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Graduate Recital in Voice, April 16, 1996

Christine Bergan

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GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

April 16, 1996

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

Christine Bergan
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GRADUATE RECITAL IN VOICE

This abstract will discuss the literature performed during the Graduate Recital in Voice of Christine Bergan, given on Tuesday, April 16, 1996. The selections are from many historical periods of music composition, from Baroque to Twentieth-Century, from Scarlatti to Menotti, and contain quite a variety of representative styles in between these two extremes. This abstract will include information about the composers represented, some of their general compositional stylistic traits, and a discussion of the specific pieces performed.

Alessandro Scarlatti was an prominent composer of the late Italian Baroque period. His works represent a culmination of his predecessors including Monteverdi, Cavalli, Cesti, Carissimi, and Stradella. In vocal composition, he focused on the forms of musical drama and cantata and most frequently chose the Da Capo form for his aria settings.

The recital opened with "Rompe sprezza" and "Mio tesoro" from Scarlatti's 7 Arie con Tromba Sola. These arias are written for Trumpet in D, Soprano, and a continuo complement of piano or harpsichord with optional violoncello, bassoon, or viola da gamba; although the original continuo would have certainly called for both a keyboard and a melody instrument selected from those just listed.

"Rompe sprezza," literally translated, describes how the character "breaks and scorns with a sigh every heart even though it be of stone; She petrifies the spirits, the soul, and every grace at her whim." These words are accompanied by detached chords and fragmented rhythmic and melodic patterns which "signify the shattered ego of the rejected suitor."¹ Scarlatti achieves this with the thematic development of a

¹ Henry Meredith, ed. Alessandro Scarlatti: 7 Arie con Tromba Sola. (program notes by editor). Nashville, TN: The Brass Press, 1980, #732274.

paired sixteenth-note motive. This motive is ornamented or embellished, inverted, augmented, and even "petrified"² in a phrase of repeated eighth notes. This aria is in binary form with a contrasting B section which is more melismatic than the A section. The melodic line is primarily conjunct, the rhythmic vocabulary (in this case, the paired sixteenth-note pattern) is established within the first few measures, and there is extensive use of sequential patterns of varying lengths, all of which are common features of Scarlatti's music.

"Mio tesoro" is subtitled an "Aria in forma di Menuet alla Francese" or translated an aria in the form of the French Minuet--a form introduced by Lully in mid-17th-century. The text proclaims "My darling, for thee I die! Come quickly to console this heart, which so much longs for you and calls upon you to restore it." The aria is set in Da Capo form and has a melismatic setting of the text in the A section contrasted by a more declamatory setting of the text in the B section. The aria is characterized by an imitative texture first stated in the trumpet and answered in the voice. "The entry voice turns part of the opening motive downward into a 'longing' sigh and spins out fragmented thematic variants throughout the vocal portion of the A section."³ This is one of many ways in which word-painting is successfully incorporated into this piece. The B section is the most chromatic of any in this set as a result of Neapolitan sixth chords, and it eventually returns to the stability of a tonal center on the "ristorar" or "restore" text (yet another example of word-painting).

Gabriel Fauré is considered one of the great masters of the French *Mélodie* and his compositions represent the French Art Song or *Mélodie*

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

during its prime era of development. His stylistic development links the end of Romanticism with the second quarter of the twentieth-century, as is evidenced in the appearance of the whole-tone scale and other impressionistic devices. Early in his career, Fauré composed primarily strophic settings of poems; later in his career, he preferred to compose modified strophic, through-composed, and ternary settings of poems due to his increased desire to more accurately reflect the meter and declamation of the text. Nadia Boulanger said of Fauré, "The tonality, the chords, the rhythm, and the forms are those that [he] found when he began serving music; in his hands those ordinary things have become precious."⁴

The first piece performed in this set was "Après un Rêve." It was composed during Fauré's early Italianate period, around 1878, and is by the poet Romain Bussine. Its overwhelming popularity is in part due to the coupling of a wealth of emotional freedom with compositional restraint. It has been transcribed and arranged through the decades, including an arrangement by Pablo Casals for Cello in 1910.

