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Extended Program Notes for Thesis Voice Recital

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

EXTENDED PROGRAM NOTES FOR THESIS VOICE RECITAL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

by

Rebecca Ann Longtemps

2012

To: Dean Brian D. Schriener
College of Architecture and the Arts

This thesis, written by Rebecca Ann Longtemps, and entitled Extended Program Notes for Thesis Voice Recital, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Date of Defense: March 25, 2012

The thesis of Rebecca Ann Longtemps is approved.

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Florida International University, 2012

DEDICATION

For their loving support and constant encouragement
this thesis is dedicated to my Mother, Martha Longtemps (in memory),
my Father, Robert Longtemps,
and Dr. Kathleen Wilson.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
EXTENDED PROGRAM NOTES FOR THESIS VOICE RECITAL

by

Rebecca Ann Longtemps

Florida International University, 2012

Miami, Florida

Dr. Kathleen Wilson, Major Professor

This thesis presents extended program notes for a sixty-minute vocal graduate recital consisting of the following repertoire for soprano: Two arias by Johann Sebastian Bach from his Coffee Cantata, BWV 211; W.A. Mozart's concert aria Vado, ma dove?, K. 583; three selections from Antonín Dvořák's Cigánské Melodie, Op. 55; Jules Massenet's Adieu, notre petite table from Manon; Gustav Holst's Four Songs, Op. 35; contemporary composer Mark Adamo's Joy Beyond Measure from Little Women; Sergei Rachmaninoff's Vocalise; and selected English art songs by Madeleine Dring. Extending over four centuries of music, these works encompass five languages and display a variety of musical periods and styles. These extended program notes place these works in historical context, offer analytical overviews, and discuss relevant performance practice traditions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH:	
A Controversial Beverage in Eighteenth-Century Leipzig.....	1
Musical Configuration of the Plot and Characters.....	2
II. WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART: Vado, ma dove, K. 583.....	5
III. ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK:	
Nationalism in Art Songs.....	7
Three selections from Cigánské Melodie, op. 55..	9
IV. JULES MASSENET:	
A Comparison of Novel and Libretto	10
Manon: The Role	11
V. GUSTAV HOLST:	
Unconventional Style.....	15
English Folk Song Revival	15
VI. SERGEI RACHMANINOFF:	
Defining the Vocalise	17
Tchaikovsky's Influence.....	18
Vocalise from Fourteen Songs, Opus 34	18
VII. MADELEINE DRING:	
The Early Years	20
Influences on Style.....	21
Neo-Baroque Style in 20 th Century Art Song.....	22
An Elizabethan Love Song	22
Modern Musical Approach on Shakespeare	23
Betjeman and Dring: A Meeting of the Minds	25
A Bay in Anglesey.....	25
Business Girls	26
Undenominational.....	27
Upper Lambourne	28
Song of a Nightclub Proprietress.....	29
VIII. MARK ADAMO: Joy Beyond Measure.....	31
REFERENCES	34

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Ei! Wie schmeckt der Coffee süsse	3
2. Heute noch, lieber Vater tut es doch.....	4
3. Vado, ma dove?	6
4. Vado, ma dove?	6
5. Struna naladěna.....	7
6. Když mne stará matka.....	8
7. Adieu, notre petite table.....	13
7. Adieu, notre petite table.....	13
9. Four Songs for Voice and Violin.....	16
10. Vocalise	19
11. The Enchantment	22
12. When Daisies Pied.....	24
13. It was a Lover and his Lass.....	25
14. A Bay in Anglesey.....	26
15. Business Girls	27
16. Undenominational.....	27
17. Undenominational.....	28
18. Song of a Nightclub Proprietress	29
19. Song of a Nightclub Proprietress	30
20. Joy Beyond Measure, Mother!.....	31
21. Joy Beyond Measure, Mother!.....	33

Chapter I

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH:

A Controversial Beverage in Eighteenth-Century Leipzig

Coffee, the subject of Bach's secular cantata, BWV 211, proved to be a controversial topic for women of the eighteenth century. Christian Friedrich Henrici, known by his pseudonym, Picander, produced this comic, semi-dramatic libretto set to music by Johann Sebastian Bach in 1734–35. When Leipzig mourned the death of Elector Friedrich August I of Saxony in 1733 and a new Elector took his place, Bach began his remarkable output of forty secular cantatas.

Bach's sacred cantatas outnumber his secular cantatas because he was required to produce a new one most Sundays. He wrote his secular cantatas for university functions, coffee house salons, and his own Collegium Musicum events. The Coffee Cantata was first performed at Zimmerman's Coffee House, presumably by the Leipzig Collegium Musicum, over which Bach presided. Thus, it is not surprising that when Zimmerman's Coffee House closed, Bach's output of secular cantatas immediately decreased (Goodman 2006).

Leipzig, Bach's final place of residence and a city acclaimed for its commerce and the world's oldest trade fair, was the creative space in which he wrote his late works. This includes his most dramatic repertoire: the Coffee Cantata (BWV 211) and the Peasant Cantata (BWV 212). The city's emphasis on trade encouraged increased importation of coffee beans, which in turn raised consciousness about caffeine's effect on the brain and body. The consumption of coffee became an unacceptable activity for women, comparable to smoking and drinking. As taverns were converted into coffee houses, the new beverage replaced alcohol.

