

2021

Graduate voice recital: Alyssa Holley, soprano

Alyssa Holley
University of Northern Iowa

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GRADUATE VOICE RECITAL: ALYSSA HOLLEY, SOPRANO

An Abstract of a Recital
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

Alyssa Holley
University of Northern Iowa
May 2021

This Study by: Alyssa Holley

Entitled: Graduate Voice Recital: Alyssa Holley, Soprano

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Jean McDonald, Chair, Recital Committee

Date

Dr. Korey Barrett, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Suzanne Hendrix-Case, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Alyssa Holley

Entitled: Graduate Voice Recital: Alyssa Holley, Soprano

Date of Recital: April 6, 2021

has been approved as meeting the recital requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Jean McDonald, Chair, Recital Committee

Date

Dr. Korey Barrett, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Suzanne Hendrix-Case, Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Jennifer Waldron, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

On April 6, 2021, soprano Alyssa Holley and pianist Dr. Korey Barrett presented a recital of classical vocal literature in Graham Hall at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, Iowa. The program began with Fiordiligi's first aria from *Così fan tutte* and continued with Lieder by Joseph Marx. The second half of the program opened with mélodies by Henri Duparc, and concluded with the song cycle *Natural Selection* by Jake Heggie.

“Temerari...come scoglio” from *Così fan tutte* by W.A. Mozart (1756-1791) is one of the most well-known arias from the soprano repertoire.¹ One of the most esteemed child prodigies throughout music history, Mozart began composing operas at only twelve years of age. His compositions were written during the Classical time period. The renowned librettist Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838) collaborated with Mozart on three of his most celebrated operas: *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*.² Their final work together, *Così fan tutte* premiered in 1790 in Vienna.³ This opera was composed toward the end of Mozart's life, and is characterized by noteworthy ensembles and the infamous plot, which embodies the notion that “all women are the same.” The opera centers around two young sisters (Fiordiligi and Dorabella) and a maddening prank that has been played on them by Don Alfonso, the town philosopher. A bet is made between Don Alfonso and the sisters' boyfriends (Ferrando and Guglielmo) in which he

¹ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 538.

² Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 553.

³ Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas: The Cultural and Musical Background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte* (Oxford, Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1988), 208.

tries to prove that all women are unfaithful. The sisters' boyfriends are sent off to war, and then mysteriously return, disguised as foreigners. These foreigners try to woo the sisters, tempting them to be unfaithful to their real boyfriends.

Fiordiligi's first aria, "Temerari!...Come scoglio," is a reaction to the foreign visitors' flirtatious behavior. She orders the men to cease their provocation and leave the sisters' abode. In his operas, Mozart composes recitative in both *secco* and *accompagnato* styles ("dry" and "accompanied"); the recitative style utilized in this piece is an example of accompanied recitative, meaning that the orchestra plays the entire accompaniment. Mozart utilizes various melodic gestures to reflect Fiordiligi's distressed state of mind. Specifically, he uses shifts in vocal registration and text painting to tell the story. During the word "morte" ("death") at the end of her recitative, Mozart begins to utilize a lower vocal range, which reflects the meaning of the text.⁴ In the next phrase, the composer uses a dramatic vocal leap of over an octave on the word "mondo" ("world"), which appropriately shows the gravity of the situation.⁵ In the aria proper, Fiordiligi continues to use various technical feats, such as large leaps, coloratura passages, and triplet figures. Mozart uses these techniques to further characterize Fiordiligi and her emotional state. The words "la tempesta" ("the storm") are set over two octaves apart in subsequent measures; this illustrates the fury of the emotional storm Fiordiligi is experiencing.⁶ Mozart also sets words such as "affetto" ("affection") and "speranza" ("hope") on long

⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Così fan tutte ossia La scuola degli amanti* K. 588 (Germany: Bärenreiter, 2005), 136.

⁵ Mozart, *Così fan tutte ossia La scuola degli amanti* K. 588, 136.

⁶ Mozart, *Così fan tutte ossia La scuola degli amanti* K. 588, 137.

melismatic passages, utilizing text painting even further.⁷ In one of the most recognizable parts of the aria, Mozart employs both ascending and descending triplet figures throughout the soprano's range, which requires the singer to change vocal registration. This registration shift further shows Fiordiligi's exasperation and instability. The aria ends with five iterations of the phrase "non vi renda audaci ancor" ("not make you [the foreigners] bold again").⁸ Mozart uses a wide vocal range (two octaves) in his setting of these words, which can be interpreted as a final attempt to show how Fiordiligi is unraveling.