"Après un Rêve" is in barform (AAB) and uses the repeated eighth-note pattern in block chords for unity and to help create a mood. Creating a mood is a salient trait of much of Fauré's music. Specifically, he aimed "to convey the prevailing atmosphere rather than detailed images in poems of this kind."⁵ "Après un Rêve", while centered around D minor, contains restless harmonies which include major ninth chords based on the circle of fifths. The melodic phrases begin in a three plus four pattern and remain throughout the song. This

⁴ Frits Noske. French Songs from Berlioz to Duparc. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1970, 268.

⁵ Jean-Michel Nectoux. "Gabriel Fauré." New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 20 vols., ed. Sadie Stanley, London: MacMillan, 1980, VI, 424.

mélodie assumes the aspect of a seventeenth-century aria in its typically Italian focus of placing the thrust of expression primarily in the vocal part.

"Les Berceaux," the second song in this Fauré set, is a poignant and gentle song written in 1879, around the same time period as "Après un Rêve". This lullaby is tinged with melancholy and describes the hands of the mothers rocking their infants in their cradles while their fathers leave to pursue unknown horizons at sea! "Les Berceaux" is an excellent example of Fauré's ability to create a mood with a single accompanimental figure--a repeated arpeggio--suggestive of both the cradles and the boats at sea. Additionally, "Les Berceaux" provides a clear example of the importance of the melodic-harmonic features of Fauré's music. This can be seen in the linear representation of the harmony found in the melody of this piece.

Francis Poulenc was a composer and pianist during the first half of the twentieth century. He is considered the most distinguished master of the French *Mélodie* since the time of Fauré. His style is primarily one of simplicity and directness. He was not particularly inventive with texture, rhythm, or harmony, but in the area of melody he "found his way to the vast treasury of undiscovered tunes within an area that had been surveyed, worked and exhausted."⁶

Poulenc once said:

I know perfectly well that I'm not one of those composers who have made harmonic innovations like Igor Stravinsky, Ravel or Debussy, but I think there's room for new music which doesn't mind using other people's chords. Wasn't that the case with Mozart and Schubert?⁷

⁶ Roger Nichols. "Francis Poulenc." New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 20 vols., ed. Sadie Stanley, London: MacMillan, XV, 167.

⁷ Ibid., 167.

Poetry and song were inseparable to Poulenc, who believed that he must "translate into music not merely the literal meaning of the words, but also everything that is written between the lines. Each, poetry and music, should evoke the other."⁸

"C" was written as part of the set *Deux poemes de Louis Aragon*--a friend of Poulenc's and the poet of the French Resistance. Poulenc's music often centers around poems which reflect the current social and political scene. This poem describes the dream of the town Les Ponts-de-Cé which the Germans occupied, and the destruction and ruins left after the war. The poem is in litany form, which means that every line ends on the same sound, and the song is through-composed with similar opening and closing phrases, used to help provide unity. Pure declamation is rarely found in the body of Poulenc's songs, but "C" is for the most part very declamatory. Poulenc chose to communicate the sad text with the key of A-flat minor while ending the song with a hopeful modulation to A-flat major. The climax of this song is reached through a combination of a high pitch and a low dynamic, with the highest intensity of all being stated in a forte turned suddenly pianissimo ("O, my abandoned France"). There are many changes in tempo and dynamics--nearly every bar--which Poulenc employs to emphasize the dramatic character of this poem.

Gian Carlo Menotti is a twentieth-century American composer of Italian birth. He is known primarily for his operas, although he has also written ballets, cantatas, orchestral works, and miscellaneous chamber works. The following statement reveals the composer's feelings regarding the human voice: "There is a certain indolence towards the

⁸ James Husst Hall. *The Art Song*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, 184.

use of the voice today, a tendency to treat the voice instrumentally, as if composers feared that its texture is too expressive, too *human*."⁹

An insightful quote by H. Wiley Hitchcock regarding Menotti is:

Menotti combined the theatrical sense of a popular playwright and a Pucciniesque musical vocabulary with an Italianate love of liquid language and a humane interest in characters as real human beings; the result was opera more accessible than anyone else's at the time.¹⁰

The characters in The Old Maid and the Thief are certainly real human beings and the events highly plausible to the audience of 1939 and to modern day audiences as well.

