

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SELECTED CANADIAN ART SONG

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## Preface

Many American singers would most likely have a difficult time naming a Canadian art song composer. The reality is that many Canadian singers would also have a difficult time naming a Canadian art song composer. Canada is very much in its youth in terms of a cultural identity, and as a Canadian singer, I wanted to expand my knowledge of Canadian art song and simultaneously provide a resource for other singers.

As I began my search for little known Canadian art song, I made use of the Canadian Music Centre, specifically the central region centre and the prairie region centre. It became evident that it is somewhat difficult to define the Canadian component of Canadian art song. Art song can generally be defined as song written for voice and piano, set to an independent poem or set of poems, in the case of song cycle. Usually art songs are composed with the classical vocal tradition in mind, meaning that an extended vocal range is often used and the use of vibrato is desirable. Complex harmonic and rhythmic devices are sometimes used, and a cultivated, lyric tone is expected. As broad as I have tried to make that definition, it fails to capture all examples of what we consider to be art song. In its most general terms, art song is classical song excluding opera and oratorio.

As I explored the repertoire that I found at the Canadian Music Centre, I discovered that although all of the composers had a Canadian connection, many of them have connections to other nationalities. In the strictest sense, Canadian art song could be defined as art song composed by a Canadian while living in Canada. In a broader sense, Canadian art song could be defined as art song composed by any Canadian composer

whether or not the composition took place in Canada. In the broadest sense, Canadian art song could be considered any song written in or out of Canada by a Canadian, and songs written in Canada by foreign residents of Canada. This is the definition that the Canadian Music Centre uses and the one that I have used for this project.

There is no doubt that many would consider some of the composers on this list to be American composers. Martha Hill Duncan was born and received her post-secondary education in Texas. However, she subsequently moved to Canada and became a Canadian citizen, composed her songs in Canada, and used Canadian poetry as the texts for her songs. Violet Archer was born and educated in Canada, but taught in the U.S. for many years composing many of her songs there before returning to Canada to retire. John Greer was born in Canada, but now lives and teaches in the U.S. I will let others decide if some of these songs are also American art songs. In the end, all of the songs in this bibliography have strong Canadian connections making them what I would consider to be Canadian art songs.

When it came time to choose songs for this document, I needed a place to start and so I began with composers with whom I was already familiar. I also wanted to explore songs with which I was not familiar and so I used the very unscientific approach of simply pulling scores off the shelf and discovering what was inside. As a result, this document is a mixture of some well-known and some lesser-known composers and compositions. It is only a sampling of the Canadian art song repertoire.

## Explanation of Bibliographical Entries

Each of the entries found in this annotated bibliography is meant to provide the information that a singer or voice teacher would need to help narrow the search for a new song. I have included composer, composer dates, title, poet, range, tessitura, and comments on information such as harmonic, rhythmic and technical difficulties, poetic ideas, and the overall musical sense of the piece. In many cases, I have also tried to include my sense of a level of difficulty of the song, indicating whether it would be suitable for pre-college, undergraduate or graduate level singers. The sample entry below outlines how I have organized each entry.

**SMITH, JANE** – *the composer's name is in large font, bold and all caps.*

(1900-1980) – *composer's dates. In the case that the composer is still alive, no death date will be*

*indicated and the birth date will be indicated in the following manner:*

(b.1956).

**Title of Song** (Poet Name) – *the title of the song or song cycle is bold with the name of the poet, if known, following in brackets and in regular font.*

Range A4-B5. – *I have used absolute pitches for all ranges. In the case of some songs that may be sung by men or women, the range may need to be transposed down an octave as is a regular occurrence for male writing.*

Tessitura Med. – *I have made a subjective evaluation with the intent of giving an idea of where most of the pitches lie. I have used the terms Low, Med-Low, Med, Med-High, and High; Med being an abbreviation for Medium.*

*(Song Cycles or Song Groups)*

a.       ***Title of song within a song cycle*** (Poet Name). – *The name of a song within        a song cycle will be indented with a lower case bullet (ie. a. b. c.) and will be in bold, italicized font. The name of the poet, if unique for each song        within a cycle, will be in brackets, regular font, just after the title of the song.*

Range A4-B5. – *The range of the individual song within a song cycle will follow the title of the song on the next line.*

Tessitura Med. – *The tessitura of the individual song with a song cycle will follow the range of the song on the next line.*

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# ARCHER, VIOLET

(b. 1913)

## **Birds at Daybreak** (Irving Layton)

This cycle for tenor voice and piano was a commission of the Alberta Composers Association and the Canadian Music Centre for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Banff Centre in 1983. Archer provides instructions at the beginning of the cycle that both Sprechstimme and parlando are to be used. She also includes instructions for the piano in terms of how she has notated reverberation and “squillante”. Accidentals only apply to the octaves in which they appear. This cycle makes use of a great deal of atonality and Archer is interested in extra vocal techniques. She asks for a very large range from the tenor and although it is not rhythmically difficult, it would only be suitable for a graduate level singer.

### a. *The Madonna of the Magnificat*

Range C#4-B5.

Tessitura High.

This song alternates between largo and andante tempo markings. The accompaniment is predominantly chordal. Archer uses an expansive range in both the piano and the voice. The vocalist must also deal with some difficult leaps although a great deal of the writing is step-wise motion. Although not overly difficult in terms of the rhythm, she does make use of alternating time signatures of 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4. Although many different types of tenor could handle this song, it seems that she had a leggiero in

mind when composing this song. The accompaniment isn't broad enough to balance a heavier voice.

b. *Vigil*

Range D4-Bb5.

Tessitura Med-High.

Although this song isn't quite as high as the previous, it still demands a wide range. The accompaniment is full of chord clusters making it difficult technically for the pianist and harmonically for the singer. The singer is often required to make leaps of a fourth or fifth, then back down to a diminished fourth or fifth. The tempo is largo and the song has an unsettling feeling that is typical of Archer's music.

c. *Birds at Daybreak*

Range D4-B5.

Tessitura High.

This is the fastest song in the cycle and is also the song that contains the *parlando* and *Sprechstimme*. It is the longest of the three and has an exuberant feel. There are several sustained high notes A, Bb and B, all on text about excitement or singing. The meter changes frequently and the rhythm is often syncopated. Harmonically, it stays in an atonal structure throughout. This song would no doubt be very satisfying to sing; it would however be a challenge for the highest level singer.

### **Northern Landscape (A.J.M. Smith)**

This is a set of three songs for mezzo-soprano and piano. They were composed for the Canadian Music Competition National Finals in 1978. There is nothing textually that demands a woman's voice so it is most likely that Archer was looking for a mezzo tone quality for this set.

#### **a. *The Lonely Land***

Range B3-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is composed using a serial technique, although not strictly twelve tone. The piano part often has three or four note tone clusters and finding the pitch in the vocal line can be difficult. That being said, the vocal part does have a lovely sense of line. The discomfort created by the atonality is a suitable atmosphere for the loneliness and severity of the poetry. This would be a good song for an advanced singer with a good ear.

#### **b. *Swift Current***

Range Eb4-Gb5.

Tessitura Med.

The current is depicted in the piano and Archer uses a whole tone harmonic structure to create tonal ambiguity. Despite this however, she helps the singer by frequently doubling the vocal line. The vocal line moves in a predominantly quarter note rhythm above the fast moving

sixteenths in the piano. This song could easily be handled by a young singer who is interested in something more modern sounding.

c. *Sea Cliff*

Range D4-G#5.

Tessitura Med-High.