Joseph Marx's Lieder embody the height of turn of the century Romanticism. Marx (1882-1964) was an Austrian composer whose songs possess rich, varying harmonic language, and texts regarding a variety of topics.⁹ Many of his songs feature virtuosic piano accompaniments. Marx had a talent for using sound to create a vivid atmosphere, and liberally employed text-painting to aid in story-telling. Although not performed as often as some of his German counterparts, Marx's repertoire is some of the most beautiful and indulgent. "Waldseligkeit," or "Woodland rapture," begins in the key of D Major, evoking the atmosphere of the blissful night. The piece uses poetry by Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), one of Germany's foremost poets prior to World War I. The poem uses an ABAB rhyme scheme and is only two stanzas. Continuous triplet figures in the piano accompaniment reflect "the rustling forest and the gentle winds that caress the trees." The climax of the piece occurs when the narrator proclaims that she is

⁷ Mozart, *Così fan tutte ossia La scuola degli amanti* K. 588, 139-142.

⁸ Mozart, *Così fan tutte ossia La scuola degli amanti* K. 588 143.

⁹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 142.

“entirely only yours” as she awaits her lover in the night; it is truly a suspenseful moment, as the climactic note occurs during an augmented V7 chord.

“Nocturne” truly showcases the pianist’s abilities; its dramatic cascading passages reflect the night’s breezes, and require true athleticism and close collaborative effort between pianist and singer. It is described as a “miniature tone poem with words” and tells a tale of rapturous delight. The poetry is written by Otto Erich Hartleben (1864-1905), a German poet and dramatist, and uses an ABAB rhyme scheme.¹⁰ The song features contrasting sections in an ABA format, and Marx skillfully melds the vocal line and piano accompaniment together. While the text is mostly joyful, it ends on a bittersweet thought, noting that delight is now intermingled with the pain of an unhappy memory. The first and third stanzas contain almost the exact same words, with the exception of their final lines – “Schmerzen” (“pain”) is added in the very final line, and Marx uses additional chromaticism during this moment for emphasis (V7 with a lowered 5th).

Featuring poetry by Paul Heyse, “Die tote Braut” describes the story of “The Dead Bride,” who is observing her own funeral from afar.¹¹ She wonders how her lover will react when he sees her lifeless body. This song is part of Marx’s *Italienisches Liederbuch*, which includes mostly through-composed songs.¹² Heyse was known for writing about “immoral” subjects, and the topic of this poem might have been considered startling for that time period. Marx uses intense chromaticism to depict the eeriness of the

¹⁰ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 143.

¹¹ Joseph Marx, *30 Songs*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 38-41.

¹² Marx, *30 Songs*, 66-67.

situation. Upon the bride remarking that she will “weep loudly,” the piano breaks into an impassioned chromatic passage, which truly reflects the text. The mood changes, however, after this outburst, as the bride wonders if he truly loved her. After she states, “Oh pray now for me,” the piece concludes on a tonal A-flat Major arpeggio. The varying harmonic language and intense dynamic shifts show the many facets of her feelings.

“Nachtgebet” features poetry by Ernst Heinz Hess.¹³ Set in a modified strophic form, the variation between sections serves to elaborate upon the narrator’s opinions on love. The song begins with a chromatic, modulatory prelude that finally arrives at the tonic of E-flat Major after several shifting harmonies. In this piece, love is compared to a religious awakening. Among several tender moments in the piece, the most prominent is a sustained high A-flat on the word “Liebe” (love).¹⁴ As the dynamic level increases, this intimate moment transforms to reflect the text. The dynamic is abruptly changed from pianissimo to forte, signaling a shift in the narrator’s thoughts. A short postlude ends the piece in the tonic key of E-flat Major.

“Hat dich die Liebe berührt” is a song in ABA’ format, using poetry by Paul Heyse.¹⁵ The poetry discusses the joy that one feels if love has touched them, and about how they will “walk among golden clouds” and wear the “crown of life.”¹⁶ The piece is in the key of E-flat Major and features a climactic ending section. Using chromaticism and tempo markings, Marx indicates that the emotion heightens in the final section of the piece. The musical phrase culminates in a sustained vocal line that descends from a high

¹³ Marx, *30 Songs*, 66-67.

¹⁴ Marx, *30 Songs*, 66.

¹⁵ Marx, *30 Songs*, 47-49.

¹⁶ Marx, *30 Songs*, 49.

B flat. “Hat dich die Liebe berührt” is one of Marx’s most beloved compositions, and the musical language truly embodies the theme of the glory of love. Rich harmonies underneath the vocal line support the singer and contribute to the climax of the piece.