The Old Maid and the Thief is an opera in the opera buffa tradition of set numbers (number opera). It was originally a Radio Opera in one act consisting of 14 short scenes and was first broadcast on NBC on April 22, 1939. The drama surrounds a reluctant spinster, Miss Todd, who has offered hospitality to a young drifter, Bob. Miss Todd was deserted by her lover years ago and her house is usually devoid of any male presence. Both she and her maid, Laetitia, eagerly take care of him and try to gain his affections.

This aria occurs while Laetitia is in the kitchen mending and pressing Bob's trousers. She is reviewing and commenting on the status quo with both drama and humor. The subject turns from the hope of finding love to the fear of death before finding love and returns once again to the plea for love "before dark death steals her prey." The scene opens with an arioso-like recitative which summarizes the action, a characteristic trait of Menotti, and much like the classic recitative and aria of the eighteenth-century. The tempo changes frequently, and

⁹ Bruce Archibald. "Gian Carlo Menotti." New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 20 vols., ed. Sadie Stanley, London: MacMillan, 1980, XII, 165.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

the meter fluctuates periodically; these were devices used by Menotti to better fit the natural flow and stress of the words. The aria is in a bar-type form of AAB. The melody spans a wide range from D-4 to B-flat-5. The soprano must possess both soubrette and lyric qualities to successfully transform from a young innocent girl into a passionate lover during this aria.

Vincenzo Bellini was one of the most important and influential opera composers of the nineteenth century. He is known for minimizing the difference between aria and recitative by introducing a large number of cantabile, aria-like passages into his recitatives, a technique which he took well beyond the traditional ariosos. Other characteristic features of Bellini's music include a Romantic approach to an "ecstasy of sound", the principle of isorhythm, alternating harmonies, and varied orchestral textures and timbres.

I Puritani, an opera in the tradition of opera seria composed in 1835 in Paris, was Bellini's final opera and is set in a Puritan fortress near Plymouth during the Revolutionary War. It is the story of ill-fated lovers, Arturo and Elvira, who have difficulty surviving their romance due to some very unfortunate and almost fatal circumstances.

The aria "O Rendetemi la speme . . . viendi letto e in ciel la luna" is a mad scene in which Elvira is slightly crazy and delusional after she believes Arturo has left her for another woman. During the aria she despairs of his unfaithfulness, laments her lost happiness, and comforts herself with the delusion that Arturo is still with her. The form of the aria is one of Bellini's favorite: A A1 B A1 Coda. The aria is full of lyric beauty and contains many common features of Bellini's music: long, broad melodic curves with an emphasis on the third degree of the scale, the alternation between minor and major keys between the

main body of the aria and the coda, difficult and demanding passages of coloratura (during the coda), and an orchestration which primarily accompanies the cantabile vocal line but at times becomes more forceful--such as in the middle section of this aria.

Gustave Charpentier was a French composer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, known primarily for his work in the genre of opera. He wrote all of his own librettos and his operas were first performed in Paris. The influence of Wagner and Gounod is evidenced through his use of leitmotifs, harmonic language, and rich orchestral palette.

Louise is a Roman musical in four acts which was composed in 1900. It is an example of Naturalism in opera, and depicts real life situations. Charpentier, who was an advocate of the feminine emancipation movement, used the opera as a platform to support his ideas about free love and complete independence for young people of both sexes. The subject matter was highly scandalous for the time, as the characters sing quite frankly about the pleasures of physical love and the sexual delights of an eighteen-year-old girl living *outside the bounds of marriage* with her lover.

The aria "Depuis le jour" portrays the newfound happiness that Louise has with her lover, Julien. It is a "song of liberation and gratitude. By going to live with her lover, Louise has sinned against the laws of the family, of society, and of decency. At this hour she has triumphed over all of them, and all seems right to her as she sings this aria."¹¹ Louise describes the way he makes her feel and of the

¹¹ Martial Singher. An Interpretive Guide to Operatic Arias.
University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press,
1983, 18.

everyday pleasures of living with him. After the aria, she throws herself into the arms of her lover.

