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# "Contrasts": Differences and similarities in choral settings of Christina Rossetti's poems

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“CONTRASTS”: DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN  
CHORAL SETTINGS OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI’S POEMS

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors

Coren Hucke  
University of Northern Iowa  
December 2017

This Study by: Coren Hucke

Entitled: "Contrasts": Differences and Similarities in Choral Settings of Christina Rossetti's

Poems

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University

Honors

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Date

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Dr. John Wiles, Honors Thesis Advisor

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Date

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Dr. Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

## Introduction

Choral music is a unique art form because it combines text with music. This juxtaposition allows the two elements to enhance each other, working together to create a clearer product. Composers of choral music must make carefully informed decisions when selecting a text and deciding how to set it to music. The characteristics of the text can have observable effects on the choices a composer makes in their setting. These effects are the subject of this thesis. I wanted to study musical settings of one poet to determine whether certain characteristics of the poetry had noticeable effects when set by various composers. I studied a representative selection of choral pieces setting the poetry of Christina Rossetti in order to determine the relationship between the text and the music. I began by reviewing dozens of choral settings of Rossetti's poems and selecting a portion for closer analysis. I chose multiple poems set by the same composer as well as multiple settings of the same poem by different composers to identify similarities and differences between the settings. I conducted a detailed musical analysis of each piece, observing things like style, texture, harmony, form, rhythm, and character. Next, I organized a small ensemble of singers and led rehearsals of the selected music, using my analysis to inform the rehearsal process. Finally, this project culminated in a recorded performance of the selected pieces, accompanied by my commentary on the results of my analysis.

This project had two main purposes, which were fulfilled by separate parts of the process. The first purpose was to answer two main research questions regarding the relationship between text and music in choral settings of Christina Rossetti's poetry. First, what contrasting musical features are revealed when a single composer sets multiple texts by Rossetti? To answer this question, I included multiple pieces by the composer Robert Young, all of which set texts by Rossetti. Second, how do characteristics of a single poem produce similar or different outcomes

when it is set by multiple composers? To answer this question, I included multiple settings of two famous poems: “Echo” and “In the Bleak Midwinter.” The task of answering these two research questions comprised the first main purpose of this project.

The second purpose was to create a recorded lecture-recital performance, using my findings to inform the rehearsal process and lecture content. To fulfill this purpose, I recruited a small ensemble of singers and led them in rehearsals of the music I chose. In addition to preparing the musical pieces for performance, I also wrote brief lectures to accompany the performance. These lectures informed the audience of my process and my findings, and allowed me to highlight certain similarities and differences between the pieces. Therefore, the research and analysis portion fulfilled the purpose of identifying the characteristics of the texts which resulted in similarities or differences between settings, and the rehearsal and performance portion fulfilled the purpose of applying these findings to the rehearsal process and demonstrating them in a performance. Through this process, I have found that certain characteristics of Christina Rossetti’s poetry frequently lead to observable effects in the meter, tonal, and formal choices in their musical settings.

### **Literature Review**

Before analyzing the effect of Christina Rossetti’s poetry on its musical settings, it is helpful to review the existing literature regarding her life and work. Rossetti was born in London, England, in 1830, and died in 1894. Her poems were primarily romantic, devotional, or children’s poems. Today she is considered one of the finest poets of her time. Attention to form, lyrical language, and romantic images of the natural world are frequent hallmarks of Rossetti’s

poetry. Rossetti is “chiefly remembered for the delicate rhythms of some anthology pieces.”<sup>1</sup> Another critic writes, “Her most consistently remarkable poetic attribute is her facility in rhyming and fitting thought into form without a trace of awkwardness.”<sup>2</sup> This attention to form is of particular importance to this project, considering the relationship between the rhythm of poetry and the rhythm of music. Indeed, many readers note the lyrical, musical qualities of Rossetti’s words. Though her work is not intellectual, Stuart Curran writes, “She has the not inconsiderable gift of felicitous music.”<sup>3</sup> This lyricism is another characteristic that makes Rossetti’s poetry particularly suited to setting to music. The existing literature regarding Christina Rossetti’s life and work characterizes her as a fine, spirited poet possessing remarkable skill with form and lyricism in her poetry.

A review of existing literature relevant to this project would also be incomplete without inclusion of prominent choral settings of Rossetti’s poetry. Since examining this repertoire and selecting examples for closer analysis and performance was part of the process of this project, this literature will be discussed in the context of that process.