Gender debates in early eighteenth-century Leipzig focused on women's intellectual and creative limitations, as well as on the negative effects of caffeine on women. In a treatise contemporaneous to Bach's time, Daniel Duncan compared women's consumption of coffee to men's use of wine: "For this sex, which does not have as much to do, [coffee] serves in place of an activity, and women drown their cares in coffee as we drown ours in wine" (cited in Barron 2006, 201).

Musical Configuration of the Plot and Characters

The Coffee Cantata consists of three solo characters, chorus, and a small chamber ensemble. Unlike the sacred cantatas, with their discrete movements and disparate texts, its subject and music are continuous, like that of an opera. Although Bach was not an opera composer, he nevertheless used the Italian recitative in his secular cantatas, thus transforming them into dramatic works rather than a collection of pieces. As in opera, the recitative between each aria and chorale accelerates the plot.

In his sung dialogue, the narrator quiets and gathers the audience to listen to the story of Herr Schlendrian and his daughter Liesgen. Schlendrian complains of the arguments between parents and children, deciding that his words "Go in one ear and out the other." He continues to complain in the ensuing dialogue with his daughter and the narrator, in which Schlendrian criticizes his daughter for indulging in coffee. Her reasoning is that she would dry up like a "roasted goat," if she did not have three cups a day.

Defending her beloved beverage further, Liesgen sings an aria, "Ei! Wie schmeckt der Coffee süsse (Ah! How Sweet Coffee Tastes)," in which she claims that coffee is "sweeter than a thousand kisses" and "smoother than muscatel wine." Bach's

opening instrumental motive recurs when the vocal line enters, as shown in Figure 1.

Bach treats the innocent text in a romantic, sensuous manner through his sixteenth-note triplet ornamentation.



Figure 1. Bach: “Ei! Wie schmeckt der Coffee süsse.” Sensuous vocal entrance accompanied by Flute and Harpsichord.

After she proclaims her faithfulness to coffee, Liesgen’s father reacts. He begins by restricting her to their house, to which she responds, “Fine, just leave me my coffee.” He then warns that he will not supply her wardrobe with fashionable garments and ribbons, to which she retorts that she can do without. An obstinate daughter is not one to be won over easily, admits the father. He decides to attack her weak spot. In the recitative that follows, he threatens to withhold his permission to marry if she refuses give up her coffee. In her yielding response in the aria “Heute noch, lieber Vater, tut es doch,” she indicates that if she only had a lusty lover before sleeping, she would no longer need coffee. The narrator divulges to the audience what the father does not know: Liesgen’s secret marriage contract with her future husband stipulates that she be allowed to drink coffee. In the above-mentioned aria, Bach’s unnatural setting of the German syllables,

Chapter II

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART:

“Trunk arias” or “Insertion arias” were a long-established tradition for Mozart (1756–91) and his contemporaries. As they traveled to their various engagements, singers would take along the scores of arias showing their particular vocal talents to optimal advantage—hence the term *trunk aria*. Depending on the term of their contract, singers often substituted these arias for ones originally written for the opera in which they were performing. “Vado, ma dove?” is one of two insertion arias Mozart wrote for the opera *Il burbero di buon cuore* (*The Goodhearted Churl*) by the opera and ballet composer Vicente Martín y Soler (1754–1806). (The other is “Chi sa, chi sa, qual sia.”)

Lorenzo da Ponte (1749–1838) wrote Martín y Soler’s libretto based on an Italian comedy by Carlo Goldoni (1707–93). The opera premiered in 1786 at the Burgtheater in Vienna, coincidentally the same year Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* was premiered. Three years later, both operas were revived at the same theater, each with two new Mozart “trunk arias.”

Mozart wrote the two arias for soprano Louise Villeneuve, who performed the role of Madame Lucilla for the November 9, 1789 revival at the Burgtheater. The aria was inserted into Act II, Scene 5, during which Madame Lucilla sings of her suitor’s torment. It is a two-part aria with contrasting meter and tempo. Her frazzled soliloquy is distinguished by frequent modulation between verses and a recurring, “tormented” motive shown in Figure 3. Mozart’s conjunct descending and ascending melody, with characteristic two-note group slurs, preceded by a leap of a minor third, provides a whimpering effect. Figure 3 also shows that this motive is preceded by a fermata on a V7 chord, which leaves the listener expecting a resolution. The new idea continues to

prolong this seventh chord, however, which does not completely resolve until the second section.

o De - i! se - de' tor - men - ti -
I know not. Would that the gods had

p

V V⁷

Figure 3. Mozart: “Vado, ma dove?” Representation of torment in the vocal line by an unresolved dominant seventh continuing into a new phrase.

The first section states the motive from Figure 3 five times and then recurs, albeit less often, in the second section, part of which is shown in Figure 4. Here the diminished tempo and the elimination of a beat per measure create a more reflective, less frantic mood. Triplets in the accompaniment set against the vocal line’s duple rhythms create a two-against-three sustained pattern in a slower tempo.

