

A PERFORMER'S GUIDE TO LANGUAGE AND SONG

by

Chloe Agostino

A Senior Honors Project Presented to the

Honors College

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for

Graduation with Honors

by

Chloe Agostino

Greenville, NC

December 2018

Approved by:

Dr. Jami Rhodes

Department of Vocal Studies, School of Music, College of Fine Arts and Communication

Abstract

This project centers around the development and final performance of my Senior Recital that took place on December 1, 2018. For my Senior Recital I performed art songs and arias encompassing a wide array of styles and time periods. While my Senior Recital culminated into a one-hour long performance, it was developed through many hours of research, preparation and practice. For my recital I sang in a number of different languages, various styles and written by many composers. My program consisted of “Der Musensohn,” “Schäfers Klagelied,” and “Rastlose Liebe” all by Franz Schubert (1797-1828), “What Would Missus Herring Say?” from Benjamin Britten’s (1913-1976) *Albert Herring*, “Faites-lui mes aveux” from Charles Gounod’s (1818-1893) *Faust*, “Pourquoi?,” “Le Sourire,” and “La Fiancée Perdue” from Olivier Messiaen’s (1908-1992) song cycle *Trois Mélodies*, “Pensa alla patria” from Giachino Rossini’s (1792-1868) *L’Italiana in Algeri*, “Chanson espagnole,” “Chanson française,” “Chanson hébraïque,” and “Chanson italienne” from Maurice Ravel’s (1875-1937) song cycle *Chants populaires*, “What a movie!” from Leonard Bernstein’s (1918-1990) *Trouble in Tahiti*, “Who Am I?” from Bernstein’s *Peter Pan*, “A Little Bit in Love” from Bernstein’s *Wonderful Town*, and “Some Other Time” from Bernstein’s *On the Town*. In total, the languages I studied and performed included German, English, French, Hebrew, Italian and Spanish. When learning all of these pieces it was necessary to study not only how to pronounce each language in order to accurately sing it, but also the meaning behind the text. For vocal music, the text or poetry is as important as the music, and it is necessary to understand the poet’s motivation and meaning behind what they’ve written. This written project will explain the process and references I used when preparing my Senior Recital.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	4
II. Process.....	5
III. Conclusion.....	8
IV. References and Resources.....	9
A. Course Study.....	9
B. Works Cited.....	9
V. Translations.....	10

I. Introduction

This project centers around the development and final performance of my Senior Recital that took place on December 1, 2018. For my Senior Recital I performed art songs and arias. Arias are vocal pieces that are composed to be performed in an opera or oratorio, yet in this context (as it is in all recitals) I will be singing each aria by itself. Art songs are vocal pieces that can be composed in a group of sets, which includes other art songs, or by themselves.

While my Senior Recital culminated into a one-hour long performance, it was developed through many hours of research, preparation and practice. For my recital I sang in a number of different languages, various styles and written by many composers. My program consisted of “Der Musensohn,” “Schäfers Klagelied,” and “Rastlose Liebe” all by Franz Schubert (1797-1828), “What Would Missus Herring Say?” from Benjamin Britten’s (1913-1976) *Albert Herring*, “Faites-lui mes aveux” from Charles Gounod’s (1818-1893) *Faust*, “Pourquoi?,” “Le Sourire,” and “La Fiancée Perdue” from Olivier Messiaen’s (1908-1992) song cycle *Trois Mélodies*, “Pensa alla patria” from Giachino Rossini’s (1792-1868) *L’Italiana in Algeri*, “Chanson espagnole,” “Chanson française,” “Chanson hébraïque,” and “Chanson italienne” from Maurice Ravel’s (1875-1937) song cycle *Chants populaires*, “What a movie!” from Leonard Bernstein’s (1918-1990) *Trouble in Tahiti*, “Who Am I?” from Bernstein’s *Peter Pan*, “A Little Bit in Love” from Bernstein’s *Wonderful Town*, and “Some Other Time” from Bernstein’s *On the Town*. In total, the languages I studied and performed included German, English, French, Hebrew, Italian and Spanish. When learning all of these pieces it was necessary to study not only how to pronounce each language in order to accurately sing it, but also the meaning behind the text. For vocal music, the text or poetry is as important as the music, and it is necessary to

understand the poet's motivation and meaning behind what they've written. This written project will explain the process and references I used when preparing my Senior Recital.

