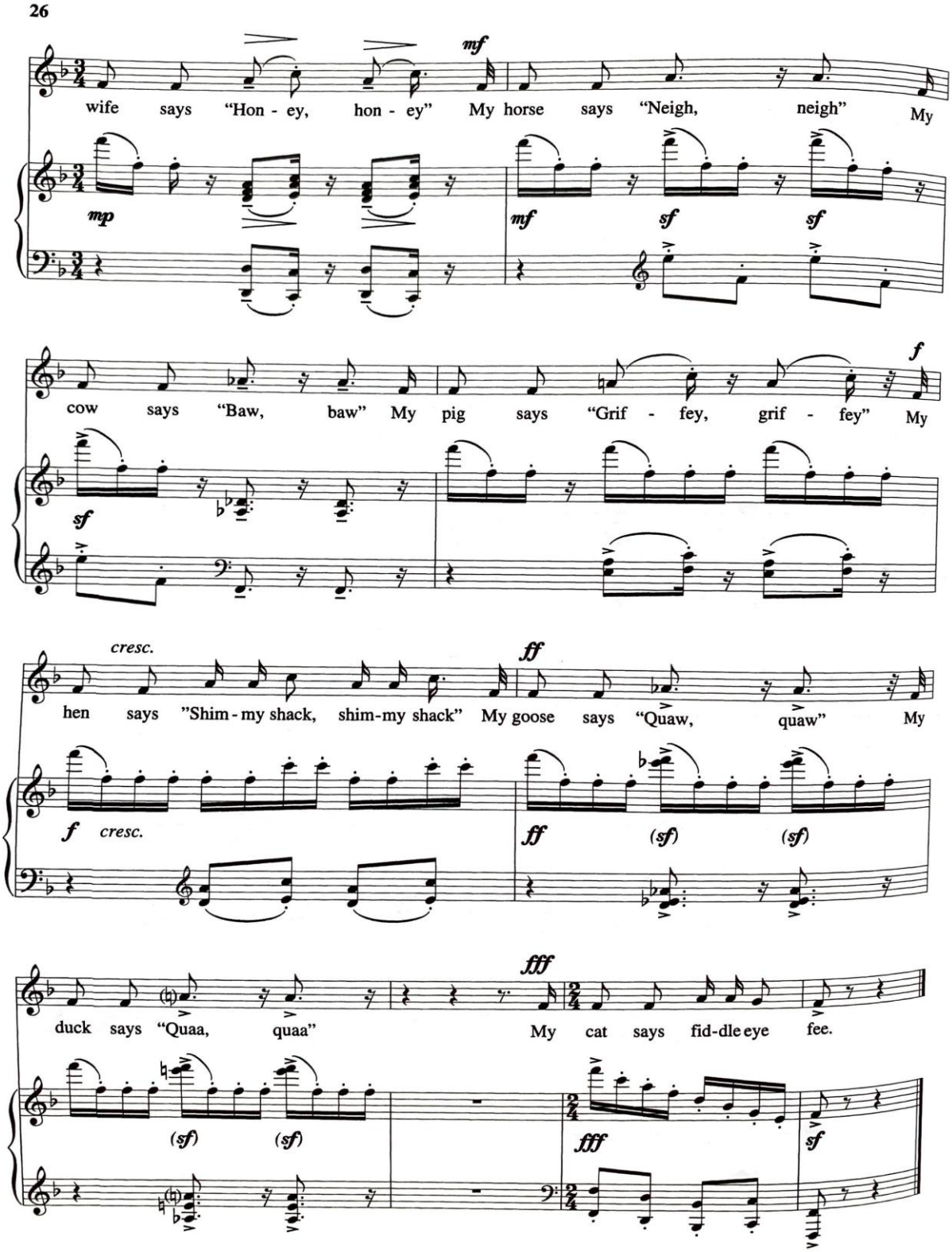
[16] Butterworth, *Copland,* 133.

[17] Alan Lomax, "The Golden Willow Tree (part 1)," The Lomax Kentucky Recordings, October 17, 1937, https://lomaxky.omeka.net/items/show/964.