Tu che mi par-li al co - re,
Love, let my steps be guid - ed;

Figure 4. Mozart: “Vado, ma dove?” Two against three between the vocal and accompaniment lines.

Chapter III

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK:

Nationalism in Art Songs

Along with Czechoslovakia composers Smetana, Fibich, and Janáček, Dvořák (1841–1904) is one of the most notable nationalistic composers of the nineteenth century. He incorporates Czech culture and folk tradition in his compositions by incorporating popular dances such as the polka, *dúmka*, *skočná* (reel), and *sousedská* (slow waltz). The latter two are exemplified in Figures 5 and 6.¹

Bur - sche, tanz' im Krei - - se! Heu - - - te
Join the wrea - thing dan - - ces! Laugh to - - -
ho - chu toè se v ko - - le dnes snad

Più animato
f

Più animato
f

Figure 5. Dvořák: “Struna naladěna.” Representation of the *skočná*.

Although he composed ten operas — most notably *Rusalka* in 1900 — his set of songs published as *Cigánské Melodie*, Op. 55, is better known today. The songs are characterized by *rubato*, chromatic accompaniment, and two-against-three cross rhythms.

¹ *Skočná*: a rapid dance in 2/4 meter, also known as the “Dance of Comedians.”
Dúmka: a Slavic folk song that alternates in character between sadness and gaiety.
Sousedská: a Bohemian dance in slow triple time.

p mezza voce

Als die al - - te Mut - - - ter
 Songs my mo - ther taught me
 Když mne sta - rá mat - - ka

pp

Figure 6. Dvořák: “Když mne stará matka (Songs my mother taught me).” Example of the *sousedská* (a Czech slow waltz).

The Czech poet Adolf Heyduk (1835–1923) was a comrade and follower of the Nerudova generation. He and Jan Neruda — advocates of Czech Realism — were members of the May School, a group of nineteenth-century poets and novelists attempting to establish Czech as a modern literary language. Nonetheless, in those waning years of the Hapsburg Empire, the German-speaking community in Bohemia was so sizeable and culturally predominant that Heyduk found it expedient to publish his *Gypsy Songs* or *Zigeunermelodien* initially in German. Dvořák initially set the German texts to music; later Heyduk disseminated a Czech version, for which the composer reworked his original melodies. Although the melodies remain mostly the same, the Czech version often yields several syllables in the place of a single German syllable, requiring in turn that the melodies be rhythmically modified: several repeated shorter notes in the Czech version substitute for a single sustained note in the German version. Therefore, the latter requires the breath support of an advanced singer, for the musical phrases tend to be more expansive.

Three selections from *Cigánské Melodie*

Gypsy or Romani culture — a favorable subject of Romantic and folk music in Europe and Russia — fascinated those living in oppressive societies. Text evoking images of vast fields and an itinerant, carefree life style were often set to music by nationalist Central and Eastern European composers. For Russians, Czechs, and Slovaks, freedom from governmental repression was a foreign and inspirational idea.

Prior to composing the *Cigánské Melodie*, Dvořák's nationalistic output consisted of *Three Slavonic Rhapsodies*, Op. 48, and the *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46. In January of 1880, Dvořák reached his peak as a songwriter with the *Gypsy Songs*. He effectively captured the spirit of Adolf Heyduk's text, his folk dance-inflected melodies evoking images of free-spirited living in the open-air. I chose three songs to exemplify the emotional, harmonic and technical complexity of Dvořák's *Gypsy Songs*. They are a coherent grouping, related to one another by key — D Minor and D Major.

Chapter V

JULES MASSENET

Jules Massenet's (1842–1912) early musical instincts were cultivated through composition lessons with Ambroise Thomas (1811–96). Massenet's experience playing timpani at the Théâtre Lyrique in Paris helped foster his knowledge of current operatic style. This early exposure to both French and foreign opera inspired his own operatic works, including the opera that initiated his thirty-five year theatrical career, *La grand'tante*. His early works reflect a variety of influences, most notably those of Gounod, Reyer, Mozart, and Gluck.

A Comparison of the Novel and Libretto

It is possible that Massenet's adaptation of Abbé Prévost's (1697–1763) novel *L'histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon* is more successful at depicting the French story than the other operatic versions by Daniel Auber or Giacomo Puccini. Massenet and his team of librettists — Henri Meilhac and Philippe Gille — collaborated to create in *Manon* an alternative, abridged version of the novel. For example, the operatic action never leaves France; it begins in the stage coach town of Amiens; its central three acts take place in Paris, and Manon dies in the last act en route to Le Havre, where she is to be deported to Louisiana (the fate of many French eighteenth-century prostitutes, who were forcibly relocated to the New World to help engender future generations of colonists). In the original novel, we follow Manon to the New World and a series of disastrous adventures, ending with the poor girl's death from exhaustion in the wilderness. The five-act *opéra comique* (“comic” because of its occasional use of spoken dialogue in place of formal recitative) avoids the social criticism that the novel, written in

the last days of the *Ancient Régime*, so movingly expresses. Meilhac and Halévy make a few other changes. The corrupt soldier Lescaut, instead of being Manon's brother, becomes her cousin, which is a significant shift in relational dynamics. The opera libretto shortens the amount of time Manon and Des Grieux live together unmarried, and Manon's love for the finer things in life induces her to leave him just once, rather than three times. All of this to make the sprawling novel manageable for an evening in the theater.