The tessitura in this song is just slightly higher than the other two with the high notes being sustained. The harmony returns the more serialistic approach of the first song. It is in 6/8 and the rhythm is very sensual. The poetry describes the spray of the waves splashing against the cliff and is written as a run-on sentence that creates the continuousness of the waves.

The song builds to an effective climax towards the end and there seems to be a sexual undertone to this music. This song requires an advanced undergraduate singer to handle the technical and tonal difficulties.

**The Owl Queen** (Vachell Lindsay).

Range Bb3-Eb5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is published in an anthology of songs for young adults, edited by Roberta Stephen, titled *for Hobble de Hoys & Giggle de She's*. This song was previously published by Alberta Keys Publishing in 1986. This song sounds like a typical children's song with a twist. In the poem, the moon (the Owl Queen) sends her owls to eat naughty mousie girls and boys. The vocal line is very straightforward rhythmically and harmonically. It has a few strange leaps, but would work well for a young singer.

## BECKWITH, JOHN

(b. 1927)

**Old Meg Merillies** (John Keats).

Range B3-E5.

Tessitura Med.

This piece is simple rhythmically mimicking folksong style. It stays in a simple-duple meter almost throughout and would be suitable for an undergraduate or advanced high school level singer. Harmonically, there are dissonant moments that might make this piece difficult for a beginner. Although not a gem, there are some beautiful moments that make this piece lovely.

## BLAIR, DEAN

(b. 1932)

**Spring** (William Shakespeare).

Range D4-D5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This is published in *Hobble-de-hoys & Giggle-de-she's* by Alberta Keys Publishing. In this sonnet, Shakespeare plays with the homonymous nature of “cuckoo” and “cuckold” telling us that it is a sound “unpleasing to a married ear”. In 6/8 time with a very lilting feel, this song sounds very Elizabethan. Strophic with two verses, this song is good for a young singer.

# BURGE, JOHN

(b. 1961)

## **Autumn Closing and Winter** (Bliss Carman).

This is a set of two songs. They were written for the Windsong Trio which consists of Carol-Lynn Reifel, soprano, Donelda Gartshore, flute, and Ireneus Zuk, piano. The poetry for these two songs, as is common with much of Canadian poetry, depicts elements of the Canadian landscape.

### a. *Autumn Closing*

Range C#4-G#5.

Tessitura Med.

The accompaniment consists of rolling 32<sup>nd</sup> notes throughout, reminiscent of the blowing wind perhaps, and will require an advanced pianist.

Harmonically the music is mostly tonal, however there are few leading tones giving the music a whimsical sense of ambiguity. It isn't tremendously difficult to sing, but not suitable for a beginner. The flute part is rhythmically more challenging, with many grace notes and an extended upper range. It is an effective song and quite satisfying to sing.

### b. *Winter*

Range D4-Ab5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is more difficult than "Autumn Closing" both for the flutist and for the singer. The piano accompaniment is also quite challenging. The song opens with a chorale played by the flute and piano, and then moves

on to a set of six variations. Once the song reaches a climax halfway through the third variation, it relaxes both rhythmically and dynamically. Melodically it contains a fair amount of chromaticism, but moves predominantly in stepwise motion. This would be a challenging but rewarding song for an advanced singer.

**Blue Psalm (Denis Lee).**

Range A2-F#4.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song was composed for the Canadian baritone Bruce Kelly and the composer indicates that it is for low voice and piano. The accompaniment is a dirge-like ostinato that continues throughout. The text is dark, modern and very effective. The melody is extremely lyrical and tonally accessible. This would certainly be manageable for an intermediate baritone who possesses a good range. The duration of this song is 7'30"; by the time the piece finishes, the audience has been taken on an emotional journey. This is an excellent song.

**Elegy as a Message Left on an Answering Machine (Steven Heighton).**

Range C4-F5 or C3-F4.

Tessitura Low Soprano, Med Baritone.

This song is for voice, clarinet and piano. On the cover, the composer indicates voice, but on the score itself, he indicates soprano. Nevertheless, this piece's range is well suited for a baritone or tenor and the text is neither from the feminine nor masculine perspective. The text is a message that has been left on a deceased friend's answering machine and it mixes humor with poignancy. The



clarinet part is very manageable although it does extend into the altissimo register. Tonally, this piece is much more serialistic than “Our Children” or “Blue Psalm.” In fact, the phone number becomes a serialized seven-note theme. As a result, it is significantly more difficult to sing. It is nine minutes in duration.

**Our Children** (Jesús López-Pacheco).

Range C4-A5.

Tessitura Med-High.

The composer indicates several alternate pitches that can help in adjusting the tessitura of the piece but nevertheless, it rests rather high. This song was composed for Canadian soprano Diana Katz and the composer indicates that it is for high voice and piano. As with many of his other compositions, Burge uses a mix of tonality and atonality giving this song a modern and ethereal sensibility. As in the previous song, we feel as if we have been on a journey, but we’re not quite sure to where, and the audience is left feeling somewhat unsettled. The poem is an inversion of the Lord’s Prayer, i.e. instead of “Our Father who art in heaven” the poem reads “Our children who art on earth”. It is at times dark and at others hopeful, which suits the unsettled nature of the harmony quite nicely. At ten minutes in duration, this song is quite lengthy, but would make an effective set for a recital on its own.

## CARDY, PATRICK

(1953-2005)

**...And in the Night the Gentle Earth is Falling into Morning...**(Patrick Cardy).

Range G3 – E5 (ossia F#5).

Tessitura Med.

Cardy indicates in the score that there is a version for soprano or tenor that is a minor third higher. He also indicates that there is an orchestral arrangement. This piece is predominantly in the minor key but is rich with dissonance that Cardy uses to create an ethereal atmosphere. Rhythmically the song is very manageable. It is quite lengthy, eleven pages, and almost 8' in duration. This song would be suitable for an intermediate singer.

**Lullaby** (Patrick Cardy).

Range A3-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is published in the *Songs for Hobble de Hoys & Giggle de She's* anthology. Although this anthology is intended for young singers, the range of this song might be too wide. Poetically, this song seems more suited for a soprano. It is strophic with three verses and the melody is quite lovely. Rhythmically, the song is very manageable, and harmonically, it is in A minor and tonal throughout.

## CHAMPAGNE, ÉRIC

(b. 1980)

**Airs Mélancoliques** (Paul Verlaine)

This set of three songs is composed for a mezzo-soprano. The first song ends a capella and the second song is entirely a capella. The third song ends with three pages of a vocalise on [a], which the singer finishes by humming. The poems, as the title would suggest, are dark and depressing. Champagne takes a novel approach that is both interesting and satisfying.

a. *Un grand sommeil noir*

Range Bb3-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This song uses the same poetry as the Ravel setting by the same name but has little resemblance to it. The left hand of the accompaniment moves in parallel major or minor ninth quarter notes throughout the song. The meter changes between 5/4 and 4/4 but the rhythm is not overly complex. What is difficult about this song is the almost complete independence of the vocal line harmonically to the piano. The singer rarely sings the same pitches as the piano and is often asked to sing a semitone off from the accompaniment. The text is about a black sleep that puts all hope to rest, and the poet loses memory of bad and good.

b. *Chanson d'automne*

Range C#4-F5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

The lack of accompaniment in this song only makes it easier to sing. Nevertheless, the singer is asked to move in chromatic motion and make frequent leaps. The rhythmic content is mostly eighth notes in varying groups of twos and threes. The poetry talks of the sobbing violins of autumn that hurt the heart with a monotone.

c. *Soleils couchants*

Range C4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

“Soleils couchants” refers to sunsets. The right hand moves in a rolling sixteenth note arpeggiation throughout. Rhythmically, the song stays consistently in a triple meter, either 6/8 or 9/8. The song feels almost tonal with just enough chromaticism to keep us away from a tonal center. The sunsets are like strange dreams, pale phantoms. The concluding vocalise and subsequent humming bring this song to an effective conclusion, peaceful yet somewhat unsettling.