Figure 8, Source: Aaron Copland, Old American Songs: Complete, (Milwaukee, Hal Leonard, 2009), 26.



the captain in return for gold or a ship of his own. The boy carries out his deadly task, but the captain of the Golden Willow Tree refuses to take the boy on board after completing his task, leaving him to drown at sea. The boy cares deeply for the crew of the Golden Willow Tree, and decides not to sink them like he did the other ship, but accepts his fate and sinks to the bottom of the sea.

This song is the most harmonically complex song included in Copland's *Old American Songs*, as each stanza follows the highs and lows of the story arc, sometimes travelling to distant key areas and employing dissonant harmonies. The singer must convey different characters and different moods as each stanza of the song portrays a different perspective. The form could broadly be described as modified strophic, though there are phrasal differences throughout. The primary melody of the song is stated first in the piano, and promptly echoed by the singer. The accompaniment provides a great deal of drama and movement, and often contains an eighth-note pickup into the strong beats. This eighth-note pickup gives a swaying or rocking figure throughout the whole piece that gives the audience a feeling of being out at sea. The song is rooted in G major, and briefly travels to A-flat major and G-flat major. These jarring modulations happen without preparation, and shock the listener as the story unfolds. The first modulation happens on m.35, when the captain speaks for the first time. The turning point of the story happens during the second modulation in m.63 when the captain tells the young boy that he won't be taking him on board his ship, and Copland builds that harmonic landscape on tritones in the key one half-step below the original tonic. The end of the song details the young boy's demise and has an accompaniment often marked *clouded*. This effect is achieved with several close harmonies in the low register of the piano, and the player can use the pedal generously to create a more blurred sound. It is during this final scene when the vocalist reaches their lowest

notes when singing about the bottom of the sea.

CHAPTER 4

CARLISLE FLOYD

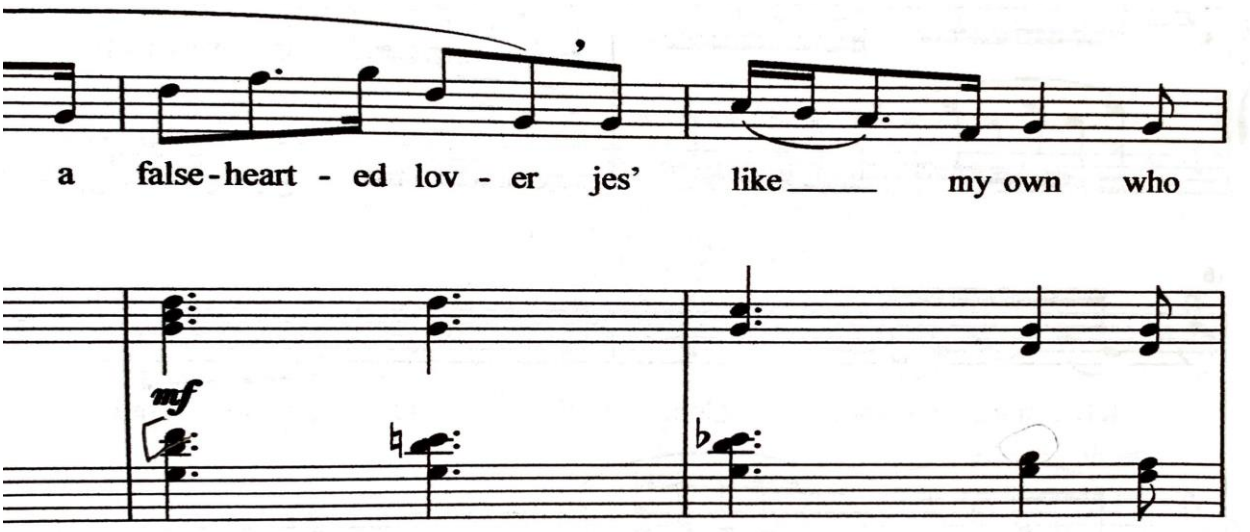
Carlisle Floyd was born in South Carolina in 1926, and became a well-known composer of operas in his lifetime. His experiences of growing up in the conservative south influenced his libretti, including his most renowned opera, *Susannah*. He wrote the opera, *Susannah,* during his teaching tenure at Florida State University. Floyd began as a piano professor before becoming a composition professor. *Susannah*'s world premiere in February 1955 was a cast of students, and it later premiered in New York in September 1956. The story of *Susannah* is based on the biblical tale of Susannah and the Elders. The latter, original story involves two elders that spy on Susannah as she bathes, and then blackmail her to sleep with them. After she refuses, they testify against her, saying she has committed adultery with another man and Susannah is sentenced to death. The king, Daniel, decides to question the elders separately and finds inconsistencies in their stories, ultimately ending in Susannah's freedom and the elders' demise.