### **Process**

To complete this project, I followed a series of steps laid out at the beginning of the process. First, I reviewed dozens of choral settings of Christina Rossetti’s work and chose the pieces to include and study for this project. Next, I analyzed the poetry used in each piece, noting aspects such as rhyme, meter, form, imagery, and character. In addition to the poetic analysis, I also conducted a detailed musical analysis of each piece, noting aspects such as style, texture,

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<sup>1</sup> Hönnighausen, “Emblematic Tendencies,” 1.

<sup>2</sup> Curran, “The Lyric Voice,” 293.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

harmony, form, rhythm, and character. Next, to answer my research questions and fulfill the first purpose of this project, I compared the analyses of multiple poems set by the same composer as well as the analyses of multiple settings of two poems, “Echo” and “In the Bleak Midwinter,” by different composers. In this comparison, I took note of musical similarities and differences in meter, tone, and form, and searched for explanations in the text that could have caused these similarities and differences. With these questions answered, I began to fulfill the second purpose of the project, producing a recorded lecture-recital demonstrating my findings. I recruited an ensemble of singers and arranged rehearsal times. I prepared for the rehearsals and led them with the findings of my analysis in mind. Finally, I conducted the ensemble in a performance of the pieces I studied, accompanied by my commentary on my research in the form of short lectures in between sets of music. This process was designed with the main purposes of the project in mind.

### Repertoire Selection

The first step of this process was the review of existing choral repertoire based on Rossetti’s poems, and the selection of pieces for further study. I utilized a variety of sources to find pieces including my personal library, loans from colleagues, online databases like ChoralNet, and online stores like JWPepper. With the final goal of a recital in mind, I knew my choice of literature would be limited in some ways by the nature of my ensemble and performance. Since I would not have an acceptable piano available for the performance, I chose pieces that could be sung unaccompanied. Since my ensemble would ideally be twelve singers, I chose pieces that could be sung by a small group. Finally, since my singers would be volunteers who could only rehearse a few times before performing, I chose pieces that were not too difficult to learn. Because of these limitations, some pieces I found in my literature search could not be selected for this project. For instance, Harold Darke’s setting of “In the Bleak Midwinter” is

popular among choirmasters but uses an organ accompaniment, which would not be available for my performance. Another piece I reviewed but didn't choose was a set of songs by Per Drud Nielsen, which set multiple Rossetti poems for voices. These selections were too difficult to prepare in the short time I had available. I also reviewed multiple settings written for piano accompaniment or ensembles that did not match the group I formed. These are just a few examples of the pieces I eliminated in my selection process.

With these limitations in mind, my choices were also informed by the nature of my research questions. As stated before, my research was attempting to answer two main questions. What contrasting musical features are revealed when a single composer sets multiple texts by Rossetti? And how do characteristics of a single poem produce similar or different outcomes when it is set by multiple composers? To best answer these questions and present my findings in an understandable way, I arranged the performance into three groups. The first group of pieces addressed the first research question, and therefore included pieces by the same composer. For this set I chose "She Sat and Sang Alway" and "Contrasts," both by the composer Robert Young. "Contrasts" includes two pieces published together: "For Sweet Things Dying" and "A Birthday." These three settings comprised my first set of music, intended to determine what contrasting musical features are revealed when the same composer sets multiple poems by Rossetti.

The second and third groups of songs juxtaposed contrasting settings of the same poem by different composers: "Echo" for the second group, and "In the Bleak Midwinter" for the third group. In the second group, "Echo" by Robert Young and "Come to Me in the Silence of the Night" by David Eddleman both used Rossetti's poem "Echo," and exhibited similarities and differences in phrase length and form attributable to the text. In the third group, Holst's setting of



“In the Bleak Midwinter,” “My Gift” by John Ratledge, and settings by Andrea Ramsey and Paul Mealor all used Rossetti’s poem “In the Bleak Midwinter,” though they did not all use the same stanzas. These two groups of songs illustrated the features of Rossetti’s poetry that caused composers to set them in similar ways, as well as the instances where this was not the case. I selected these pieces to fit the constraints of my ensemble and performing space, and also to best demonstrate the findings of my research questions.

