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# An Annotated Recital

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UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

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PROJECT TITLE: An Annotated Recital

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Sarah Searle, Faculty Mentor

Date: 5/6/04

Comments (Optional):

# AN ANNOTATED RECITAL

## -MELISSA C. KELLY, MEZZO-SOPRANO-

### PROGRAM NOTES

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My first set is selected from Canzone Scordate, a wide-ranging anthology of European songs arranged by contemporary Norwegian composer and singer Arne Dørumsgaard. The original songs are by 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish composers and evoke the atmosphere of early Renaissance Spain.

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#### **Con amores, la mi madre**

– Juan de Anchieta (1462-1523)

With love, my mother  
I fell asleep with love, mother.  
I dreamed about my heart's care  
and love consoled me  
far more than I deserved.

Anchieta was one of the leading composers of church music in Spain at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The graceful, lilting melody of this song has the feel of a lullaby, in keeping with the text.

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#### **Que bien me lo veo**

– Anonymous

How well you see it, and well I know it,  
That by your hands I will die.  
My life, I consent that you will kill it,  
And you feel that I feel that I deserve it;  
That in this you will see who has my fidelity,  
That by your hands I will die.

The melismas in this song are typical of Renaissance-style vocal ornamentation and add emphasis to the most important word of the text, “morire” – “I will die.”

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#### **De Antequera sale el moro**

– Cristóbal de Morales (1500-1553)

From Antequera came the Moor.  
In his hands were letters of sorrow;  
Written in blood and not for lack of ink;  
With the blood of a hundred twenty years of  
suffering.

Trained in Seville and employed as a church musician in Rome and Toledo, Morales wrote mostly liturgical music. The stately melody of this secular exception, written in mixed meter, well expresses the mysterious and melancholy nature of the story.

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#### **Pámpano verde**

– Fransisco de la Torre (fl. 1483-1504)

Green pampano trees cluster white.  
Whoever saw duennas out at this hour?  
In their midst the young girls are seen.

Torre was a prolific composer of dances as well as songs, and this tendency shows in the dancelike melody and triple meter of this song. The pizzicato figures in the accompaniment are reminiscent of the *vihuela*, a Spanish type of plucked viol.

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While many people are very familiar with Franz Liszt's masterful works for solo piano, few are aware that he often drew material from vocal songs that he composed. Liszt regularly took the song accompaniments of which he was particularly fond and reworked them as piano solos for his concerts. Such is the case with each of these songs; in fact, the melody of "O lieb'" is much better known in its instrumental form, entitled "Liebestraume."

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**Die Lorelei** – text by Heinrich Heine

I don't know what it may signify  
That I am so sad;  
There's a tale from ancient times  
That I can't get out of my mind.

The air is cool and the twilight is falling,  
And the Rhine flows quietly by;  
The top of the mountain is glittering  
In the evening sun.  
The loveliest maiden sits  
Up there, wondrous to tell.  
Her golden jewelry sparkles  
As she combs her golden hair.  
She combs it with a golden comb  
And sings a song as she does,  
A song with a wondrous,  
Powerful melody.

It seizes upon the boatman in his small boat  
With unrestrained woe;  
He does not look below to the rocky shoals,  
He only looks up at the heights.  
If I'm not mistaken, the waters  
Finally swallowed up fisher and boat;

And this, with her singing,  
The Lorelei did.

The elegant melody lines and exquisite harmonies of this song, one of Liszt's most popular, are typical of his *Lieder*. As in many of the composer's other narrative songs, the masterful accompaniment reflects the mood of the text – in turns reflective, cheerful, and agitated.

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**La tombe et la rose** – text by Victor Hugo

The grave said to the rose:  
With the tears of the dawn that water you,  
What do you do, flower of loves?

The rose said to the grave:  
What do you do with those who fall  
Into your ever-open abyss?

The rose said: dark Grave,  
With these tears I make in the shadow  
A fragrance of amber and honey.

The grave said: plaintive Flower,  
Of each soul that comes to me,  
I make an angel of heaven.

This dialogue-based nature of this song allows the composer to vary the basic melody among the verses as a means of text painting. The seriousness of the text is emphasized by a stately rhythmic motive that occurs multiple times within the accompaniment.

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**O lieb'** – text by Ferdinand Freiligrath

O love so long as you can love,  
So long as you may love!  
The hour is coming  
When you will stand at graves and mourn.

And take care that your heart glows  
And cherishes love and sustains love,  
So long as another heart  
Still beats warmly in love.

And who opens his bosom to you,  
O, do for him what you can, for love!

And make every hour happy  
And no hour sad for him.

And guard your tongue well!  
Easily is an ugly word said;  
O God, it was not cruelly meant!  
The other, however, goes and mourns.

O love, as long as you can love!

This fervently emotional song directly addresses the listener, allowing the audience to connect intimately with the performer.

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**Oh, quand je dors** – text by Victor Hugo

Oh, when I sleep, approach my bed,  
As Laura appeared to Petrarch;  
And as you pass, touch me with your breath...  
At once my lips  
Will part!

On my gloomy face, where perhaps  
A dark dream has rested for too long a time,  
Let your gaze lift it like a star...  
At once my dream  
Will be radiant!

Then on my lips, where there flits a brilliance,  
A flash of love that God has kept pure,  
Place a kiss, and transform from angel into  
woman...