Floyd's setting of the tale is in a small mountain town in Tennessee. Susannah is a young girl who loves to dance and has a well-intentioned, though often drunk, older brother, Sam. From the onset, the townspeople do not like Susannah's provocative way of dressing or how freely she dances. The townspeople tell the new pastor, Reverend Olin Blitch, that she needs to be saved, and begin pressuring her to attend church. Two male townspeople find Susannah bathing in the creek one morning – something Susannah does frequently – and proceed to cite this as an instance of her devilish ways. The entire community turns on Susannah. Even her friend, Little Bat McLean, falsely accuses Susannah of trying to seduce him. Sam has become wary of the situation, and encourages Susannah to show the town that she isn't afraid of them by attending a church service. It is at the church service where Susannah is singled out in front of the

congregation, bid to come forth to be saved, and is manipulated to make a public confession of her guilt. Susannah leaves the service crying and screaming, "No!" About an hour after the service, Susannah is home, and she sings "The trees on the mountains," which reflects her lonesome state. Susannah feels betrayed by the community she has always been a part of, especially by her once friend (and potential love) Bat McLean. Even Susannah's brother leaves her to go hunting during all of this tumult, so she must suffer through the societal pressures alone. [18]

In "The trees on the mountains," Susannah relays bleak imagery of winter, being cold, and being left alone by a false-hearted lover. The song is laid out mostly in strophes, with a contrasting B section in the middle and a coda at the end. Each verse presents a new metaphor for the coldness Susannah feels: a blue flame that has vanished and a baby fox who's been

Figure 9, Source: Carlisle Floyd, "The trees on the mountains," (Online: Boosey and Hawkes, 1956) 101.



[18] John Freeman, *The Metropolitan Opera: Stories of the Great Opera, volume 1,* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1984), 133-134.

abandoned by its mother. Floyd sets up this lonely and stagnant air with slow, chordal rolls of the harp. The harmonic progression of the piece contains a subtle descending half-step motive that is first found in the inner voices of the harp roll, (Figure 9). This motive is present in every section of the piece, though the texture changes throughout. The strophes of the piece involve an orchestra, with the strings and winds swirling through arpeggios in the key of G minor, setting an undulating, sorrowful landscape. The music swells with the rising angst of Susannah as she calls out for the loving warmth she once knew to come back, even if just for a day. The rest of the piece plays out in a similar fashion, with the flutes adding a layer of starkness in m.33 by playing cold, thin tones in octaves above the orchestra. Susannah's final call for help begins in m.49, and is at a pitiful piano dynamic with the harp rolls that began the piece. This final section of the piece is marked even slower than the beginning, and even suspends the time in the final four bars with singers' liberties fermatas. Susannah shows the depth of her heartache and grief in this aria, which is a pivotal point of realization and character development in the arc of the opera. For Susannah, there truly is no going back.