Manon: The Role

The intriguing, multi-dimensional character of Manon appeals to most audiences, who can relate to the conflicting temptations posed by wealth on the one hand and a seemingly perfect lover on the other—and, more generally, by the emotions attached to failed relationships. Manon is a fragile, docile girl of fifteen years old when she arrives at Lescaut's residence. Even though in the opera, Lescaut plays the role of her cousin, he reprimands her as a sibling when she listens to—but rejects—the propositions of an old rake. Nonetheless, the sight of pampered women in all their finery makes her regret that her parent's are sending her to a convent.

When Des Grieux — who immediately falls in love with Manon — enters the picture, she definitively decides that the abbey is not for her. The new couple escapes to Paris where they reside in an apartment together until Manon's cousin finds her. He is accompanied by a nobleman in disguise, De Brétigny. De Brétigny warns Manon that Des Grieux will be arrested that evening by his own father and that he will be the only one able to provide her security, protection, and luxury.

Intrigued by De Brétigny's extravagant compliments and offers of wealth, Manon yields to temptation in the aria, "Adieu, notre petite table," while also expressing her regret at leaving Des Grieux. The recitative that preceded the aria begins forcefully in E-flat major, expressing Manon's firm resolve to leave her young lover—for his sake ("Allons! il le faut! pour lui-même"). Suddenly, the E-flat tonic is transformed into an augmented-sixth chord resolving to the dominant of G major. This tonal shift coincides with a near change of heart ("Mon pauvre Chevalier! Ah! oui, c'est lui que j'aime!"). But Massenet avoids cadencing in G major—the suggestion of G as tonic is just as fleeting as Manon's scruples. Her love wavers again ("Et pourtant...j'hésite aujourd'hui") as the bass line leads up chromatically the dominant of a third key, B-flat major. Over this new dominant, Manon reaffirms her decision, once again rationalizing it to herself as an act of charity ("Non, non! Je ne suis plus digne de lui"). Unlike the earlier dominant of G, this one *does* lead to a cadence: what follows is a lyrical, sensual passage in B-flat major, a key that throughout the opera is associated with Manon's lust for riches (Figure 7 shows the shift to B-flat major coinciding with a sudden change of texture.) Musically and textually, this passage alludes to De Brétigny's offer of "protection" earlier in the act. This entire recitative bears similarities to a mad scene, as Manon talks to herself and imagining the voices of her lovers. Her recollection of De Brétigny's words "Manon, tu sera reine par la beauté" coincides with the climax of the recitative, the high tessitura reflects Manon's sudden exaltation.

Non, non, je ne suis plus di - gne de lui! J'en -

Andante espressivo (♩ = 66) *con forza*

Figure 7. Massenet: Recitative preceding “Adieu notre petite table.” Sudden contrasts in range, tempo, accompaniment, and texture represent Manon’s conflicted emotions.

Once past this climax, however, as the end of the recitative leads into the G-minor tonality of the aria proper, Manon’s thoughts turn regretfully back to Des Grieux, and specifically, to the little dinner table they shared and to which she tearfully bids farewell (“Adieu notre petite table”). Massenet represents this turn to a sad, reflective state with a simple, even bleak chordal accompaniment. The vocal line, broken by frequent rests, suggests sobbing. Finally, the turn to the key of G hearkens back to the earlier recitative passage that associated the aborted G-major cadence with Manon’s regrets. Figure 8 show the opening of this aria proper.

A-dieu, no - tre pe - ti - te ta - ble!

pp

Figure 8. Massenet: “Adieu, notre petite table!” Sparse texture in accompaniment and rest after *adieu* create a fragile ambiance.

Each section of this recitative-aria complex suggests a new emotional state, carefully calibrated with changes of key, mode, and vocal color. This constant emotional flux makes sense when one remembers that Manon is only a teenager—and a commoner at that— for whom two aristocratic older men are competing. The vocal requirements, including various timbres and agility, are dictated by Manon’s restless movement back and forth between love and money. For instance, the Act III “Gavotte,” which captures Manon at her most frivolous, requires a light, flexible coloratura soprano. The aria performed in the present recital may be sung by a light-lyric or soubrette voice. In contrast, the duet should be sung by a spinto (a larger and stronger voice). The singer who wishes to tackle the role of Manon should be able to negotiate a variety of vocal timbres.

Chapter IV

GUSTAV HOLST:

Influence on Style

Breaking with several centuries of European art song conventions, Gustav Holst (1874–1934) took a modern folk approach to the genre. Having been influenced by such figures as Mendelssohn, Wagner, Grieg, Dvořák and Tchaikovsky, Holst's style is romantic, but his melodies often take a highly idiosyncratic turn that separates his style from that of his predecessors. Holst is often only associated with the epic orchestral work, *The Planets*, but he wrote many fine works for chamber ensemble as well as art songs.

Although he was a musician from an early age, his neuritis made piano playing a struggle, and his lack of interest in the violin inhibited his progress on that instrument. His unsuccessful audition for composition at Trinity College of Music in London after graduating high school halted his progress for a year. Later, however he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music. In 1893, while at the RCM, he met the established art song composer, Ralph Vaughan-Williams (1872–1958), whose opinion he came to respect (Mitchell 2001, 43–64).