"Depuis le jour" is in a two-stanza mold framed by an introduction and a coda. The second stanza is much more elaborate than the first, so that "one can perhaps speak of the first as a promise, and of the second as the fulfillment."¹² The aria is characterized by abrupt changes of dynamics and tempos--both common features of Charpentier's music. The vocal demands for this aria necessitate excellent breath control, the ability to sing a superb *messa di voce* in the highest range, evenness in tone from top to bottom, and effortless control of dynamics.

Robert Schumann is considered one of the greatest masters of the nineteenth-century German lied. His special contributions to the genre include a new equality between voice and piano and a greater importance of introductions and postludes. Schumann was deeply immersed in Romantic poetry and wished to translate their world of word into his world of tone. He primarily set only the great poets such as Heine and Eichendorff, but this cycle is an exception to this rule.

The poet for the cycle Frauenliebe und Leben (Woman's life and love) is Albert von Chamisso, not a poet of particularly high standards or regard. The cycle revolves around the story of a young girl who falls in love for the first time and takes us through the stages of her life--engagement, marriage, motherhood, and ultimately widowhood. At each stage in this eight song cycle the past is seen through the character's older and wiser eyes. The cycle is unified through means common to most of Schumann's songs and cycles: the use of repeated melodic and harmonic motives, closely related keys, and the use of

¹² Boris Goldovsky and Arthur Schoep. Bringing Soprano Arias to Life. Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990, 238.

interludes which provide a psychological and musical link between songs and a postlude to the final song which summarizes the entire cycle and which ends in the same key as the opening song.

"Innigkeit" is a term often used to describe Schumann's songs. It means a variety of warm, intimate, and meditative emotions, along with a child-like simplicity, and the ability to create or compress a world of emotions into a few short measures. This "innigkeit" quality can be found in "Er, der herrlichste von allen" (He, of all mankind the noblest). This song describes the young girl when she is in the first stages of romantic adoration. She joyously extols the fine qualities and features of the man she desires, all the while believing herself unworthy of his affections.

The use of Rondo-like form (ABACA), periods of chromatic harmony, linear chromaticism, secondary dominants, circle of fifth movements, use of Neapolitan harmonies, and repeated patterns in the accompaniment are all regular parts of the Schumann musical vocabulary of composition.

"Du Ring an meinem finger" (Thou ring upon my finger) is the fourth song from the cycle Frauenliebe und Leben. It picks up the story with the young girl, now a young woman, receiving an engagement ring and the happiness this brings her. It is also in Rondo form with contrasting key areas between the A sections (one key area) and the B and C sections (another key area). This is a common practice used by Schumann for expressive purposes. "Du Ring . . . ", like "Er, der herrlichste . . . " uses repeated eighth-note patterns in the accompaniment, but at a much slower tempo.

Richard Strauss is a late nineteenth and early twentieth-century German composer primarily known for his songs, symphonic poems and operas. Strauss's compositions for voice demand flexibility, agility,

and the ability to sing both bel canto and coloratura styles. His accompaniments are crucial in the "expression of moods and involve thick harmonies, rapid modulations, polyphonic weaving, and swirling arpeggios of a simple but extended harmonic pattern."¹³ Many of Strauss's songs were originally written with orchestral accompaniment and many more have been arranged for orchestra and voice. Even those songs conceived for voice and piano accompaniment are orchestral, showing a richness, warmth, and frequent elaborateness suggestive of the orchestral compositions with which Strauss was so well acquainted.

"Breit, über mein haupt", by Graf Adolf Freidrich von Schack, is the second in a set of six lieder based on his poems entitled Sechs Lieder aus Lotusblättern, 1885-8. The song describes the features of a loved one and a desire to be with them. It remains primarily in G-flat major and its beauty lies within its extraordinary simplicity. It is through-composed and the melody is extremely lyrical and expressive, although challenging in range and leaps. It calls for evenness of tone and a legato approach motivated by intense emotion. Both of these vocal challenges are typical in Strauss's lieder.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was one of the greatest Austrian composers of the classical period and composed and excelled in every medium and genre current to his time; especially in chamber music for strings, piano concertos, and opera. In this sense, he may be regarded as one of the most universal composers in the history of Western Music and certainly one of the most prolific. Mozart's music is characterized by melodic simplicity and beauty, formal perfection and richness of harmony and texture. All of these qualities can be found in Exsultate,

¹³ James Husst Hall. The Art Song. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, 125.