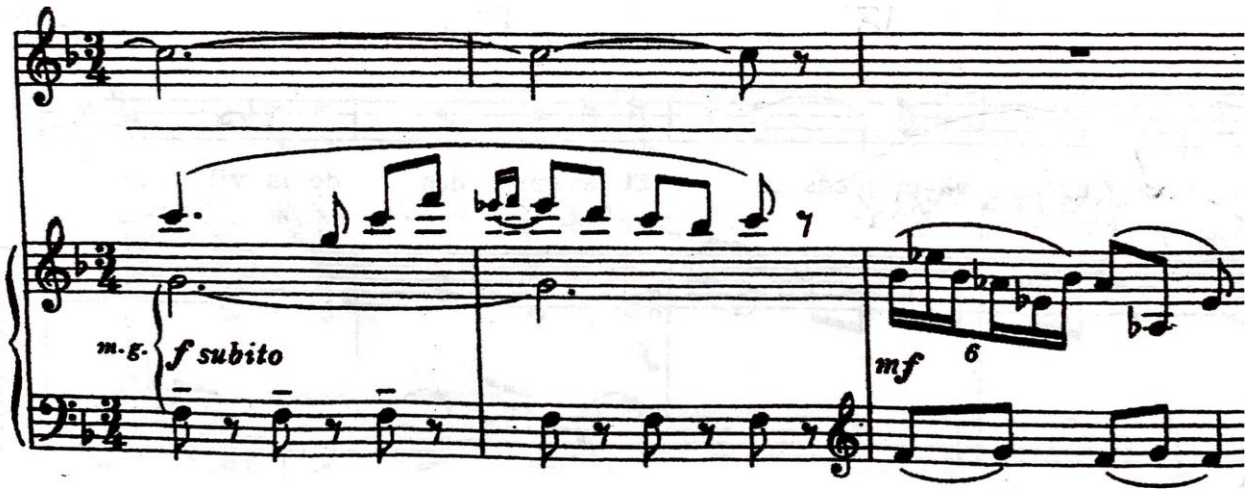
CHAPTER 5

FRANCIS POULENC

Francis Poulenc was a twentieth century French composer, whose works are often categorized as Neoclassical. Poulenc is known for writing for voice, piano, chamber ensemble, and orchestra, and his music is still beloved to this day. One of his most performed set of songs is titled *Banalités*, which he began writing in October of 1940. The set of five songs would later be premiered in December of the same year by Poulenc and baritone Pierre Bernac. Each poem is a work of Guillaume Apollinaire. Poulenc had earmarked "Sanglots" and "Fagnes die Wallonie" to be set to music for some time, and he discovered "Hôtel" and "Voyage à Paris" in 1940. Knowing he wanted a rhythmic opener to his set, Poulenc remembered a poem found in one of Apollinaire's prose works, *Onirocritique,* which became the song, "Chanson d'Orkenise." It is this first song, "Chanson d'Orkenise," that will be analyzed in further detail.

"Chanson d'Orkenise," tells of a town that sees many characters. A vagabond leaves the town, leaving his heart behind. A carter comes into the town, eager to be married. The guards of the town observe these people, ask them why they are coming and going, and warn them to be

Figure 10, Source: Francis Poulenc, "Chanson d'Orkenise," (Paris, Max Eschig, 1941) 1.



careful on the paths they have chosen. The guards laugh at the superfluous plight of the townspeople, and as they go back to knitting, the gates of the town slowly close.

Poulenc marks the song in the style of a dance, or as a popular folk song. As such, the pulse remains constant and unwavering. Wilfrid Mellers remarked, ""Orkenise is a road in Autun leading to the Roman gate: which may be why the tune swaggers over a repeated pedal note on F."[19] It is the pedal tone on F that drives the piece forward, much like proceeding down a road. Harmonically, the piece is adventurous. Though the key is marked as F major, there is never an F major chord, but the piece does begin and end on an open fifth F and C. The piece is written in triple meter – giving the piece a dance-like quality – but the phrases of the singer sometimes do not align with the natural downbeat. This happens in mm.21-25, when the downbeat functions more as a musical pickup than a landing point. The musical element that unites the piece is found in the accompaniment in mm.1-4, 29-31, and 53-56, (Figure 10). The pedal F in the left hand is decorated by the turning melodic motive in the right hand, almost like a swiveling dance move. This unifying motive is carefully placed by Poulenc in the beginning, middle, and end to bring unity, reestablish the dancing air to the piece and to mirror the construction of a story. The resulting story is a humorous snapshot of life in a folk village, and is an appropriate opener for the songs that follow.

[19] Wilfrid Mellers, *Francis Poulenc.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 57.

CHAPTER 6

JAKE HEGGIE

Jake Heggie is a contemporary American composer based in San Francisco. Heggie was born in 1961, and began studying piano from the age of seven. He is well-known for his vocal music, both art song and opera, and his works have been premiered in venues like Houston Grand Opera and The Metropolitan Opera. He is arguably the most popular living composer of vocal music. His song set *Natural Selection* was created for soprano Nicole Folland, who premiered the set in 1997 with pianist Donald Runnicles. The poetry by Gini Savage was created for this song set and it details a young woman's coming of age.