## COULTHARD, JEAN

(1908-2000)

**Dream Love** (Christina Rossetti)

Range D4-G#5.

Tessitura Med-High.

The poem is a pastoral description of young love. The accompaniment is rather lush with a good deal of chromaticism. Rhythmically the song is not overly

complicated and melodically it makes sense. This song would be appropriate for a more advanced undergraduate.

**J'ai fermé mon cœur** (Madeleine Guimont).

Range D#4-A5.

Tessitura Med.

The title of this song translates as “I have closed my heart” and the tempo marking is “sad and slow”. Although she chooses not to use a key signature, the song is predominantly in d# minor. This makes the song look very chromatic and although Coulthard does make use of non-chord tones, the song sounds very tonal. There is a wonderful climax on the high A with the word life, “...but your heart was of love and of life.” Rhythmically it is not overly complicated. The range makes it suitable for an advanced undergrad or graduate singer.

## COUTURE, GUILLAUME

(1851-1915)

**Le souvenir** (Lionel Nastorg).

Range E4-D5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song, although composed many years ago, was only recently published in *Songs for Hobble-de-hoys and Giggle-de-she's*, which is a collection of songs for the young singer. It feels like a French mélodie and the poetry is strongly Romantic depicting a dark memory that comes back to haunt the poet, but it lacks

the depth of some of his French contemporaries of whom we might be more aware. Nevertheless, it is an effective song and a good option for a young singer.

## **DUNCAN, CHESTER**

(1913-2002)

**Another Grace for a Child** (Robert Herrick).

Range D#4-D#5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

As the title suggests, this is a simple song, less than thirty seconds, with a melody that is very accessible. The harmony in the piano is interesting and not strictly tonal, the key signature is seven sharps.

**As Sweet as Balm, as Soft as Air** (John Fletcher).

Range Db4-Gb5.

Tessitura Med.

This late sixteenth century poem uses a Shakespearian language. The melody is lyrical and fairly simple. The piano accompaniment is quite sparse, often consisting of a single chord per bar. The key signature is five flats and the song hovers in and out of tonality.

**At the Edge of the...** (Patrick Lane).

Range B3-D5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This is a simple song in a baritone range. The vocal line is recitative like with a sparse accompaniment in the piano. The song is perhaps a minute in length. The poetry speaks of country life, with the farmer picking the wheat by hand so as not to waste anything.

**Autobiography** (Louis MacNeice).

Range A3-E5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song written for “medium voice” is in the minor mode and very folk song like. The poem grows dark towards the end and Duncan brings the voice higher to match the mood. Although the music is rhythmically and tonally accessible, the poem is not as easy to understand.

## **FORSYTH, MALCOLM**

(1936-2011)

**Three Métis Songs from Saskatchewan** (Traditional)<sup>1</sup>

This is a set of three songs that was commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the Canadian mezzo-soprano, Maureen Forrester. The word Métis comes from the French word mélange or mix. The Metis are descendants of unions which often happened between French male colonists and Canadian First Nations women. As a result of their mixed status, they were frequently held in low regard by both the French and aboriginal communities. Another interesting result of the mixed heritage was the development of various Métis

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<sup>1</sup> These texts come from a collection of Métis songs compiled by Barbara Cass-Beggs.

dialects. These languages often use the morphosyntax of French mixed with verbs from either Cree or Ojibwe. Although the language for the Forsyth's settings of these folksongs is not Métis or méchif, it is older French and contains some interesting sounds including some liaisons that we might not expect. Although these songs were composed for a mezzo-soprano, they could easily be sung by a baritone and suit the male tessitura well.

a. *Chanson du petit cordonnier*

Range B3-E5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song tells the tale of a young couple hoping to get married. The would-be bride's parents refuse as the young man is penniless. It has a lilting, folksong quality and moves at a fast pace. The harmony and rhythms are manageable but the language moves quickly enough that it would be tricky for a young singer who has had little experience with the language.

b. *Adieu de la mariée*

Range C#4-C#5

Tessitura Med-Low.

In this song, we see a somewhat melodramatic depiction of a bride leaving her home. Although it was the bride's choice to enter into the marriage, she is grief stricken at having to leave home. The tempo is extremely slow and Forsyth makes frequent use of extra-metric groupings. The rhythm however is not as complicated as it looks on the page and the result is an



exotic feeling that suits the mood of the piece. It is the longest song of the set at four minutes in duration.

c. *Chanson de la Grenouillère*

Range G3-G5.

Tessitura Med.

The song tells the story of the Métis band called the Bois-brûles who defeated the British and members of the Hudson's Bay Company on the field of the Seven Plains or the Grenouillère (Frog Plain) as it is known by the Métis. It is an uplifting song that depicts musically the triumph of the Métis. The meter is 6/8 and the rhythms are very manageable. The vocal entrances are somewhat tricky and the range is quite expansive. The song ends with a resounding high G. (G5 for the female and G4 for the male).

## **GAGNON, ALAIN**

(b. 1938)

### **Les chimères (Alain Gagnon).**

This is a French Canadian cycle and I have included my own translations to provide context for the songs. Literally, chimères means chimeras, but it is used in this case to mean fantasies. The harmonic language used is modal, either polytonal or chromatic, creating a very ethereal sound. These six poems were

written when the composer was young.<sup>2</sup> Gagnon said about his compositional style that he has been influenced by his years of teaching theory, counterpoint and composition, and that he therefore sticks mainly to his tonal roots. That being said, the music lacks an identifiable tonal center. It is not twelve-tone, but it does leave the listener trying to decide where the tonal center lies and where the harmonic progression is leading.

a. ***Fantasmés.***

Range F#4-A5.

Tessitura Med-High.

*Fantasmés* is another word for fantasies; “My fantasies are tired, attractive but fragile. I want to live in the dust of those white cities.” The text is strange, which suits the fantastical mood created by the music. This song is interesting, but difficult for even an advanced undergraduate singer.

b. ***Panorama d’été.***

Range D4-F#5.

Tessitura Med.

*Summer Panorama*; “See the bird asleep, smiling in the blue shell, and his clear tears, fragile like a child. See the bee on the mirror, smooth, silent death. And the wind cruising the green pains, do you see the sun, I hope dearly.” This song is fairly straightforward rhythmically although there is a good deal of three against two. Harmonically, the song is fairly atonal

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<sup>2</sup> Alain Gagnon, *Les chimères* [op. 43]. (Saint-Nicolas, Québec: Doberman-Yppan, 1998.) 2

with frequent leaps of a major or minor seventh. This would be difficult for an undergraduate singer.

c. ***Crépuscule d'automne.***

Range D4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

*Autumn Twilight*; “The evening drinks the crystal morning awakening and sees the night away without the noise of life. I listen and breathe no more. Fingertips beyond the fallen branch, spring has aged tonight.” This song continues the fantastical mood of the previous two with a harmonic color that stays outside of a tonal center. Rhythmically the piece is very manageable, but the singer will have some difficulty with pitches.

d. ***Petite chimère.***

Range E4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

*Little Fantasy*; “A fringe of water dreams of a fountain and dies in the evening like the voice of an echo. The foam sprays from the gray waves hitting the shore and revealing its power. Veins of silver blood patterned like a flower when she cries.” This song is composed using a variety of simple meters. Harmonically it feels as if it is composed using polytonality allowing it to stay in a very fantastical mood. This song could probably be assigned to a junior or senior without much difficulty.

e. ***Évasion.***

Range E4-A5.