II. Process

The process of preparing for my Senior Recital technically started when I first began voice lessons here at East Carolina University with Dr. Jami Rhodes. She has been my private voice teacher and my Senior Honors Project mentor. My seven semesters of applied voice lessons have centered around developing my solo voice in a healthy way so that I can use my techniques to perform and teach later in life. Dr. Rhodes and I have discussed voice science, pedagogy and linguistics in relation to preparing for my own study, voice juries and recitals.

When preparing for my Senior Recital, Dr. Rhodes started the entire process by giving me the list of repertoire that I would perform on my recital during Summer 2018. Some of the pieces I had already begun working on during Spring 2018, others I started during Summer 2018 (right after I received the list) and the majority I learned and practiced solely during this semester, Fall 2018. While all four years of my undergraduate career have been in preparation for my last solo performance in my Senior Recital, the real focus and rehearsal on my recital pieces began this semester.

There is typically a specific process used when learning a new piece. This process starts with finding the music and the translation of the piece (if it is in a foreign language). It is important for singers to write both the poetic translation (how it would be performed in English) and literal translation (the actual word-for-word translation) directly above the text of the piece, that way when learning the rhythms, pitches and other musical aspects they are still unconsciously seeing and reading the translation, therefore building it a strong understanding of

what the piece is about, which will then aid them later in the process when adding in acting and dramatization throughout the piece.

After completing the translation aspect of learning, I then begin learning the basic musical aspects, like notes, rhythms and stylistic interpretations. This process is done only by the performer and is essential for bringing a fully prepared piece to their voice teacher. The job of a voice teacher is not to teach a young singer the basics of every piece, but to help a young singer with the aspects that they might not be able to diagnosis or fix themselves. When I am learning the musical aspects of a piece I first play through my melody on the piano and then I play (as best as I can) the piano accompaniment. I continuously practice the melody and sometimes adding in accompaniment for each individual piece. During this process I made sure to only focus on learning and memorizing 2-3 new pieces each week. Having to learn 17 pieces for one performance is already a lot, but learning them all in one semester is very challenging. I chose to only learn 2-3 pieces a week in order to keep on track with my self-prescribed learning schedule. To prevent, or at least minimize mixing up memorization of foreign language pieces, I organized my learning schedule so that I was only learning one piece per language per week, so that, for instance, I wouldn't be trying to memorize two different sets of German lyrics at the same time. Once I had a piece completely learned and memorized I then brought it to my studio class, a class where all of my peers studying with Dr. Rhodes meet and we can perform or practice our voice repertoire in front of each other for performance practice and critique. I would continue working on the piece after performing it in studio, but usually that would be the deciding factor as to whether or not I needed to completely re-work the piece or if I could move on and start learning a new one. This procedure worked very well for me and I was able to learn and memorize all of my music efficiently and well enough that I was not stumbling in my recital.

The majority of what my mentor, Dr. Rhodes, does is diagnose and fix the vocal pedagogy-related problems that I was running into when learning my recital repertoire. The voice doesn't typically fully mature for a singer until they are in their late 20's or early 30's. This means that as a young singer my vocal muscles and resonators are still growing, moving and changing. Often times I will have to find new ways of accomplishing techniques that I've already mastered in order to overcome the differences within my muscles. This is something that I accomplish mainly through techniques prescribed by Dr. Rhodes and trial-and-error practicing with what I feel in my own voice, and what I hear. Singers self-diagnosing in the moment is less useful than a teacher listening and advising because our perceptions of how we sound are different than what we really sound like because the sound waves are coming from inside us and resonate differently once they leave our body. Dr. Rhodes is a master pedagogue, so she is able to distinctly hear what I need or do not need to do in order to make my vocal production cleaner, easier and healthier. I am very lucky to have been able to study with Dr. Rhodes because I know that she has provided me with techniques that I can use when developing my voice for years to come.