English Folk Song Revival

Holst's early compositions from the 1890s were marked by rich, chromatic textures similar to those of his idol Richard Wagner. By the end of the nineteenth century, Holst had only composed a small collection of songs. His career looked dismal as a composer, so he pursued a career as head of music at St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith until the end of his life. Around the time Vaughan-Williams was reviving

the English folksong, Holst composed three of the *Four Songs for Voice and Violin* (1916). A fourth song, “I sing of a maiden,” was added in 1917. The anonymous texts were drawn from *A Medieval Anthology*, edited by Mary Segar in 1915. He composed these songs just after his masterpiece, *The Planets* (Mitchell 2001, 625-626).

Holst’s use of voice and violin is an interesting combination and has autobiographical resonances; his mother, Clara von Holst, was a soprano and Gustav played the violin as a child. Rhythms in both the violin and voice parts are based on plainchant (i.e., Gregorian Chant, the early medieval settings of the Roman Catholic liturgy). Like plainchant, Holst’s songs follow the natural inflection of the spoken text, eschewing fixed meters (Holst did not indicate any time signatures) and allowing musical measures to contain a varied amount of beats, depending on the length of the textual phrase. The melodies are derived from the medieval church modes, oscillating between the modern minor and major modes but usually end in major. Holst’s use of double-stops in the violin part, especially in conjunction with the vocal line, requires both singer and violinist to focus on intonation (see Figure 9). Rapid changes in meter and recurring modulations require diligent attention from the performers.

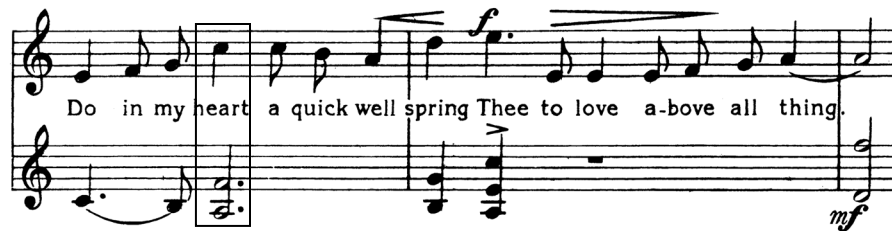


Figure 9. Holst: *Four Songs for Voice and Violin*. Example of double-stops in violin in conjunction with the voice and variation in meter.

Chapter VII

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF:

Defining the Vocalise

For centuries singers and voice teachers have used vocalizes — or songs without words — as warm-up exercises. The vocalise derives from two traditions. The first is that of warm-up exercises with solfeggio. In the nineteenth century, some of these warm-up exercises became artful in themselves. Training manuals, such as Manuel García's (1805–1906) *Traité complet de l'art du chant* with piano accompaniment, were created to encourage critical thinking and musicality while warming up the voice. The second method dates from 1775, when singer and music teacher Jean-Antoine Bérard (1710–72) arranged a number of challenging vocal selection by composers such as Lully and Rameau, but omitting the words. His contention was that the text overcomplicated technique, and if singers began by learning vocal technique without having to worry about diction, they would have an easier time at first negotiating such challenging music (Jander, "Vocalise," in Oxford Music Online). The vocalise, at first a type of exercise, eventually became a compositional genre in its own right:

...but it was not until the early 20th century that leading composers turned in any great number to the vocalise as a concert piece. At first the genre was particularly cultivated in France.... (Jander, Oxford Music Online)

It was not until after this new genre had been established in Italy and England that Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) composed his vocalise in 1912. The stylistic influence of Tchaikovsky (1840–93) lies behind Rachmaninoff's incorporation of chromaticism within otherwise simple, repetitive, folk-like melodies.

Tchaikovsky's Influence

In his early years, Rachmaninoff's one-act opera *Aleko* was recognized by composer Tchaikovsky as a success. Tchaikovsky became a mentor to as well as a compositional influence on Rachmaninoff. Like the older composer, Rachmaninoff excelled in writing dramatic melodies colored by rich instrumental textures and lush, chromatic harmonies. Although Rachmaninoff's collection of songs and vocal duets is limited to one mid-sized volume, his most famous song remains the one without words. Even to an ear unfamiliar with art songs, one can recognize the "Vocalise" from commercial advertisements or romantic moments from films.

"Vocalise" from *Fourteen Songs*, Op. 34

"Vocalise" was tailored to the artistry of coloratura soprano, Antonina Nezhdanova (1873–1950), a soloist at the Bol'shoy Theater. Vocally, the legato melody requires adequate breath control and a great sense of musicianship. A variety of arrangements, tempi, and key signatures are available for almost any instrument. Although originally written for soprano and piano, common combinations include voice and orchestra, or various combinations of voice with violin, cello, guitar or piano. The singer is at liberty to vocalize on whichever vowel is most suitable to his or her voice. The majority choose a rounded *a* or a bright *o* vowel, and some alternate between the two.