Tessitura Med-High.

*Evasion.* “Do you see through the fog the boat that floats over the foam. In the crystal veil, it sinks and binds its pure marble with thorns. To the murmur of the wind, he falls asleep where the water evaporates. And like a dream, he goes...” This song is in 6/4 throughout with the piano playing a repeating two bar motif. The vocal line is chromatic with a fair number of leaps. The rhythm is certainly manageable, but the pitches make it a difficult piece nevertheless.

f. *Murmures.*

Range E4-G#5.

Tessitura Med.

*Whispers.* “My dream is suspended in tears that fall on flowers. I see the aurora wither and die like light fragrances, and the night staggers with emotion from the softness of the embrace. Sometimes the wind blows so powerfully that the sky tears and clouds fall like weak hair. Fresh sounds fly and I listen without tiring to the whispers of my joy.” This song is perhaps the most tonal of the set, but only slightly. The piano part is characterized by an octave leap followed by third descent pattern that repeats throughout. The vocal line is chromatic with frequent leaps of a sixth or more.

**GLEDHILL, EDWIN**

(1830-1919)

**Oh! Nightingale** (Edwin Gledhill)

Range A3-F5.

Tessitura Med.

Gledhill was born in England and died in California, but lived and taught for many years in Ontario where he composed this song. The range of this song suggests that it may have been written for a baritone. The F5 comes at the end of the song and an ossia is written down the octave. This song is quite reminiscent of a Stephen Foster song and is full of the somewhat maudlin sentimentality that is typical of this style, but lacks the memorability of a Foster melody. It is strophic with two verses.

## **GLICK, SRUL IRVING**

(1934-2002)

**Anthropos in Transit** (Gerald Vise).

Range A2-G4.

Tessitura High.

This is a song cycle for baritone and piano. There is a prelude and a postlude with four songs in between. The entire set is atonal making it a difficult cycle to learn and perform as well as difficult to listen to from an audience perspective. I had difficulty determining a musical reason for the separation of the songs. In fact, the fourth song has an attacca into the postlude. For this reason, I have avoided

treating them separately as I would normally do for a cycle. These songs are not very accessible.

**Boi v'Shalom** (COME, BRING PEACE) (Traditional).

Range B3-D5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

The composer indicates that this song is for mezzo-soprano, but there is no reason that it couldn't be sung by a baritone. The text is in Hebrew and the song itself is a direct imitation of Jewish or Israeli folksong. It is in the minor mode with a slow tempo and is very accessible.

### **I Never Saw Another Butterfly**

This cycle of songs to children's poems from the concentration camp at Terezin was dedicated to the Canadian contralto Maureen Forrester. The harmonic composition of this piece is not atonal but is not strictly tonal either. This creates a mood that is at once mysterious and unsettling, very suitable for the subject of the poetry. Written for a contralto, these songs would be suitable for mezzo-sopranos and baritones.

a. ***To Olga*** (Alena Synkova)

Range D4-Fb5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

The melody is chromatic but lyrical. The poetry talks of the longing and excitement of being far away. This song, due to its atonality, would be somewhat difficult to learn.

b. ***Yes, That's The Way Things Are*** (Koleba: Kosek, Lowy, Bachner). Range C#4-F5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This poem refers directly to Terezin and is set with a children's rhyme. It is about the old granddad that has but one tooth and sits eating crusts of bread. The melody contains a lot of step-wise motion and is quite lyrical, although it contains a good deal of chromaticism.

c. ***The Little Mouse*** (Koleba, M. Kosek, H. Lowy, Bachner). Range C#4-F5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

The mouse is depicted by fast, short bursts in the piano. The singer is asked to sing similar passages with staccato moments. This song contains more leaping motions in the vocal line and continues with the same chromatic elements of the two previous songs.

d. ***On a Sunny Evening*** (Anonymous-1944).

Range Db4-F5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song hovers around Eb until it soars an octave higher describing the beauty of nature. The last line of the poem is extremely poignant: "If in barbed wire things can bloom, why couldn't I? I will not die!"

e. ***Narrative*** (Petr Fischl).

Range G3-Eb5.

Tessitura Low.

The text for this song comes from a piece of prose saved from the concentration camp and as a result, Glick uses a recitative like style to set this piece. The piano accompaniment is very sparse, and towards the end the singer is singing a capella. The vocal line sits on a C4 for much of the song and moves in step-wise motion, often chromatically. The piece slowly builds towards a climax near the end speaking of the “thousands of souls” leaving. This is a very effective setting.

f. ***The Butterfly*** (Pavel Friedmann).

Range B3-F5.

Tessitura Med Low.

The poetry for this song provides the title of the cycle. The melodic line alternates between lyricism, recitative and chromatic movement. The piano accompaniment is at times sparse and at others florid, perhaps imitating the butterfly. This is possibly the most powerful song of the cycle.

## **GREER, JOHN**

(b. 1954)



## **The House of Tomorrow**

This is John Greer's first song cycle and contains four songs for mezzo-soprano and piano to texts of four different poets: Kahlil Gibran, R. L. Stevenson, Khomyakov and an anonymous poet. The texts all celebrate children and childhood. The first and third songs are very powerful. The second song is comprised of two short poems both giving advice about how children should behave. The last song, not wishing to leave us in a dark spot, gives us rhymed images from a child's imagination.

a.       ***On Children*** (Kahlil Gibran).

Range Bb3-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is worth singing simply for the poetry alone, which comes from Gibran's *The Prophet*. It is a lovely text telling parents to love their children, but allow them to be free. The piano uses a rolling pattern in the left hand and is largely tonal. The chromaticism is rarely intrusive adding color and interest. The vocal line is lyrical and expansive. Rhythmically, the song is very straightforward. It is a lovely way to start the cycle and would be equally fine on its own.

b.       ***The Whole Duty of Children: A Recitation*** (Robert Louis Stevenson)

Range C4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is a quick three pages and consists of two short poems from *A Child's Garden of Verses* by R.L. Stevenson. The first poem is giving the child some advice about how to behave. The second is a reminder of how grateful we should be for the wonderful things in the world. The first poem is set to staccato left hand chords and fast 16th note runs in the right hand. The singer is asked to sing with "mock bad temper" and the melodic line is somewhat detached with leap-wise movement. The music transitions into the second poem with a lovely legato phrase before the postlude returns to the playfulness of the opening.

c. ***Midnight Prayer*** (Khomyakov, English translation anonymous).

Range Db4-G5

Tessitura Med.

This poem, translated from Russian, begins as the mother (although not identified as such directly in the poem) remembers the hopes she had for her children. She remembers their purity and innocence of youth, and prays that they might have long and joyful lives. The poem and the music shifts halfway through the song as the mother realizes that the house is now empty. There is a moment of anguish and pain before she asks the children to pray for her and asks God the Father to protect them forever. The opening and closing sections of this song are chordal and hymn-like, creating a reverent mood. The melodic line moves in predominantly stepwise motion and is largely tonal. The singer sings in quasi recitativo style as she realizes that the home is empty; the harmonic structure

becomes more chromatic and ominous. The song comes to a lovely climax as she sings about her heartache. This is a lovely song that would easily stand on its own.

d. ***Rhyme*** (Anonymous).