### Introductory Analysis

Once I selected the repertoire, I moved on to analyzing the poetry used in each one. I started by determining characteristics that would likely have the most effect when being set to music. One obvious choice was a poem’s meter, or the pattern of syllables and stresses. I determined which poems used a consistent pattern of stresses, and which ones were irregular. A second characteristic that I knew would affect a musical setting was line length. I determined which poems used a consistent pattern of syllables per line, and which ones were irregular. A third poetic characteristic that I knew would be important was the form, or the divisions of stanzas. Finally, I studied the overall character or tone of the poems. This poetic analysis helped me determine similarities and differences between various settings later in the process.

In addition to poetic analysis, I conducted a detailed musical analysis of each piece. I identified large-scale characteristics of each piece, like their style, texture, harmony, form, rhythm, and character. I also did more detailed small-scale analysis, such as a Roman-numeral harmonic analysis for most of the pieces, and identification of cadence points of rest at the ends of phrases and phrase divisions. I compared the musical characteristics of each piece to the poetic analysis and found the following trends to be generally true for every song. First, most composers made the form of their composition match the form of the poem. Therefore, every

time there was a stanza break in a poem, there was likely to be a cadence point followed by a new section in the musical setting. For instance, Eddleman's "Come to Me in the Silence of the Night" has three distinct sections which correspond to the three stanzas of the poem. Second, all the composers tended to place the stressed syllables of the poem on the strong beats of the music. For instance, Ratledge's "My Gift," a setting of the final stanza of "In the Bleak Midwinter," frequently sets weaker syllables of a line as pickup beats, leading toward a stressed syllable on the strong first beat of a measure. Conducting a musical analysis of each piece after completing the poetic analysis helped me begin to identify the effects of the words on the music.

The effects of the poetry on the music listed above were relatively consistent no matter which piece or poem was being analyzed. However, my two research questions required a more detailed causal relationship between specific characteristics of each poem and their musical settings. I conducted further analysis of each musical group to find the similarities and differences in each one and how they were related to the text. My findings in this step of the process formed the basis of my lectures later in the process. Through this deeper analysis, I found examples of effects of the poetry in all three sets of music.

#### Robert Young

In the first group, my goal was to examine contrasting musical features between settings of different poems by a single composer. The composer of the pieces in this set, Robert Young, exhibits a consistent style in each of the pieces I studied. One hallmark of his compositional style is the use of suspensions at the ends of phrases, or instances where one voice remains on a note outside of the final chord before resolving downward while the other voices stay the same. This technique has the effect of prolonging the phrase and emphasizing the final word. Another common element is Young's use of secondary dominance, or the inclusion of notes outside the

established key in order to create dominant chords in other keys. This technique usually either leads to a cadence at the end of a phrase or leads to a change in the tonal center altogether. Both suspensions and secondary dominant chords are consistent elements of Robert Young's compositional style, and can be found in all three songs in my first set. However, I also found certain differences between the pieces that result from the emotional and tonal differences in the texts. One difference is the speed of the rhythms employed in each piece. In both "For Sweet Things Dying" and "A Birthday," the poem describes vivid, real events in the recent past- one describing death, one describing love. There is a certain kind of immediacy in both of these texts, and as a result, Young's settings both use faster rhythms and divisions of the beat, such as rhythms as fast as eighth notes. The words move more quickly, regardless of the tempo, when these rhythms are used. In contrast, the setting of "She Sat and Sang Always" never uses any eighth note rhythms. There is nothing shorter than a quarter note in this setting. This choice matches the text, which describes something that seems more like a distant memory, something blurrier and less detailed. The differing rhythmic choices made in these three settings reflect the differences in the poems.

Just as the rhythm choices were affected by the text, so too were the meter choices. Both "She Sat and Sang Always" and "For Sweet Things Dying" use simple meter, meaning the beat is divided into two parts. This sound is plodding, like a funeral dirge. It is an appropriate choice for the sadder, commemorative poems employed by Young in these settings. In contrast, "A Birthday" uses compound meter, meaning the beat is divided into three parts. This sound is jaunty, energetic, and more generally associated with joy and celebration. As a result, "A Birthday" feels more celebratory, where "For Sweet Things Dying" and "She Sat and Sang

Always” feel mournful. These differences are direct results of the text chosen for each composition.