The last step within the recital performance process is adding in acting, dramatization and theatricality. This can be done in a number of ways depending on the piece I am working on. For my arias I had to read the plot of the opera that each piece came from. I then discovered who I was as that character and imagined what it would be like being in that situation the entire time. I kept that characterization in my head while performing each aria and showing how my character would actually react in real time. When performing art song the performer has the choice of researching the original poetry used in the composition, or coming up with their own interpretation to use when performing the piece. I chose to come up with my own background

for each individual piece from which I drew inspiration when performing. Most of the theatrical stories I created to match each art song also connected well to the composers background of the piece, but not always.

III. Conclusion

The process for preparing my Senior Recital was extensive and challenging, but I am very happy with the end result. My Senior Recital was the most important, influential and meaningful performance of my undergraduate career. While I have participated in and performed in other concerts, operas and recitals, there were none that demonstrated the abilities and skills that I have learned during my four years at ECU. Being able to include and showcase my whole process for this recital shows exactly what it is that musicians, particularly vocalists, do every day of our lives. I am proud to be representing my fellow musicians to the Honors College community.

IV. References and Resources

A. Course Study

Advanced French Lyric Diction

Advanced German Lyric Diction

Advanced Italian and English Lyric Diction

Advanced Study of the Articulators: Pedagogy

B. Works Cited

Bernac, Pierre. *The Interpretation of French Song*. London: Kahn & Averill, 2009.

Castel, Nico, Scott Jackson Wiley, and Marcie Stapp. *Italian Belcanto Opera Libretti*. Geneseo, NY: Leyerle, 2000.

Fischer-Dieskau, Dietrich, George Bird, and Richard Stokes. *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder: The Original Texts of over Seven Hundred and Fifty Songs*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1998.

Montgomery, Cheri. *English Lyric Diction Workbook*. 3rd ed. Lyric Diction Workbook Series. S.T.M. Publishers, 2006

Montgomery, Cheri. *French Lyric Diction Workbook*. 4th ed. Lyric Diction Workbook Series. S.T.M. Publishers, 2014

Montgomery, Cheri. *German Lyric Diction Workbook*. 5th ed. Lyric Diction Workbook Series. S.T.M. Publishers, 2014.

Montgomery, Cheri. *Italian Lyric Diction Workbook*. 3rd ed. Lyric Diction Workbook Series. S.T.M. Publishers, 2009

Wall, Joan. *International Phoenetic Alphabet: for Singers*. Greenbank, WA: Pacific Isle Publishing, 2005.

Wall, Joan, Robert Caldwell, Sheila Allen, and Tracy Gavilanes. *Diction for Singers: A Concise Reference for English, Italian, Latin, German, French and Spanish Pronunciation*. Redmond, WA: PST, 2009.

V. Translations

Der Musensohn (The Muses' Son)

Through field and wood roaming,
whistling my little song,
so I go from place to place.
And to the beat stirs,
and to the measure moves
everything forth with me.

I can hardly wait for them,
the first flower in the garden,
the first blossom on the tree.
They greet my songs,
and when the winter comes again,
I still sing of that dream.

I sing it in the open,
through ice's length and breadth,
then blossoms the winter beautifully.
This bloom also disappears,
and a new joy is found
on the cultivated hill.

Then as I, by the Linden tree
find the young folk,
at once I arouse them.
The dull youth puffs himself up,
the stiff maiden whirls
to my tune.

You give my feet wings
and drive over valley and hill
your favorite one far from home.
You dear, kind Muses,
when shall I rest upon her breast
finally, again?

Schäfers Klagelied (Shepherd's Lament)

Up there upon that mountain
there I have stood a thousand times
leaning upon my staff
and gazing down into the valley.

Then following my grazing flock
which my little dog guards for me,
I have come down somehow
and I do not myself know how.