Throughout the duration of his career, Henri Duparc (1848-1933) only composed sixteen art songs, but most are well-known and are still performed regularly today.¹⁷ Most songs were composed for high voices, and have a rich harmonic language. His songs are truly Romantic in nature, and he was a perfectionist when it came to his compositional style.¹⁸ Unfortunately, he destroyed many works that he felt were not adequate enough for performance. Duparc was diagnosed with an illness known as neurasthenia, and ultimately became completely blind. His compositional style consists of orchestral-sounding piano accompaniments and lush harmonic language.¹⁹ Many of his songs are strophic and the poetry he chose often deals with sensuality and opulence.

The set opens with “L’Invitation au voyage” (“Invitation to a journey”), which describes a mystical journey in the striking landscape of Holland. Duparc utilized prominent poets for his songs, as reflected in this poem by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867).²⁰ Baudelaire was one of the most compelling poets of the nineteenth century, and wrote prose as well as poetry. He was influenced by his French predecessors, but he also utilized modern literary conventions.²¹ Duparc uses rising and falling melodic lines to depict the ebb and flow of wind and water, and more static vocal passages to reflect the

¹⁷ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 173.

¹⁸ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 174.

¹⁹ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 174.

²⁰ Henri Duparc, *Mélodies* (Paris, France: Rouart, Lerolle & Cie., 1909), 34.

²¹ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 175.

calmness of respite. The piano accompaniment also varies throughout to illustrate changes in the text: it begins with repeating sixteenth note figures which lend an ethereal quality to the piece. Then, Duparc utilizes a chordal accompaniment to depict “order and beauty” (“tout n’est qu’ordre et beauté”).²² Finally, sweeping arpeggiated figures are used that signify an arrival at the famed and revered land that the narrator and his companion are traveling to. These variations in accompaniment perfectly portray the sublime journey of the piece.

“Extase” features poetry by Henri Cazalis, using the pseudonym Jean Lahor.²³ Cazalis was a French symbolist poet. Duparc modeled this piece after similar harmonic conventions used in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.²⁴ Chromaticism and delayed resolutions are utilized, just like in the famous Liebestod. “Extase” is distinguished among Duparc’s songs for its extended piano prelude and postlude, and its minimal yet emotional text. The tempo marking indicates “Lent et calme” (“slow and calm”), which appropriately indicates the passionate and sensual nature of the text.²⁵ The poetry details the pleasures of physical love and the “mort” that is heard in this poetry references the “la petite mort,” (“the little death”).²⁶

Finally, “Chanson triste” also uses poetry written by Jean Lahor, and while the title literally translates to “Sorrowful song,” the text is somewhat hopeful.²⁷ The poetry depicts a loving relationship between two people, and states that when the pair are united,

²² Duparc, *Mélodies*, 36-37.

²³ Duparc, *Mélodies*, 22.

²⁴ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 177.

²⁵ Duparc, *Mélodies*, 22.

²⁶ Duparc, *Mélodies*, 22-24.

²⁷ Duparc, *Mélodies*, 52.

sadness will be forgotten and calmness will be felt. “Chanson triste” was Duparc’s first *mélodie*, and it contains many compositional traits that epitomized his style.²⁸ Among these trademark features are flowing vocal phrases atop a continuous, sweeping piano accompaniment, and countermelodies. The song includes some modulation throughout, but begins and ends in the same key area (E-flat Major).

Jake Heggie (b. 1961) is one of the most prominent American contemporary art song composers.²⁹ In addition to his extensive song repertoire, he is renowned for his noteworthy operas such as *Dead Man Walking* and *Moby Dick*. Heggie’s music is regularly performed in both recital halls and opera houses, and he is highly sought in educational settings as a clinician for young performing artists and aspiring composers. *Natural Selection* premiered in 1997, featuring soprano Nicolle Foland, a San Francisco based soprano, and distinguished member of the University of Northern Iowa School of Music Hall of Fame.³⁰ The music and text was personalized for Foland, and this set is one of Heggie’s most beloved. Heggie incorporates musical theatre and jazz themes into his compositions and is known for his ability to set text in a masterful way. The poetry for *Natural Selection*, written by American poet Gini Savage, creatively intertwines operatic references into the profound texts, which also include allusions to Ms. Foland’s journey as a young artist.³¹ Opera lovers will enjoy hearing these clever inclusions and may even recognize the names of their favorite opera characters.

²⁸ Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, 174.