Range B3-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This last song in the cycle ends the cycle in a happier mood with a children's rhyme about silly or impossible situations. The accompaniment is fast moving with almost continuous sixteenth notes and plenty of staccato and staccatissimo notes. The vocal line is straightforward harmonically but moves quickly and requires clear diction and flexibility in the voice. Although the subject matter is appropriate for a young singer, this song requires a more advanced instrument and certainly within the context of the cycle as a whole, it is meant for a mezzo with some technical expertise.

### **The Red Red Heart** (Marianne Bindig).

Although the composer indicates "A cycle of five songs for soprano and piano, there is no reason that a tenor with exceptional high notes could not sing this cycle. Certainly the songs with a lower range could be sung by a tenor. The poetry is modern and takes the reader through a journey from the beginnings of a relationship with Christ to the conclusion of the relationship in the last song. With the final, loving embrace, the poet's heart is exposed to Christ. The middle poem is a touching image of a middle-aged woman who has forgotten her

mother's youth, an admonishment to the young to live in the moment aware of the inevitability of time. Greer's compositional style alternates between post-tonal and neo-romantic. For this reason, some may find this cycle to have varying degrees of accessibility.

a. ***The beginning.***

Range C4-C#6.

Tessitura Med-High.

The melody of this song is semi-lyrical with lots of leaps. This song has plenty of atonality and the singer is often asked to sing notes outside of the piano's chord structure.

b. ***Naked in the city streets.***

Range C#4-G#5.

Tessitura Med.

Along with leaps, there is a great deal of chromatic movement in the vocal line, making it a challenge to be tonally accurate.

c. ***My Mother's Hands.***

Range C4-A5.

Tessitura Med.

This is a slow, contemplative song that moves much more into the realm of tonality and neo-romanticism. There are some interesting rhythmic juxtapositions, including five against three or seven against three. This melody contains fewer leaps than the first two of this cycle and is quite lyrical.

d. *Laughter.*

Range E4-C6.

Tessitura High.

Greer imitates laughter in this song by asking the singer to sing staccato runs that move in stepwise and leap-wise motion, with plenty of chromaticism and fast-paced coloratura.

e. *A red red heart.*

Range B3-A5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is by far the most accessible of the cycle. Although there is some leap-wise motion, it is supported for the most part in the piano, and the melody is generally quite lyrical. There is some chromatic movement as well, making it at once, more interesting, but also more difficult. This song could be handled by an undergraduate singer.

**Sing Me at Midnight** (Wilfred Owen)

This is a cycle of five songs for baritone and piano. Greer writes a forward at the beginning of the cycle informing the reader of some of the important aspects of Owen's life and poetry. Owen was killed in 1917 seven days before the signing of the Armistice of World War I. Greer points out that his poetry was greatly influenced by Shakespeare and Keats. The poetry is extremely intimate and personal. The first four songs are more atonal than the last, and all of them have a fairly expansive range. These songs would be most appropriate for a graduate singer.

a. ***How do I love thee?***

Range B3-F5.

Tessitura Med-High.

Owen captures the intensity and passion of love. Greer in turn composes a song that is complex harmonically, and grand, with sweeping phrasal gestures. The vocal line contains frequent leaps and chromatic movement. The prominent motif for the piano in this song is a M7 leap down followed by a m6 leap up.

b. ***Three Rompers***

Range B3-Gb5.

Tessitura Med-High.

This is a quick, fun song with a sophisticated text. The piano has a continuous eighth note triple pattern that runs throughout the song propelling it forward. The vocal line is quite expansive and contains a good deal of chromaticism. Greer asks the singer to sing in a detached manner for the word “laugh” which can prove to be challenging.

c. ***Anthem for Doomed Youth***

Range B#3-E5.

Tessitura Med-High.

This is a powerful song that looks at the horror and tragedy of war. The piano wonderfully depicts the anger and noise of the machine guns that are described in the poetry. The song takes a sudden shift towards the end into a tranquillo section, which is at once beautiful and poignant. The

vocal line is somewhat chromatic, which suits both the angry section and the tranquillo ascent to heaven. This song is suitable for an advanced singer.

d. *Maundy Thursday*

Range Cb4-F5

Tessitura Med-High

This song begins with a quasi-recitative section. The poet describes the men, women and then children who approach the altar for communion and blessing. The poet is last to approach the offered crucifix and finds it to be dead and cold, except for the warm hand holding it. The melodic line of the song is predominantly stepwise but contains enough chromatic motion to make it both interesting and challenging. The piano is moderately difficult with a good deal of chordal movement. The line comes to two powerful crescendos and then the song ends leaving the listener somewhat disconcerted.

e. *Song of Songs*

Range A3-F#5

Tessitura Med-High

This is the most successful song of the cycle and appropriately finishes it. The poet asks his lover to sing to him at dawn, daytime, dusk and at midnight, each time differently. The melodic line is the most tonal of any of the songs in the cycle, and yet contains enough chromaticism to make it interesting, and to make it feel like it fits in to the rest of the cycle. The

writing for the piano is expansive and challenging, but Greer does a masterful job of creating wonderfully different sonorities. The surge in the music towards the end, just in time to sing the title of the cycle, is a sublimely powerful moment equal to many of the best moments in all of the song repertoire.

## HILL DUNCAN, MARTHA

(b. 1955)

### **Singing in the Northland**

This is a two volume set of fourteen songs, three of which are duets. Hill Duncan was born and raised in Texas but immigrated to Canada in 1982. All of the poetry for this set of songs is by various Canadian poets. Hill Duncan has said that she conceived these pieces as songs for younger singers. The range rarely exceeds an octave, however many of them require a more advanced technical ability. The technically less challenging songs are incredibly satisfying to sing even for the advanced singer. The poetry, written by Canadian authors, is also quintessentially Canadian because of its subject, the Canadian landscape.

#### a. ***The Brook in February*** (Charles G.D. Roberts)

Range D4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This is a short song, only a couple of minutes in duration. Hill Duncan is fond of using parallel fifths and polytonality in her writing which suits this song well creating the cold chill of February. The B section is effective in



evoking a warm breeze that will soon come to bring in the spring. The vocal line is rhythmically very manageable and melodically moves predominantly in step wise or arpeggiated chordal motion. The piano accompaniment is certainly manageable for a college level musician.

b. ***A Child's Prayer at Evening*** (Charles G.D. Roberts)

Range F4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is about two and half minutes in duration. Hill Duncan uses an unusual tempo marking: quarter note equals 76 “Surrounded by Stars”.

Certainly this song has a mysterious feeling harmonically and the rolling accompaniment does a good job at setting the scene. The vocal line uses a very restricted range making it sound very chant-like. Rhythmically and pianistically it is very manageable. It is a simple text that repeats.

“Father, keep me through the night as you keep the lilies through the night.”

c. ***Daisy Time*** (Marjorie Pickthall)

Range D4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This is another short song. The poetry depicts a beautiful summer afternoon in a field of daisies. Rhythmically this song is somewhat challenging in that the time signature alternates freely between 12/8, 4/4 and 3/4. Harmonically and melodically, the song is very manageable with

stepwise motion, few leaps and a tonality that is diatonic with no chromaticism in the vocal line. Overall, it is a very effective piece.

d. ***Life (After the French)*** (Charles G.D. Roberts)

Range D4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is quite short, maybe a minute in duration. Hill Duncan indicates a tempo marking of “Melodramatically” and it is a fun little ditty. The vocal line is marked with staccato almost throughout giving it a patter like feel. Harmonically it is diatonic with some chromaticism. It’s a great song for generating a chuckle from the audience.

e. ***Quiet*** (Marjorie Pickthall)

Range D4-D5.

Tessitura Med.