Filled with lovely flowers
stand the entire meadow;
I pick them without knowing
to whom I should give them to.

And rain, storm and thunder
Under the tree I wait for it to pass.
The door there remains locked,
for all in unfortunately a dream.

There stands a rainbow
arching over that house!
She however has departed,
and far away into the country.

Far away into the country
and farther perhaps even across the sea.
It's all over, my sheep, it is simply all over!
Your shepherd is hurting.

Rastlose Liebe (Restless Love)

Against the snow, the rain, the wind,
in the mist of the ravines
through the smells of fog,
always onward, always onward,

without rest and peace.

I would rather fight through suffering,
than to bear so many of life's joy!
All the inclining of heart to heart,
Ah how so curiously it creates pain.

How shall I flee? Go to the forest?
All in vain!
Crown of life,
happiness without peace,
love, you are!

Faites-lui mes aveux (Confess to her for me)

Confess to her for me,
tell her of my desires!
Flowers that bloom by her side,
tell her that she is beautiful,
that my heart, night and day,
languishes from love.

Confess to her for me,
tell her of my desires!
Reveal to her soul
the secret of my passion,
May your perfume be all the more sweet.

Wilted!

Alas! That sorcerer that God damns has cast a spell
on me!

I cannot touch a flower for it withers!

What if I dipped my fingers into holy water!
This is where Marguerite comes to pray every evening!
Now, quickly, let's see!
Do they wither?
No! Satan, I laugh at you!

It is in you that I trust,
speak for me!
May she know
the passion she has roused
and of which my troubled heart
has not yet spoken.

It is in you that I trust,
speak for me!
If love alarms her,
may the flower upon her lips
know at least to place a gentle kiss.

Pourquoi? (Why?)

Why do the birds of the air,
Why the reflections in the water,
Why do the clouds in the sky,
Why?

Why do the leaves of Autumn,
Why do the roses of Summer,
Why do the songs of Spring,
Why?

Why do they have no charm for me?
Why?

Le Sourire (The Smile)

A certain murmured word
From you, is like a kiss
Intimate and prolonged
Like a kiss on the soul.
My mouth wants to smile
And my smile trembles.

La Fiancée Perdue (The Lost Fiancée)

She is the sweet fiancée,
She is the angel of kindness,
She is a sunny afternoon,
She is the wind on the flowers.

She is a smile
Pure as a child's heart,
She is a tall lily, white as a wing,
Towering in a gold vase.

O Jesus, bless her!
Her! Bestow on her your powerful grace!
May she never know pain and tears.
Bestow peace on her mind, O Jesus!

Pensa alla patria (Think of your country)

Think of your country,
and you will fearlessly accomplish.

See throughout Italy,
reborn are the examples,
of daring valor.

What pleasure! In a few moments
we will meet our homeland again.
In the danger I am courageous for love.

Chanson espagnole (Spanish Song)

Farewell, my husband, farewell,
now that you are marching off to war
do not forget to keep in touch
with those who are holding down the fort at home.
La la la!

Castilians of Castille,
treat well the Galician,
they go, go like roses,
they return, they return like blacks.
La la la!

Chanson française (French Song)

Johnny where shall we go to tend our sheep
and to have a good time for an hour?

Hi ho! Down there, across the meadow,
there are so many beautiful shadows. Hi ho!

The shepherd takes off his coat
for Jeannette to sit on it.

Jeannette has played so much
That she forgot herself. Hi ho!

Chanson hébraïque (Hebrew Song)

Mayerke my son,
before whom do you find yourself?
Before Him, King of Kings, and the only King, my
father.

Mayerke my son,
and what are you demanding of him?
Children, long life, and my bread, my father.

Mayerke my son,
But tell me, why children?
To children one teaches the Torah, my father.

Mayerke my son,
But tell me, why long life?
That which lives sings the glory of the Lord, my
father.

Mayerke my son,
But you also want some bread?
Take this bread, eat it, bless it, my father.

Chanson italienne (Italian Song)

I look out the window and see the waves,
I see my misery which is so great.
I call to my love, but she does not reply.