²⁹ David Salazar, “Artist Profile: Jake Heggie, A Major American Composer of 21st Century Opera,” *OperaWire*, March 31, 2019, <https://operawire.com/artist-profile-jake-heggie-a-major-american-composer-of-21st-century-opera/>.

³⁰ Nicolle Foland, interview by author via Zoom, March 16, 2021.

³¹ Nicolle Foland, interview by author via Zoom, March 16, 2021.

In “Creation,” the narrator begins her tumultuous journey. She reminisces on the relationship with her parents, and comments, “I gave birth to myself,” signifying that her childhood left much to be desired.³² She tries to make her own way in the world but has trouble fitting in, which is alluded to the poet’s text of “When does Goldilocks say I am?”³³ Heggie also uses tonality to reflect the mood of the text: the key signature indicates that the piece would either be in the key of A minor or C Major, but there is no cadence in either key throughout the piece. The undefined harmonies embody the questions being asked and the contemplative nature of the piece.

“Animal Passion” is the most fiery piece of the set. It describes the type of love life that the narrator desires – one of primal passion. Tango rhythms and motifs portray this passionate mood, and syncopations and triplet figures are used as well. The piece is in the key of A minor throughout and does not feature meter changes, unlike others of the set. This use of a singular key area reflects the primitive desires detailed in the song, and the narrator’s focus on her ultimate goal. The piece features an intricate introduction marked to be played “mysteriously,” and it perfectly prepares the listener for the music that is to come.³⁴ Heggie also notates several fermata markings throughout which provide a sense of tension that is appropriate for the sensual subject matter.

“Alas! Alack!” tells the story of failed romantic exploits while cleverly intertwining operatic references into the text. In a humorous confession, the narrator professes that she always falls for the “bad boys” of opera instead of upstanding

³² Jake Heggie, *The Faces of Love* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1999), 16.

³³ Heggie, *The Faces of Love*, 17.

³⁴ Heggie, *The Faces of Love*, 19.

characters like Mario Cavaradossi (*Tosca*) and Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*). A surprising relationship between Pamina and Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) is divulged, and shockingly, if the narrator was Brünnhilde, she would be smitten with Wotan (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*). Many dotted rhythms and triplets are used, which help to add a speech-like flow to the text.

“Indian Summer – Blue,” shows the contrast between the narrator’s carefree teenage years and the more difficult time she is going through. The piece begins with the narrator remembering her treasured red Chevy, a car that she loved “like a child loves a pony.”³⁵ The tempo marking for this first section is “Quick – with a swing,” which gives the piece an easygoing, jazzy feel.³⁶ Later, however, the mood of the song changes as she transitions to her present situation. She is now “Bluebeard’s wife,” which references the French folktale by Charles Perrault.³⁷ This is also another operatic reference, as *Bluebeard’s Castle*, by Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, also details this story. The narrator feels that she is living in a prison and that her current partner is controlling her every move. She describes his mysterious past and fears that she may meet her demise because of him.

“Joy Alone (Connection),” is the culmination of the cycle. The final song harkens to “Creation,” showing the narrator’s glorious transformation. Both pieces begin with similar themes in the piano, but the final piece builds throughout and expansively proclaims, “joy alone” multiple times.³⁸ The simple pleasures of life, such as running

³⁵ Heggie, *The Faces of Love*, 31.

³⁶ Heggie, *The Faces of Love*, 31.

³⁷ Heggie, *The Faces of Love*, 32-33.

³⁸ Heggie, *The Faces of Love*, 38-39.

squirrels and flowing rivers, are reflected upon, and the narrator discovers that joy is a part of both her and her surroundings. Heggie uses a variety of time signatures to lend an improvisatory quality to the song, which also assists with the singer's ability to text paint.

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School of Music
University of Northern Iowa

presents

Alyssa Holley, soprano
In a Graduate Recital

assisted by:
Dr. Korey Barrett, piano

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Master of Music degree in Voice Performance
From the Studio of Dr. Jean McDonald

“Temerari!...Come scoglio” from *Così fan tutte*

W. A. Mozart
(1756-1791)

Waldseligkeit
Nocturne
Die tote Braut
Nachtgebet
Hat dich die Liebe berührt

Joseph Marx
(1882-1964)

pause

L’invitation au voyage
Extase
Chanson triste

Henri Duparc
(1848-1933)

Natural Selection

1. Creation
2. Animal Passion
3. Alas! Alack!
4. Indian Summer – Blue
5. Joy Alone (Connection)

Jake Heggie
(b. 1961)

Graham Hall, at 6:00 P.M.

Tuesday, April 6, 2021