The poetry for this song describes the peace that comes from loneliness and the ability to appreciate nature’s beauty in solitude. The piano describes this idea well with a rolling eighth-note bass line throughout. Vocally, the melody is quite beautiful. It leaps but follows the triad and so it is quite manageable.

f. ***The Star*** (Beatrice Redpath)

Range E4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This is one of Hill Duncan’s most successful songs. She indicates a tempo of “With wonder” and the piano beautifully depicts this sentiment. The

poetry tells of the beauty of an apple bloom, but that this is nothing when compared to the wonder of a star. The vocal line moves in arpeggiation almost throughout. The climax at “But, oh, when He had hung a star” is full of passion and fun for the singer.

g.      ***The Dustman*** (Bliss Carman)

Range C4-D5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This is the first of the duets in this series. The range and tessitura for both voices is identical. This is a beautiful duet that young singers and advanced singers alike would enjoy singing. The poetry depicts the Dustman, or the Sandman, as he’s known in modern times, as he gently puts the world to sleep each night. The piano writing is predominantly two-part contrapuntal with moving eighth notes throughout. Hill Duncan begins the duet with the piano at the top of its range creating the twinkling effect of the dust as it descends. The two voices either sing in unison or echo each other and move predominantly in step-wise motion. Harmonically the writing is tonal but with plenty of dissonance, creating a very rich sound. The piano part ends with a harmonic major second interval.

h.      ***Grey Rocks and Greyer Seas*** (Charles G.D. Roberts)

Range C4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This is the first song of the second volume from this series. It is harmonically and rhythmically more complex than some of the others from this group, but is still very suitable for a freshman or sophomore. The song is in Eb major but begins in Bb major and makes frequent use of temporary, unprepared modulations. The vocal line is melodically very manageable although it does contain frequent arpeggiated movement. It is a very effective song.

i. ***Lady Icicle*** (E. Pauline Johnson)

Range F4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song makes more use of chordal texture than many of Hill Duncan's other songs. The poem depicts a snow fairy, named Lady Icicle, who rejoices in the coming of winter. It reads almost as a nursery rhyme and Hill Duncan does a good job of creating musically the whimsical nature of the poetry. The vocal line is simple, although the tessitura lies higher than a beginning singer might find manageable. She also makes use of portamenti to help create the playful mood of the song.

j. ***Rainfall*** (E. Pauline Johnson)

Range C#4-F#5.

Tessitura Med.

In this song Hill Duncan uses a triple-triple-duple eighth-note ostinato (3/8 3/8 2/8) in the piano underneath a rather straight forward vocal line written in 4/4. This, along with a tempo marking of a quarter note equals 144

BPM, makes this song somewhat challenging. The result however is quite effective with the music depicting the patter of the rain and the sense of freshness that comes about after a rainfall. The song ends with a triumphant, three-bar, held C#5.

k. ***Severance*** (Charles G.D. Roberts)

Range F4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This is one of Hill Duncan's best songs. The poem describes the separation of lovers across the sea. The poet is mourning that the crane returns but does not bring his lover back to him. The accompaniment is typical of many of her songs with rolling eighth-note movement. The melody is broad and beautiful and the singer is given a wonderful climax on the word "heart". It is in Bb minor with very few chromatic moments. This song is extremely satisfying both to perform and to listen to.

l. ***Where Leaps the Ste. Marie*** (E. Pauline Johnson)

Range F4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This is one of the songs from this series that depicts Canadian landscape, and the St. Marys river that runs between Lake Superior and Lake Huron. The poet asks the river what makes it so happy and joyful. The accompaniment consists of a rolling bass line. Hill Duncan alternates between g minor and f minor and makes use of frequent key shifts. The

vocal line is very manageable, however the sixteenth note section towards the end is a bit tricky. Overall, the effect is quite bucolic.

m. ***Be Quiet, Wind*** (Charles G.D. Roberts)

Range C4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This is the second duet in this series. Unlike *The Dustman*, the second soprano line is lower than the first and the parts often sing in harmony. Hill Duncan indicates “a la wind chimes” for a tempo marking and it is clear in the piano writing that that is the effect she is after. The poetry is lovely but somewhat hard to understand upon first hearing. Rhythmically, the vocal lines are very straightforward. The first soprano must sing a G5 half way through the duet, but Hill Duncan indicates a lower option. This duet is quite beautiful.

n. ***Roadside Flowers*** (Bliss Carman)

Range, Soprano 1, D4-F#5, Soprano 2, C#4-D5.

Tessitura Soprano 1 Med, Soprano 2 Med-Low.

This duet seems to be written more clearly for soprano and mezzo. The parts are in call-and-response or in harmony with each other. The tempo marking is “carried by the wind” and the accompaniment creates a gentle forward motion. Hill Duncan uses rolling bass line as is typical with many of her songs. The vocal lines are straightforward and fun to sing.

**Summer** (Linda Jacques).

This is a group of songs set to poems by Canadian poet Linda Jacques. Hill Duncan calls these songs “Imaginative Art Songs for Medium High Voice”. The range and tessitura of all of these songs are well suited for the younger singer. Hill Duncan does not indicate if she feels that these songs are meant to be performed as a cycle although she does state that they are all memories of summers on Georgian Bay. They can easily be performed as individual songs and would work well as a set for a recital.

a. ***My Cedar Canoe***

Range E4-D5.

Tessitura Med.

The poetry is simple and describes a maiden voyage in a cedar canoe and the excitement of the many journeys ahead. The accompaniment is manageable for a young pianist with a rolling arpeggiation in the left hand and a straightforward rhythm in common time. The vocal line is entirely tonal in D major and moves in simple step wise motion. This song is well suited for a young voice.

b. ***Sand Fleas***

Range D4-D5.

Tessitura Med.

This song, as the title suggests, is about the fleas that bite beach goers. The accompaniment is manageable for a young pianist again in common time. The song is harmonically tonal and the vocal line is very

manageable. Hill Duncan has fun with the idea of the fleas biting by including numerous staccato notes to end each phrase. This song was not inspired by either the Beethoven *Es war einmal ein König* or the Mussorgsky *Mephistopheles' Song in Auerbach's Cellar (Song of the Flea)*.<sup>3</sup>

c. ***The Swimmer***

Range E4-Db5

Tessitura Med.

The poetry of this song is from the perspective of someone taking a swim in the lake. Everything is going well when suddenly something nibbles the poet. Her imagination gets the better of her until she looks under the water and discovers it's just a fish. This song follows along the lines of the other two in terms of its accessibility, as the piano and vocal lines are manageable for the young musician. The song has some fun dramatic moments as the singer tries to figure out what is going on underneath the water.

d. ***Cloud Dreams***

Range C4-C5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

The range and tessitura of this song allow it to be sung by virtually any voice type, but it might be a bit too low for a soprano. The accompaniment is somewhat more difficult than the previous songs but is

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<sup>3</sup> Martha Hill Duncan, conversation with author, 17 Nov 2013



still very doable for a young pianist. Harmonically the song is tonal and rhythmically it uses easy patterns.

e. ***Queen of the North***

Range D4-D5.

Tessitura Med-High.

This last song of the set personifies the northern lights as the Queen of the North. The accompaniment is an easy rolling arpeggiation with a tempo marking of “with grace”. The vocal line is legato and flowing, and Hill Duncan makes frequent use of the onomatopoeic qualities of the word “shimmer”. The song and the set come to an easy, peaceful close.