The final five measures of the postlude include the first section's memorable motif inverted contrapuntally in the accompaniment to produce an exquisite collaboration between voice and accompaniment (see Figure 10). Rachmaninoff's expertise as a

pianist and his knowledge of the voice are clearly demonstrated in this, one of his most popular works.

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece. The top staff is a vocal line, starting with the tempo marking "a tempo" and ending with "ten. ad lib". The bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment, marked with dynamics "p" (piano) and "mf" (mezzo-forte). The score is in 2/4 time. A main theme is highlighted in red in the piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 10: Main theme of first section varied in postlude accompaniment (highlighted in red).

Chapter VIII

MADELEINE DRING:

The Early Years

An unconventional composer of art songs, Madeleine Dring (1923–77) strove to relate sung poetry to a broad audience. Having grown up during the swing era, Dring used jazz harmonies and swing rhythms to enliven the traditional art song style.

Although Madeleine Dring's songs are harmonically sophisticated, her eclectic use of modes and jazz elements make her pieces an easy listen even for those not steeped in academic music. Unfortunately, her music, published in England, has not been widely disseminated in the United States. Moreover, with the exception of one set of songs—the *Shakespeare Songs* (published in 1977)—her works were edited and published posthumously by her husband, the oboist Roger Lord. Information about her compositional style, influence, and opinion stems largely from Lord's recollections, journal entries, and letter correspondence (Brister, 2004).

To understand her compositional style one must first examine Dring's upbringing and early influences. In 1923, Madeleine Winefriede Isabelle Dring was born into a family of artists. Her father, Cecil John Dring, was an amateur cellist, improvisational pianist, and ventriloquist; her mother, Winefride Isabel née Smith, was an accomplished mezzo-soprano; and her elder brother, Cecil was a percussionist.

When Dring was nine years old, the headmistress of St. Andrew's Catholic School, which Dring attended, recommended that she audition for a spot in the Junior Royal College of Music (an equivalent American institution would be the preparatory department at the Julliard School). She was awarded a scholarship to attend Saturday classes of violin, piano, theatrical arts, and composition.

During her studies, Dring assisted theatre director Angela Bull in writing shows, arranging pieces for orchestra, accompanying musical rehearsals, as well as acting in shows. Bull proved to be a major influence on both Dring's compositional philosophy as on her success as an arranger. Bull was critical of Dring's works as can be seen in the following excerpt from a letter to Dring regarding an arrangement she wrote for side drum.

I doubt if we've got anyone who can do one difficult rhythm you've written for side drum. Keep in mind the material we have actually got, not professional standards. I do these plays and the music to be of help and enjoyment to the children, not to try and attain the impossible. So everything has to be fitted to idioms familiar to them and techniques possible to them. They can achieve perfection within their limits but not even mediocrity when they are aiming at idioms beyond their capacity and experience. (Hancock-Child 2000, 13)

Bull showed Dring that while ingenuity is compelling, her compositions would never be performed if she was not attentive to musicians' abilities. Such experiences may well have led her to write accessible music even in her mature years. In this, she departed from the modernist mainstream of post-war classical music.

Influences on Style

Early in her career, Dring came into regular contact with accomplished British art song composers like Herbert Howells, Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Gordon Jacob, and her works reflect their influences. Her traditional British tonality and her use of neo-Renaissance and Baroque rhythms can be attributed to Herbert Howells and Gordon Jacob respectively. Sparse textures in the accompaniment or a serious, demanding tone can be associated with Ralph Vaughan Williams (Brister 2004, 13-15).

Neo-Baroque Style in Twentieth-Century Art Song

Dring wrote specifically for her voice, which was a delicate, agile soprano with an extensive high tessitura. This explains why Lord transposed many of her songs for high voice down a third. Although she composed mostly for herself, some of her pieces, particularly “The Enchantment,” were set to poems that seem more appropriate for a male voice and have in fact been recorded by baritones.

A prime example of Howells’ and Jacob’s style in Dring’s songs is the passage shown in Figure 11, with its lilting six-eight time signature, its accents on strong beats, and its antique-sounding parallel fifths (which are a trait of Medieval, not Baroque, music).

The image displays a musical score for the song "Enchantment" by Dring. It consists of two staves: Voice and Piano. The music is in 6/8 time and features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked "Moderato". The score is divided into four measures. The first two measures are marked "mp" (mezzo-piano) and the last two are marked "p" (piano). The lyrics "I did but look and love a - while, 'Twas" are written under the voice staff. The piano accompaniment includes parallel fifths in the right hand, which are noted as an antique-sounding trait.

Figure 11. Dring: “Enchantment.” Example of neo-Baroque style.

An Elizabethan Love Song

The Elizabethan poet and political advisor to the Queen Sir Philip Sidney wrote *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (1578), from which Dring extracted the text for “My true love hath my heart.” The original poem suggests a more somber ethos than does Dring’s adaptation. She tended to take liberties with poetry removed from her own

era. Chromatically embellished scales and lush harmonic progressions infused with seventh and ninth chords redolent of jazz create a sensuous, highly charged ambiance.

Descending scalar figures repeat throughout the verses in an array of keys. The interlude motive is nearly identical to the postlude, and a retrograde of the prelude provides a hopeful outlook to the end of a somewhat dismal poem.