### “Echo”

In the second group of songs, I addressed my second research question, concerning which characteristics of Rossetti’s poems result in noticeable effects on the music when they are set by divergent composers. The second set of music included two settings of Rossetti’s poem “Echo,” one by Robert Young and one by David Eddleman. This poem, like many of Rossetti’s poems, uses a regular pattern of syllables and stresses. My analysis revealed that the number of syllables per line had a particular effect on the two musical settings of this poem. While many forms of metered poetry contain an equal number of syllables in every line, Rossetti’s lines in “Echo” do not. The six lines of each stanza contain ten, ten, ten, six, four, and ten syllables each. Both composers tended to make their phrases last as long as one line of the poem, no matter how many syllables the line had. The result, in both versions, is that instead of phrases that have regular lengths, one after the other, these pieces both have irregular phrase lengths, because the number of syllables per phrase changes. This is one instance where a specific quality of Rossetti’s poem, the number of syllables per line, resulted in a similarity between settings by two contrasting composers.

However, not every characteristic of the source text resulted in a similarity like this. For instance, the division of Rossetti’s poem into three stanzas of equal length did not result in identical form divisions in the two musical settings I studied. When texts are divided into stanzas of equal length, they lend themselves to being set to repeated musical material, like verses that use the same music with different words. Eddleman’s setting repeated material from the first section in the third section, an ABA form using an almost identical melody and harmony for the

words of the final stanza as for the words of the first stanza. Young's setting of the same poem, however, does not repeat any musical material between stanzas, despite their equal lengths and structures. His version is through-composed, with no material being repeated as it is in Eddleman's. The form of the poem, therefore, did not result in similar forms between the two musical settings I studied. My analysis of two contrasting settings of Rossetti's "Echo" revealed an example where the poetry affected the music, and an example where it did not.

#### "In the Bleak Midwinter"

In the third group of songs, I continued attempting to answer my second research question, whether elements of Rossetti's poetry resulted in noticeable effects on the musical settings of the same poem by contrasting composers. I studied settings of Rossetti's "In the Bleak Midwinter" by four divergent composers. These included the famous hymn setting by Gustav Holst as well as three newer settings by John Ratledge, Andrea Ramsey, and Paul Mealor. This poem consists of five stanzas with eight lines each. It features a regular rhyme pattern, but unlike "Echo," the stress and syllable pattern are not consistent between stanzas. The first four stanzas are descriptive in nature, giving an account of the scene at the birth of Christ. However, the fifth stanza employs a stark change in perspective. It is first-person and introspective, featuring the speaker wondering what gift they could give the Christ-child that would be adequate. In my analysis, I found that both the irregular syllable and stress pattern and the change in perspective in the last stanza had noticeable effects when these poems were set to music. When setting a poem with multiple stanzas, a composer may choose to repeat the same melody each time. However, if each stanza of the poem does not have an identical syllable and stress pattern, as is the case in this poem, using the same exact melody may result in awkward word placements, or too many or too few notes. For example, the first lines of the second and fourth stanzas illustrate

the disparities in syllables and stresses throughout the poem. The second stanza begins with the words “our God,” an instance of a weak syllable followed by a strong syllable, while the fourth stanza begins with the word “angels,” an instance of a strong syllable followed by a weak syllable<sup>4</sup>. The first line of the second stanza contains only six syllables, while the first line of the fourth stanza contains eight syllables. Because of both the differences in stress and number of syllables per line, it would be difficult to set both of these lines to the same melody in a satisfying way, so composers must make choices on how to accommodate the irregular meter of the poem. The composers I studied solved this problem in two methods, depending on whether or not they chose a form that repeated the same melody. The first method, employed by Holst and Meador, was creating an adaptable melody that could be adjusted to add or subtract syllables. Both composers add an extra pickup beat in lines that begin with a weak syllable, and connect notes within the line in cases where there are fewer syllables. In this way, the same basic melody is preserved from verse to verse, even though the pattern of syllables and stresses is not identical. The second method, employed by Ramsey and Ratledge, is to avoid repeating melodic material in the first place. Ramsey has a couple of melodic themes that are repeated, but never attempts to set one stanza identically to another. Ratledge only sets one stanza of the poem, and therefore has no need to repeat material between stanzas. In all four settings I studied, the effect of the poetry’s irregular pattern is evident, though not all four composers arrived at the same solution.