## **HOLMAN, DEREK**

(b. 1931)

**Four Shakespeare Songs** (William Shakespeare)

This is a set of four songs for baritone and string orchestra or piano. The set runs between ten and eleven minutes. There doesn't seem to be a theme that connects these songs except that they are all Shakespearian texts. They all pose some rhythmic and harmonic challenges for a young baritone and are probably better suited for an upper classman or graduate singer. The last song asks the most of the singer in terms of range and technical ability. Gerald Finley premiered these songs in Ottawa in 1991.

a. ***When Icicles Hang by the Wall***

Range B2-Eb4.

Tessitura Med.

The tempo marking is quarter note equals 112 BPM, and the piano has an almost continuous eighth note pattern of seemingly random pitches that dance around. The poetry depicts a winter scene of peasantry going about their business in the cold. In addition to the harmonic difficulties that this song presents, the meter is constantly shifting between groups of duple and triple. For this reason the ensemble and counting are especially difficult. The singer although not required to make the random leaps of the piano, is still asked to make frequent jumps. Despite its difficulty, the song does have a certain charm. Although it is atonal throughout, the song ends on a B major chord.

b. *A Bridal Song*

Range Bb2-E4.

Tessitura Med.

The text is a wish for good things like roses, daisies and sweet thyme, and a wish that bad things like the slanderous cuckoo will let the couple be.

This song is slower than the first and rhythmically less challenging, although Holman plays with the meter considerably. The accompaniment becomes somewhat more harsh during the discussion of crows, ravens and cuckoos. Like the previous song, despite being atonal throughout, the song closes with a major chord, this time G major.

c. *Sonnet*

Range A2-E4.

Tessitura Med.

This song has the lowest tessitura of the four, but does not remain in the low range. It is the slowest and least tricky rhythmically. The poetry is contemplative, remembering things past as though at the end of one's life. A life full of woe and sorrow until the end, when the poet says "except when I think on thee, dear friend," the song comes out of atonality to what has now become its expected major closure. This song is very effective both in terms of its accessibility and its artistic satisfaction.

d. ***When That I Was and a Little Tiny Boy***

Range B2-F4.

Tessitura Med.

This song is composed tonally with a good deal of atonality that adds color and playfulness. It is the fastest song of the set, but is not overly difficult to sing. The voice has some patter and coloratura but not excessively so. This song has a good energy and seems like it would be fun to sing. It is certainly manageable for an upperclassman.

## **LAVALLÉE, CALIXA**

(1842-1891)

**L'absence** (Remi Tremblay)

Range D4-D5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song is published in a collection of children's songs titled *Songs for Hobble de Hoys and Giggle de She's* edited by Roberta Stephen. Calixa Lavallée is the composer of Canada's national anthem and was born in Quebec but died in Boston. *L'Absence* was first published in a collection titled *L'Album musical*. It is a simple, two verse, strophic song with a French text. It is a typical Romantic love song, reminiscent of Stephen Foster.

## MACK, COLIN

(b. 1957)

### **The Shadow-Maker** (Gwendolyn MacEwen)

This is a cycle of four songs for soprano. The poetry evokes a dream world with journeys through the dark forest and a stranger that comes at night. The entire cycle is fourteen minutes in duration.

#### a. ***Dark Pines Under Water***

Range E4-G#5.

Tessitura Med High.

This song uses lush harmonies and Mack has composed a beautifully lyric vocal line. The tempo is an easy andante and there are several moments when the voice is allowed to soar over the top. This song presents a rhythmic challenge with meter changes happening with almost every measure alternating between 5/8, 2/4, 6/8, 7/8 and 4/4. This song would be best suited for the advanced undergraduate singer.

#### b. ***Dreamer Dream On***

Range C#4-A5.

Tessitura Med.

This song continues the dream-like mood but this time uses an almost continuous sixteenth note rolling chord pattern in the piano. The meter is much more consistent switching from a compound duple to simple duple halfway through the song. The range in this song is much more expansive than the previous and requires the soprano to make more use of her low range. There are several coloratura moments throughout the song that require a solid technical ability. The poetry is somewhat strange and a bit dark but effective nevertheless. The final line of the poem reads “dream me those lies without which we cannot live, dream me dream me to die.”

c. ***Song for a Stranger***

Range F4-Ab5.

Tessitura Med.

This song has a reverent feel as Mack makes use of a chorale-like chord progression. He combines this with folk harmonies and plenty of parallel harmonic motion. It is tonally accessible for the singer and rhythmically very manageable. The climax of the song seems to come out of nowhere a mere four measures before the end of the song. The poetry tells of a stranger who comes at night but not at all unwelcome, “Stranger do not let my sleep grow tame.”

d. ***The Last Day***

Range C#4-G5.

Tessitura Med High.

The poetry for this song begins “Today is the last day of my life” and moves on to the last hour and finally the last minute. The tempo is fast and the rhythm gives the impression of speeding towards the end. There is a great deal of syncopation which will prove challenging to the singer.

This song stands out in the cycle in that it is the only fast moving song and provides an interesting punctuation to the cycle.

## **MORAWETZ, OSKAR**

(1917-2007)

**Elegy** (Anne Wilkinson)

Range C#4-F#5.

Tessitura Med.

This is a short piece, two pages long and about 2’45”, but very effective nonetheless. The piano prelude is extremely dissonant and harsh, but the song turns instantly tonal as soon as the singer enters. The harmony in the piano accompaniment remains chordal throughout and for the most part remains consonant. There is a brief piano interlude that returns to the atonality of the prelude. The voice has a soaring climax in time for a lovely dénouement. The rhythm of this piece is certainly manageable for a younger singer, although the range would be more challenging for a younger baritone.

# RAPOPORT, ALEXANDER

(b. 1957)

## **Lieder nach Texten von Heinrich Heine (Heinrich Heine)**

This is a set of three songs by poetry of Heinrich Heine. Rapoport does not indicate a voice type for these songs, however based on the range and tessitura, they are best suited for soprano, mezzo, tenor or high baritone.

### a. ***1. In mein gar zu dunkles Leben***

Range C4-G5.

Tessitura Med High.

The composition creates an appropriately eerie atmosphere for this dark text. The rhythm is manageable and the meter makes only a few shifts which are not especially tricky at the indicated tempo. The lack of a tonal center creates a musical challenge for the singer and this song is most appropriate for an advanced undergraduate singer.

### b. ***2. Der Wind zieht seine Hosen an***

Range D4-G5.

Tessitura Med High.

The poem creates an allegory with the dark, night storm representing the woe and angst of the poet. The tempo is fast and the composer indicates a duple compound meter. The rhythm of the vocal line alternates between a duple compound and a triple simple which makes the ensemble more difficult. Harmonically, this song contains a great deal of chromaticism

which is not always supported in the accompaniment. It requires an advanced singer to deal with its challenges.

c. **3. *Mein süßes Lieb, wenn du im Grab***

Range B3-F#5

Tessitura Med.

This last song of the set has the lowest tessitura of the cycle and could be sung by a baritone. The poem presents a scene in which the lover assures his beloved that he will follow her to the grave when she dies. It is also the most tonal of the three and is reminiscent of Chopin's *Préludes* Op. 24 No. 2. It alternates between slow, minor, dirge-like sections and faster bursts of atonal flourishes. Rhythmically, it presents some challenges to the ensemble during the flourishes. It is of an appropriate difficulty for an advanced undergraduate singer.