"Animal Passion" is the second song in the set, and tells of a woman ready to land a lover. Feline metaphors abound in this scandalous song. The protagonist wastes no time revealing her burning desire to be swept off her feet and into the bedroom; all she needs is a bottle of whisky and a hotel room. Halfway through the song, she reveals her driving fear, "I don't want to be a fat domestic cat." She runs from this fear in the opposite direction, perhaps taking it to extremes. She declares that she won't be embarrassed by loud sounds or eavesdroppers, and she welcomes voyeurs and willing suitors alike.

"Animal Passion," is filled with Latin dance influences, foremost is the tango – the ultimate partner dance. Duality is also found in the form of the song, which is split into two large sections that repeat, (ABA'B' Coda). The song is set in A minor, but employs numerous accidentals and unexpected harmonies to highlight the direction of the text. The A section is seductive, enticing, and flirty. The singer sings long lines with off-beat entrances that creeps up in range and dynamic through m.27. The accompaniment maintains the syncopated tango pulse , and alternates between fast sweeping figures and languorous triplets. The B section is dreamy,

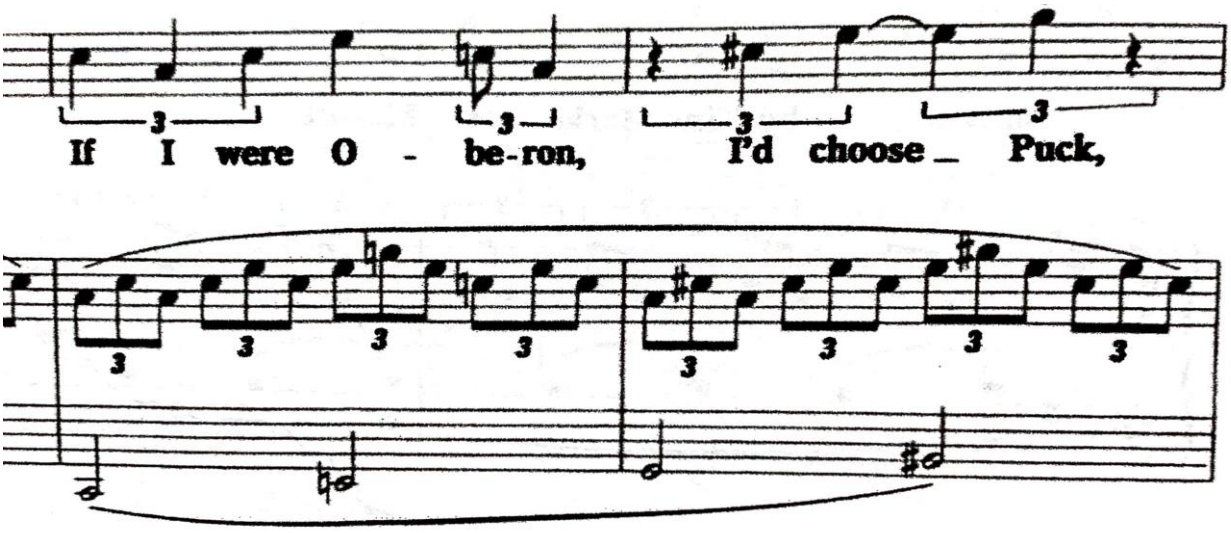
and the singer fantasizes of feisty scenarios as she sings up and down her range. The piano maintains its pulse, but has slowed to mostly half-notes in a shifty harmonic dreamscape. The end of the song sees repetitive, discordant thrusts from the accompaniment before the final utterance from the singer and a flourishing pounce from the piano, as the singer beckons her potential lovers to come.

"Alas! Alack!" is the third song in Heggie's *Natural Selection*. The protagonist laments her choice of men through the years, and realizes that there must be something wrong with herself. She casts herself as several well-known operatic heroines who end up with the wrong character from their story. She even mentions her penchant for "chain-smoking bad guys in leather" and guys who "ruffle [her] feathers the most." As she rattles off more characters that she sympathizes with, she tries to justify some of her choices with the men's successful career and power and even gets swept into a fantasy with yet another incorrect match. The song ends with the protagonist's realization that there must be a change, but can she really let old habits die?