Jubilate. Richard Strauss once said of Mozart: "I spend a great deal of time on my melodies; from the first idea to its final melodic shape is a long way. . . . The most perfect melodic shapes are found in Mozart; he has the lightness of touch which is the true objective."¹⁴

Mozart's Exsultate, Jubilate, K-165 was written while Mozart was in Milan for the castrato Venanzio Rauzzini (who was only 17 years old), who had sung in his opera Lucio Silla. The first performance took place on January 17, 1773. This composition is a straightforward anthem of praise which may be considered a motet, a cantata for soprano and orchestra in a three movement sinfonia-like form with a secco recitative linking the first two movements, or a vocal concerto. It consists of two arias connected by a recitative and concluded by the famous "Allelujah."

The first movement of this cantata was chosen to close the recital and was performed with piano and string quartet. The movement is an Allegro aria in sectional ternary form (A-BA). The dynamics, which range from piano to forte, often occur with sudden contrasts. Beginning in F major, the movement modulates to the dominant, C major, and then returns to F major for the final A section. There is liberal use of secondary dominant chords, primarily of the dominant and of the subdominant. There is extensive use of the passing I 6/4 chord and the cadences are either plagal or authentic, both perfect and imperfect. The texture is primarily homophonic and the instruments often play *colla parte*. Ritornello-like motives periodically re-occur. The texture becomes more polyphonic during the instrumental interludes. The final A section is ornamented with a cadenza before the final tutti cadence.

¹⁴ Alan Jefferson. The Lieder of Richard Strauss. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971, 132.

All of the above compositional traits are highly characteristic for the vocal works of Mozart.

This recital has offered the audience a taste of a wide variety of vocal literature including selections ranging in period and style from the Baroque to the present day. The music reveals how uniquely and ingeniously the various composers were able to use the common denominators of melody, harmony, rhythm, form, texture, and text underlay to express some of the deepest thoughts and feelings of the human race. Each composer, from Scarlatti to Menotti, was successful at incorporating the old with the new and in adding their own contributions to their respective genres.

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The background features a repeating pattern of treble clefs on musical staves. A large, solid black treble clef is centered in the middle of the page, overlapping the staves.

*UNI School of Music
Presents
Christine Bergan, Soprano*

Master of Music Recital

Mabel Rempe, Accompanist

Tuesday, April 16, 1996

6:00 pm at Russell Hall

University of Northern Iowa School of Music
presents Christine Bergan, Soprano
Mabel Rempe, Accompanist
Tuesday, April 16, 6:00 P.M.

Rompe SprezzaAlessandro Scarlatti
Mio Tesoro per te Moro (1644-1725)
from "7 Arie con Tromba Sola"
Bryan Bennett, Trumpet

Après un RêveGabriel Fauré
Les Berceaux (1845-1924)
CFrances Poulenc
(1899-1963)

Steal Me, Sweet ThiefGian Carlo Menotti
from "The Old Maid and the Thief"

Intermission

Rendetemi la speme....viendi letto e in ciel la luna
from "I Puritani"Vincenzo Bellini
(1801-35)

De puis le jourGustave Charpentier
from Louise (1860-1956)

Er, Der Herrlichste von AllenRobert Schumann
Der Ring (1810-56)
from "Frauenliebe und Leben"

Breit, über mein HauptRichard Strauss
(1864-1949)

"*Exsultate*" from Exsultate, JubilateWolfgang Amadeus
Mozart (1756-91)

String Quartet
Amanda Schima, Violin I
Susan Funk, Violin II
Jessica Reynolds, Viola
Cassandra Gartner, Cello

This recital is from the studio of Michael Cousins and is in
partial fulfillment of the Master of Music Degree