A Modern Musical Approach to Shakespeare

Shakespeare's poem "When Daisies Pied" from Act V, Scene 2 of *Love's Labour's Lost* is a charming yet biting tribute to the cuckoo bird. The cuckoo bird's name originated from the word *cuckold* because of its instinct to lay eggs in other birds' nests. Shakespeare juxtaposes primeval images of daisies and violets with evocations of the cuckoo—a cautionary reminder that new love brings infidelity. Shakespeare changes meter in lines seven and sixteen, revealing the sung nature of this poem (poems within the plays—as opposed to the predominant blank verse in iambic pentameter—were meant to be sung).

In Dring's setting, disjunct leaps in the melodic and harmonic progressions of the vocal and accompaniment lines convey the idea of dysfunctional relationships. Descending figures in the voice create a *glissando* effect, caressing the words in a sensual manner. Tonality exists—Dring often cadences in F Major—but is obscured by blues scales and constant modulation. The final series of descending *glissandi* for the singer is the most challenging passage as it requires steady support, connection, and agility. It also represents the final temptation of the cuckold's mate. The piano introduction, shown in Figure 12, is based on the major-minor tetrachord {0, 3, 4, 7}, which becomes a motive throughout the song. Combining major and minor modality is a stylistic trait of Dring's.

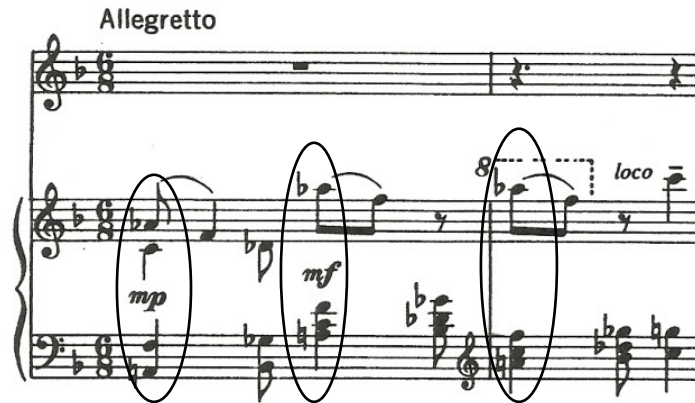


Figure 12. Dring: “When Daisies Pied.” Modal mixture in the prelude.

Shakespeare’s song “It was a lover and his lass” from *Much Ado about Nothing* is one of the most set texts in the English art song repertoire. A pastoral comedy written around 1600, *Much Ado* is nearly a comic opera because of its large number of songs. Composers from the Baroque to the present have usually set the many repetitions of the “hey nonino” refrain with rapid *parlando* rising and falling rhythms. In an otherwise normative strophic song, Dring introduces a modulatory interlude. The rhythmic syncopation, reminiscent of 1920s swing style, is unique, as is the vocal jazz riff shown in Figure 13, which is analogous to the cadenza often heard in arias before the final cadence or postlude.



Figure 13. Dring: “It was a Lover and his Lass.” Vocal jazz riff equivalent to aria cadenza.

Betjeman and Dring: A Meeting of the Minds

Dring composed *Five Betjeman Songs* in 1976, a year before her death. The British poet, John Betjeman, shared Dring’s preference for writing works that to which the general public could relate. They both resisted modernist tendencies towards abstraction and complexity. The English composer Mervyn Horder said the following of Betjeman:

Betjeman hadn't much of an ear for music, was no singer himself. What he most liked was to listen to the sound of his own voice declaiming his own poems, but he had a passion for the old-time British Music Hall, the last surviving stars of which were still about in the 50s and 60s and all known to him personally. He made no secret of hoping that these and other music settings of his work might succeed in making him famous in this kind of world. (Cited in Horder, 1994)

That he preferred his poetry to be sung to popular-style music may have inspired Dring’s settings, with their blend of swing, blues, and jazz.

A Bay in Anglesey

“A Bay in Anglesey” is vocally challenging because of its large range and unexpected shifts in harmonic progressions. The prelude employs a repetitive,

neighboring-thirds sequence in the accompaniment, which evokes the imagery of ocean waves. The static vocal line, unlike the accompaniment, reflects the textual reference to the “sleepy sound of a teatime tide” (see Figure 14).



Figure 14. Dring: “A Bay in Anglesey.” A static vocal line against an arpeggiated accompaniment depicting ocean waves.

The accompaniment continues to correspond to textual description throughout the song. For example, while the poetry describes birds soaring above the sea, the accompaniment remains in the treble register, but as the text describes the bay and its seaweed, it shifts to the bass register.

Business Girls

The song “Business Girls is structured as a theatrical piece and built out of repeated motives and an arpeggiated accompaniment. Dring’s constant use of modulation to prevent monotony is ironic in this instance, since both the poem and the musical parameters of motive and accompanimental suggest monotony. The repetitive accompaniment represents the routine of Camden women before work: eating breakfast, bathing, and seeing and hearing the same sounds every morning. These everyday occurrences are noticed by these particular women because they have nothing and no one to occupy them.