Illuminating the frustration of the protagonist, "Alas! Alack!" contains a continuous drive and string of notes, with only a few pauses, until the end of the song. The accompaniment makes the form of the piece clear, AABA'. Anytime the singer delivers the titular words, the harmonies clash and bang like shattered glass with accents and minor seconds and sevenths. As the singer unfolds her misfortunes the piano twists and turns with anxiety, employing continuous triplets and off beat accents as the harmonies subtly shift. The piece is set in A major but is modally ambiguous and lacks any revealing cadences. Moments of the piece are in A major, A minor, and A Lydian. The clearest example of this modal ambivalence can be seen in mm.55-64, the B section. Under one slur, the piano travels through A major, C major, and A major seventh in the right hand, all while the left hand outlines an A minor chord with a major seventh (Figure 11).

The end of the piece ends as anxious and undefined as the start, with the singer and the piano teaming up for two final notes evocative of the idiom, “womp, womp.”

Figure 11, Source: Jake Heggie, The Faces of Love: The Songs of Jake Heggie, (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 1999) 33.



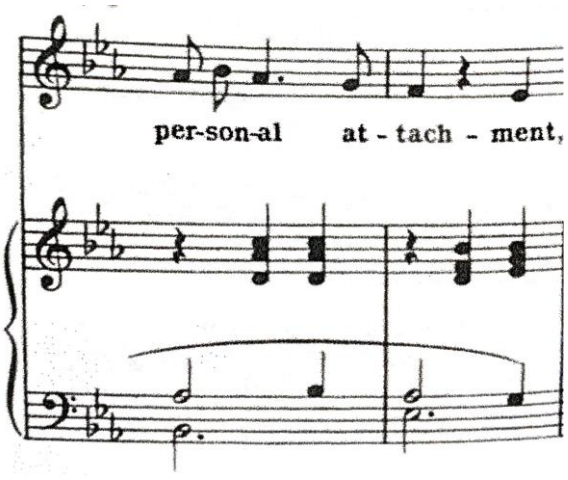
CHAPTER 7

CELIUS DOUGHERTY

Celius Dougherty is an American composer – known primarily for his art songs – who lived from 1902 to 1986. Dougherty was originally from Glenwood, Minnesota, but lived out much of his professional career in New York City, where he worked as a composer and pianist. “Love in the Dictionary” was written to be an amusing closer for a New York recital by mezzo-soprano Blanche Thebom. The idea of looking in the dictionary for inspiration was presented by Dougherty’s longtime collaborator and friend, Vincenz (Adolph) Ruzicka. The text for the song was taken verbatim from the Funk & Wagnalls dictionary, and Dougherty knew the last line, “in some games, as tennis, nothing” would be a wonderful way to end the song.

“Love in the Dictionary” tells the listener exactly what to expect in its title alone. Many video recordings of this piece portray the singer as a narrator or teacher educating the audience on the complex meaning of the word, “love.” The first words of the song describe love as “a strong complex emotion,” and the definition gets more complex as the song progresses. Love can

Figure 12, Source: Celius Doughtery, "Love in the Dictionary", in American Art Song, (Milwaukee, Hal Leonard, 2007) 86.



be towards a particular object, perhaps approaching obsession. Love can be between man and wife, lovers, and siblings, and can refer to someone who is beloved.

"Love in the Dictionary" contains a few repeating melodic and rhythmic motives that are not part of a larger framework, but become familiar as the piece goes on. The piece is written as a lively waltz which has buoyancy and humor throughout. The melody is tuneful but volatile, at times quite angular and spanning a large range in each phrase. Much of the composition reflects the overlying text, or contains whimsical ironies. One example is the use of a rest in the word "attach-ment" as in m.19 (Figure 12). The accompaniment ironically sinks with descending half-steps as the singer describes the love between man and wife, and the accompaniment becomes pouncing and dissonant as the singer sings about animal passion. The personification of love, Cupid, watches over the whole discourse, as the piano flutters about with trills at the beginning and end of the piece. Though the piece is majorly boisterous and flamboyant, the final measures of the song slow gradually slow in tempo as the singer earnestly delivers the final lyrics, mentioning tennis as one instance – perhaps of many – where love means zero.

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