Another quality of the poem, the change in perspective in the last stanza, produced noticeable effects in three of the four settings I studied. The setting that is left out is the hymn setting by Gustav Holst, because hymns traditionally use identical melody and harmony for every verse, so no change in the music is possible to emphasize the change in perspective. The

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<sup>4</sup> Holst, “In the Bleak Midwinter.”

other three settings, however, all share a musical characteristic that highlights the poem's sudden change to first-person. In Ramsey's setting, there is a change from homophony, with all four voices singing together, to a different texture, with each voice briefly singing a line alone while the other parts sing in the background with no text. This gives the effect of the featured voice part singing as though they were the first-person narrator. A similar change is present in Meador's version. Upon arriving at the final stanza, all the voice parts sing accompanimental parts with no text while a baritone soloist sings the melody alone. Just like in Ramsey's setting, this change gives the impression of the baritone singing as the voice in the poem. As noted above, Ratledge's version sets only this first-person stanza, so no change is evident from previous stanzas as in the other two settings. However, the same focus on one voice representing the first-person speaker can be found in Ratledge's piece, because all four voices begin nearly every phrase singing in unison or octaves, as one voice. This perspective change in the poem had noticeable effects on how the composers chose to set the poem to music, sometimes resulting in similar musical characteristics between settings.

### Rehearsal and Performance

After completing my detailed musical analysis and identifying the answers to my research questions, I began to fulfill the second purpose of this project. I reserved a performance space, set a date for my lecture-recital, and recruited singers for my ensemble. The ensemble was comprised entirely of students and had twelve members, or three per voice part. Approximately one month before the performance date, we began rehearsing the music. We met four times to rehearse, working for one hour each time. I led rehearsal from the piano, playing the chorus's parts along with them, and then gradually transitioned to conducting the chorus a capella as they became more comfortable. We focused on correct pitches, rhythms, diction, intonation, vowel

unification, dynamics, and articulations. I also took time to discuss the poetry and discuss my analysis, pointing out to the chorus the musical elements that were affected by the poetry. We worked together to find ways to highlight elements like phrase differences, rhythmic differences, formal differences, and tonal differences in our performance.

Finally, the performance itself completed my second purpose for this project. Working with my analyses from earlier in the process, I composed three short lectures to present along with the performance. I wrote one lecture for each set of music, along with introductory and conclusive remarks. In each lecture, I aimed to describe my analysis process and present my findings for each research question. In addition to the lectures, I designed programs to hand out to the audience members to help illustrate my findings. I printed the text of each poem in the program and occasionally referred to certain lines or patterns, instructing the audience to follow along in the text. The texts and my lectures accompanying the chorus's performance enhanced the audience's understanding of my research questions and the answers I found in my research.

### **Reflection**

Having completed the process and fulfilled my two main purposes, I have time to reflect on this project to consider both the elements that went well and the ones that could have been improved. Overall, I consider the project largely successful because I fulfilled its two main purposes. The first purpose was to answer two research questions: how are contrasting musical elements revealed when a single composer sets multiple poems by the same poet, and how do characteristics of a single poem produce similar or different outcomes when it is set by multiple composers? First, my analysis of multiple Robert Young pieces all using Christina Rossetti texts revealed differences in meter, rhythm, and character that could all be traced back to differences



in the source poems. Second, my analysis of two settings of “Echo” revealed similarly irregular phrase lengths due to the line lengths of the poem, while not yielding identical forms as a result of the form of the poem. Third, my analysis of four settings of “In the Bleak Midwinter” revealed two methods of dealing with the irregular stress pattern of the poem and a change in texture to emphasize a single voice when setting the stanza written in first-person. Throughout all of my analysis, I found evidence of the characteristics of the poetry affecting the characteristics of their musical settings.

The second purpose was to create a recorded lecture-recital performance, using my findings to inform the rehearsal process and lecture content. On this requirement I was also successful. My singers performed the music beautifully and were very responsive to my requests. They were very helpful in emphasizing the characteristics of the pieces that I highlighted in my lectures. Additionally, my lecture content clearly explained my process and the results of my analysis to my audience.

While the project was successful as a whole, there are a few things that could have been improved. Some factors outside of my control limited the scope of this project. Given my performance space’s limitations, my time restraint, and the size of my ensemble, there were significant amounts of music that I could not perform. I was still able to study a diverse selection of pieces, but without these constraints I could have included even more diverse examples. Other factors within my control could have been improved. Given the opportunity to do this project again, I would study scores even if I did not intend to program them or assign them to my chorus. This way, I could include a wider sample of pieces in my analysis and share my results in my lecture, though without the example of the chorus performing the works I studied. The scope

of my research questions could be widened by removing the requirement of performing the pieces I studied for at least one set of music.