The last verse, which Dring directs to be sung softly and in slower tempo, is a set of directions for the lonely businesswomen: “Rest you there, poor unbelovd’ ones/Lap your loneliness in heat/All too soon the tiny breakfast/Trolleybus and windy street.” The postlude concludes with an ascending and descending scale of chromatic passing tones that mimics the wind described in the text Example 15).

Figure 15. Dring: “Business Girls.” The chromatic scale represents the wind, an example of text painting.

Undenominational

The expressive marking “declamatory, with conviction” added by Roger Lord is appropriate for the text and its rhythmically rigid setting heard in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Dring: “Undenominational.” Rigid, dotted rhythms set the poem’s description of a traditional religious revival meeting.

The rigidity of the dotted vocal rhythm in unison with the top voice of the accompaniment reflects the traditional, austere preacher. The singer should introduce a hint of sarcasm in her tone to enhance the text’s corrosive wit. An example of the latter is the mechanical intoning of revivalist hymn titles listed with gradually accelerating speed over a stepwise, ascending sequence in the accompaniment (see Figure 17).

a tempo più moto

“Glo - ry”, “Gos - pel”, “Rus - sell Place,” “Wrest - ling Ja - cob,” “Rock,,” “Saf - fron Wal - den,”

a tempo più moto

B-Flat Major B-Major D-Major F-Major G-Minor

Figure 17: Dring: “Undenominational.” Modulatory section listing titles of hymns.

Upper Lambourne

The town of Upper Lambourne is a section of Berkshire known for its horse races. The Lambourne Downs or hills are perfect terrain for training horses. The poem concerns a celebrated trainer who died in 1923 (the year of Dring’s birth).

To add variety and interest to the repetitive verses, Dring adds many expressive markings throughout the accompaniment and interludes between the verses. The meter oscillates between five and six beats per measure.

Song of a Nightclub Proprietress

Dring and Betjeman's sense of humor comes to the fore in this final piece, "Song of a Nightclub Proprietress." It is a witty vignette about a drunken, old club owner who has nearly gone out of business because an overpass is blocking the view of her establishment.

The free tempo and alternation between triplet and dotted rhythms creates the carefree, musical atmosphere of the club (Figure 18). The abrupt switch between the two rhythmic patterns suggests the unsure footedness of its drunken denizens.



Figure 18. Dring: "Song of a Nightclub Proprietress." Alternation of triplet and dotted rhythms.

Descending chromatic scales also imitate what could be interpreted as drunken movements. Dring's two instances of spoken text within the song allow the singer to exaggerate the character's intoxication. Throughout this song, the text painting is amusingly conventional. When the text describes spiders "Rac[ing] across the ciders" (a case of *delirium tremens?*), ominous sounding chords are followed by a rapid sixty-fourth-note run (Figure 19).



Figure 19: Text imagery of scurrying spiders.

Chapter VI

MARK ADAMO

“Joy Beyond measure, Mother!” from *Little Women*

The American composer and librettist Mark Adamo (b. 1962) turned to Luisa May Alcott’s timeless novel *Little Women* for his first opera, composed in 1998. It became an immediate success—unusual for a contemporary—and has been programmed by major opera companies as well as young artist programs over sixty times.

His abridged adaptation presents a series of flashbacks in the context of a dialogue between Laurie and Jo that distill Alcott’s story about the four March sisters and their family dynamics during an era of war and recovery. Adamo combines serial and tonal compositional techniques. An example of diatonic writing from the present aria—which I take as a musical emblem of Amy’s confidence—is shown in Figure 20.

AMY: *f* Joy be-yond meas-ure, Moth-er!

fp

Figure 20. Adamo: “Joy Beyond Measure.” Opening vocal line supported by an E-Major chord (example of tonality) reflects Amy’s confidence.

The relationship between Jo and Amy is often troubled, and this aria, sung by Amy in Act II, Scene 4, underscores the character's insensitivity to Jo's feelings for Laurie. Wide vocal leaps atop a stable accompaniment of arpeggiations and chordal progressions suggest Amy's excitement over her engagement to Laurie. Framing her diatonic exuberant phrase on the text "It's happened. At, last it's happened" (referring to her engagement), however, are two whole-tone chords: a complete whole-tone cluster within a B-major context and an augmented-triad within a Bb-minor context (see Figure 21). These atonal sonorities evoke a more reflective mood that contrasts with Amy's outward exuberance.

Adamo's constant modulation between unrelated keys (B Minor—B-flat Major—A natural Minor, etc.) yields an atonal and chromatic background against foreground diatonic and tonal progressions such as previously displayed in Figure 20. It is sometimes difficult for the singer to find her pitches as she transitions from one tonality to the next. The composer described his style of composition in the following excerpt from his program notes included in Schirmer's film version of *Little Women*: "I knew Jo's wild imagination, her haunting memories, would free me musically to range between abstract and tonal, poetic and vernacular, song and symphonic forms" (Mark Adamo). His style is inspired by the text both rhythmically and melodically.

4 *poco rall.*
 been! It's
f
p

Whole-tone chord within B major

mp (gratefully) *poco*
 hap - pened. At last, it's hap - pened. I
poco
p legato *poco*

Augmented C chord within B Flat-Major

Figure 21: Adamo: "Joy Beyond Measure." Augmented chords evoke an ethereal, dream-like state, which represent Amy's excited thoughts.

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