## **RAUM, ELIZABETH**

(b. 1945)

### **Men I Have Known** (Elizabeth Raum)

This is a cycle of six songs that Raum composed to her own texts for a Valentine's Day concert at the Conservatory of Music in Regina, Saskatchewan which was broadcast on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio service. The score indicates that these songs are for soprano but Raum's website indicates that these songs are for mezzo soprano.<sup>4</sup> The first five songs are titled with the

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Raum, <http://www.elizabethraum.com/music-c=complete.html>, (Accessed Nov 2013)



initials of five different men; JD James Dean, TS Tom Selleck, MR Mickey Rooney, JP John Paul (Pope John Paul II), DR Dick Raum. She writes in the program notes that her idea was to take the listener through a series of metaphorical relationships that women form with men from adolescence to mature love. The cycle begins with a very atonal feel and slowly progresses towards tonality as the love matures, creating a very effective harmonic device that unifies the cycle.

a. ***J.D.***

Range D4-A5.

Tessitura Med.

Although this song is titled JD for James Dean, it is not about James Dean, but rather a young man like James Dean that the singer wants to meet. Raum does an excellent job of creating the angst that a young woman might feel about meeting a James Dean, and at times the song is sufficiently over dramatic to portray this teenage mood. It is predominantly in 6/8, but does have some meter shifts. It is fairly manageable rhythmically. Tonally, Raum uses tri-tones throughout to create an ambiguity in the harmony of the song. The melody moves stepwise with some leaps, and has some chromaticism.

b. ***T.S.***

Range B3-A5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is about a tall, muscular and hairy man, aka Tom Selleck, and the physical attraction that a woman feels for a man. The range is quite low, but Raum uses it well to create the lusty sound of a woman in her chest voice. The rhythm is somewhat tricky but also playful in nature. It is quite chromatic and makes frequent leaps. This song would be suitable for an advanced singer.

c. ***M.R.***

Range E4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This song, like Mickey Rooney, is fast and short. She tells the man to slow down and enjoy life. It is solidly in e minor, which makes it infinitely more accessible than the previous two. Rhythmically in 2/4, the song is playful and fun but not difficult. Raum uses an AABA form.

d. ***J.P.***

Range C4-F5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

Raum gives us a view of a relationship with the pope, in which the woman feels like a prisoner. The song effectively mimics a Bach chorale with a walking bass line in the left hand that stops when the singer sings “You hold me prisoner.” Harmonically the song is in f minor and makes use of a very baroque-like tonality. Rhythmically it is in 4/4 and very manageable.

e. ***D.R.***

Range D4-Gb5.

Tessitura Med.

Dick Raum is Elizabeth Raum's husband. The text for this song is rather banal, with the couple sitting across the table from each other discussing things like lost keys and a call from the aunt. The music however is supremely sublime in a strophic AB form. Harmonically the song is tonal making frequent modulations with the melody moving predominantly in stepwise motion. Rhythmically it is very accessible and pianistically very manageable. This would be an excellent song to use in a set of love songs.

f. *What does love say?*

Range C4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This song begins as a series of questions about love culminating in the question, "Will love ever die of its own?" The song ends with the poet assuring her loved one that love will endure and she will always love him. It is in Eb major, but Raum holds the authentic cadence until the last two chords of the song. Meanwhile during the course of the song she gives us a series of half cadences as if asking questions. The melody is beautiful and provides a lovely close to this cycle.

# WEINZWEIG, JOHN

(1913-2006)

## **Private Collection** (John Wenzweig)

This is a collection of songs for soprano, rather than a cycle. The composer indicates in his program notes that “the singer may select any one or more for presentation.” Some of them are less than a page in length, others are more substantial. Weinzwieg includes an index of special notations which he uses to indicate unusual sounds or musical events. These songs are certainly unusual and unique but effective nonetheless. The mood of the poetry is reminiscent of Shel Silverstein, although not as poetically masterful.

### a. ***I Heard.***

Range F4-G5.

Tessitura Med-High.

Weinzweig in his program notes indicates that this song was written in response to a white breasted sparrow that was bothering him at his summer house. The song is a brief 30” in duration and attempts to imitate the sounds of the bird. It is an interesting endeavor and will certainly get a chuckle from the audience.

### b. ***Says What?***

Range F4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

As might be indicated from the title, this song consists of nonsensical words and phrases. The composer indicates a swing tempo at the start and

the accompaniment, although in a fairly straight forward rhythm, is harmonically as nonsensical as the text. The vocal line moves in and out of spoken and sung text. This piece would go well with the previous in terms of creating a silly, absurd set.

c. ***Hello Rico.***

Range D4-G5.

Tessitura Med-High.

This song is in modified strophic form. It is much more substantial than the previous two, being several minutes in duration. The piano accompaniment has a jazzy feel and although the text is in English, it continues the absurdist style of the last two songs. We get the sense that we're listening to a telephone conversation in which we only hear half of the conversation. It is not rhythmically complex, but would be a challenge for a freshman or sophomore. Again, this song comes across as fun and silly.

d. ***Echoes.***

Range Eb4-A3.

Tessitura Med-High.

This song uses alternative piano techniques and is essentially a vocalise. The piano depresses a tone cluster silently at the outset, and the singer sings into the soundboard from above causing the strings to vibrate creating an echo effect. Harmonically, the song is atonal and each vocal phrase feels like a tone cluster, although Weinzwieg often repeats pitches.

He is also very precise about dictating the duration of the pauses throughout this song with markings such as 2 seconds or 4 seconds.

e. ***Questions.***

Range C#4-C#5.

Tessitura Med-Low.

This song is a series of four unanswered questions. The piano and singer alternate between the piano motif and the singer's question, which she sings a capella. Harmonically the piece is atonal and chromatic. It is rhythmically fast, but can be taken at the singer's tempo since the vocal line is unaccompanied.

f. ***Oh, that I were.***

Range Bb3-A5.

Tessitura Med.

This song must be performed with a grand piano as it asks for the singer to perform glissandos on the strings of the piano with her fingernails. The singer and piano alternate as in the previous song and the text continues the absurdist style of the collection.

g. ***My Dear, Etcetera.***

Range E4-F5.

Tessitura Med.

This song is almost entirely spoken. It is a playful exploration of the word "etcetera".

h. ***All is still.***

Range C4-G5.

Tessitura Med.

This is a single page song and is fairly short. The composer asks the singer to alternate between singing upstage and turning downstage at certain points throughout the song. The singer is also asked to alternate between singing and using a kind of Sprechstimme.

i. *Love, love, love.*

Range D4-A5.

Tessitura Med-High.

This is one of the most substantial songs of the set and is a caricature of many of the standard classical love songs. There is reference to Shakespeare's "It was a lover and his lass" and Dowland's "Come again, sweet love doth now invite". As is typical with all of these songs, the rhythm is very straightforward. Harmonically, Weinzwieg alternates between a tonal homophonic texture and atonality.

## Conclusion

This document only touches the surface in terms of the Canadian Art Song repertoire. There are many more songs that I would like to explore especially at the other Canadian Music Centre locations. There is a wealth of French language songs housed in the Quebec location and the Atlantic provinces are rich with folk music that there are no doubt many hidden treasures there. I would also like to continue to explore the trend of

Canadian identity in Canadian art song. As Canada continues to have one of the strongest immigration policies in the world, our cultural mosaic continues to expand with many eastern influences. Vancouver is almost one third Chinese and Toronto schools often boast of having students born in more than 100 different countries. Already western style art songs are being composed with a Chinese or Middle Eastern influence. This mixing of cultures is very much a Canadian ideal and I am deeply curious to see what the future holds.

My hope is that Canadian art song will not continue to be as obscure as it has been in the past. As Canadian singers take an interest in their own music, news will spread about the songs that stand out and hopefully non-Canadians will become interested in the music as well. I am also hopeful that with advances in modern technology will come an accessibility to this music that has never existed before.



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