Ultimately, for this project, I identified an important topic- the effect of Christina Rossetti's poems on their choral settings- and devised an appropriate plan to study these effects and present my findings by demonstrating them with an ensemble. This process has been helpful to me personally, giving me a chance to practice my analysis and conducting skills. My findings have made it clear to me how important the influence of words is on choral music. My process can be replicated with other poets and composers and could reveal similar findings. In my future work in choral music I will benefit from studying poetry's effect on music by recreating the process I used to study Christina Rossetti. Rossetti's poems have noticeable effects on their choral settings, and these effects can be identified and heard in performance.

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**In the Bleak Midwinter**

In the bleak mid-winter  
Frosty wind made moan;  
Earth stood hard as iron,  
Water like a stone;  
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,  
Snow on snow,  
In the bleak mid-winter  
Long ago.

Our God, heaven cannot hold Him  
Nor earth sustain,  
Heaven and earth shall flee away  
When He comes to reign:  
In the bleak mid-winter  
A stable-place sufficed  
The Lord God Almighty -  
Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom Cherubim  
Worship night and day,  
A breastful of milk  
And a mangerful of hay;  
Enough for Him, whom Angels  
Fall down before,  
The ox and ass and camel  
Which adore.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Sopranos**

Taylor Else  
Lauren Soukup  
Dawn Vickers

**Altos**

Annika Andrews  
Aja Baskerville  
Mallory Vallentine

Angels and Archangels  
May have gathered there,  
Cherubim and seraphim  
Thronged the air;  
But only His Mother  
In her maiden bliss  
Worshipped the Beloved  
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,  
Poor as I am? -  
If I were a Shepherd  
I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man  
I would do my part, -  
Yet what I can I give Him, -  
Give my heart.

**Tenors**

Aaron DeSantiago  
Aricson Knoblock  
Jonathan Norris

**Basses**

Joel Andrews  
Andy Cutler  
Will Lubaroff

# Contrasts:

## Differences and Similarities in Choral Settings of Christina Rossetti's Poetry

### Coren Hucke

*She Sat and Sang Always*.....Robert Young  
*Contrasts*

*For Sweet Things Dying*  
*A Birthday*

\* \* \* \* \*

*Come to Me in the Silence of the Night*.....David Eddleman  
(b. 1936)

*Echo*.....Robert Young  
(1923-2011)

\* \* \* \* \*

*In the Bleak Midwinter*.....Gustav Holst  
(1874-1934)

*My Gift*.....John Ratledge  
(b. 1954)

*In the Bleak Midwinter*.....Andrea Ramsey  
(b. 1977)

*In the Bleak Midwinter*.....Paul Mealor  
(b. 1975)

*This performance is presented in partial fulfillment of the Honors Thesis  
requirement at the University of Northern Iowa.*

November 10, 2017, 6:00 p.m.

Great Reading Room, Seerley Hall

### **She Sat and Sang Alway**

She sat and sang alway  
By the green margin of a stream,  
Watching the fishes leap and play  
Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept alway  
Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,  
Watching the blossoms of the May  
Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory;  
She sang for hope that is so fair:  
My tears were swallowed by the sea;  
Her songs died in the air.

### **A Dirge**

Why were you born when the snow was falling?  
You should have come to the cuckoo's calling,  
Or when grapes are green in the cluster,  
Or, at least, when lithe swallows muster  
For their far off flying  
From summer dying.

Why did you die when the lambs were cropping?  
You should have died at the apples' dropping,  
When the grasshopper comes to trouble,  
And the wheat-fields are sodden stubble,  
And all winds go sighing  
For sweet things dying.

### **A Birthday**

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;  
My heart is like an apple-tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;  
My heart is gladder than all these,  
Because my love is come to me.  
Raise me a daïs of silk and down;  
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;  
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,  
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;  
Because the birthday of my life  
Is come, my love is come to me.

### **Echo**

Come to me in the silence of the night;  
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;  
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright  
As sunlight on a stream;  
Come back in tears,  
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,  
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,  
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;  
Where thirsting longing eyes  
Watch the slow door  
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live  
My very life again though cold in death:  
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give  
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:  
Speak low, lean low  
As long ago, my love, how long ago.