At once my soul  
Will awaken!

This song is one of Liszt's best known *Lieder*; in it the narrator compares his longing to that of Italian poet Francesco Petrarca for Laura, the woman he adored. As with many of the texts he used, Liszt made multiple settings of "Oh, quand je dors;" this version was composed in 1860.

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The sensuous, Romantic style of French composer Jules Massenet is exemplified in this aria from his opera *Werther*, which is based upon Goethe's novel about a young man who suffers and dies for love. At this point in the opera, Charlotte has been musing over letters sent to her by Werther, who is a friend of her husband's and whom she loves. Charlotte breaks down before her sister Sophie and sings about the dangers of repressing one's sadness, to the accompaniment of a saxophone obbligato.

**Va! laisse couler mes larmes**

Go! Let my tears flow;  
They do me good, my darling.  
The tears which one does not cry  
fall again inside our soul, all of them;  
And with their patient drops,  
They hammer the sad and weary heart!  
Its resistance finally exhausts itself;  
The heart collapses and weakens...  
It is too big, nothing fills it;  
And too fragile, everything breaks it!

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Gaetano Donizetti's opera La Favorita is set in 14<sup>th</sup>-century Castille and revolves around the novice monk Fernando, who is expelled from his monastery when he falls in love with the beautiful Leonora. Unbeknownst to Fernando, however, Leonora is the mistress of King Alfonso XI. In this aria, Leonora contemplates telling Fernando, who wants to marry her, of her past. The restrained ornamentation of the vocal line and accompaniment shows the Parisian mannerisms that influenced Donizetti in his composition of this opera, which was originally set to a French libretto.

### **O mio Fernando**

O my Fernando, my heart would have given up  
The kingdom of the earth in order to possess you.  
But my unsullied love, like forgiveness,  
Is condemned, woe is me, to hopeless loathing.  
The truth will be known, and in your extreme contempt  
I shall have the punishment that is most fitting.  
If your disdain then lessens,  
Let your thunderbolt fall on me, great God.

Come, cruel ones! Who is stopping you?  
My sorrow is inscribed in heaven!  
Come, then, make a feast of it,  
Let flowers be scattered on the altar.  
The grave is already being prepared for me.  
Let the unhappy bride  
Be swathed in a black veil,  
She who, rejected and despairing,  
Will find no forgiveness in heaven.

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Benjamin Britten's vocal works, both in large and small forms, can be immeasurably frustrating for the performer to learn; however, I have found them ultimately to be some of the most rewarding music I've performed. A Charm of Lullabies uses texts by an eclectic grouping of British writers and expresses a varied set of emotions, many of which are not usually associated with lullabies. The term "charm," as used in the title of the set, can variously mean "song or singing" and "a company or flock."

### **A Cradle Song – text by William Blake**

In typical Britten fashion, this song combines a pleasant, simple melody with a pleasant, simple accompaniment in a not-so-simple way. Together, the calming motion of the accompaniment and the disconcerting harmonic flow create a hypnotic and yet vaguely disturbing atmosphere.

### **The Highland Balou**

– text by Robert Burns

Hee balou, my sweet wee Donald,  
Picture o' the great Clanronald!  
Brawlie kens our wanton Chief  
Wha gat my young Highland thief.

Leeze me on thy bonnie craigie!  
An thou live, thou'll steal a naigie,  
Travel the country thro' and thro',  
And bring hame a Carlisle cow!

Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the Border,  
Weel, my babie, may thou funder,  
Herry the louns o' the laigh Countrie,  
Syne to the Highlands hame to me!

Hee balou, my sweet wee Donald!

### **The Highland Lullaby**

Call lullaby, my sweet little Donald,  
Picture of the great Clanronald!  
Finely knows our wanton Chief  
Who got my young Highland thief.

Blessings me on your lovely throat!  
If you live, you will steal a horse,  
Travel the country through and through,  
And bring home a Carlisle cow!

Through the Lowlands, over the Border,  
Well, my baby, may you advance,  
Harry the rogues of the low Country,  
Then to the Highlands home to me!

Call lullaby, my sweet little Donald!

“The Highland Balou” is in dialect, so I have included a translation. This song is particularly special to me because it mentions MacDonald of Clanronald, to which Scottish clan I am related. I would like to dedicate this song to my mother.

### **Sephestia's Lullaby** – text by Robert Greene

This text comes from Greene's novel Menaphon, published in 1589. The contrasting moods of the different sections of the text are established with complete shifts in tempo.

### **A Charm** – text by Thomas Randolph

In the text of this comically frightening song, a frustrated nurse threatens an uncooperative child with horrors from Greek mythology. As in the previous song, the two predominant moods of the text are presented with strongly contrasting tempi and styles of accompaniment.

### **The Nurse's Song** – text by John Philip

The final song of the set finally allows the audience to relax with a typical lullaby feeling. The song begins and ends with an a capella vocal melody that gives a sense of closure to both it and the entire set.

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My last set is selected from William Bolcom's Cabaret Songs, a four-volume collection of light-toned songs for medium voice and piano. The texts are by American lyricist (and professor of English at Columbia University) Arnold Weinstein. Upon their publication, all of the Cabaret Songs were premiered by Bolcom and his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris.

### **Story of Black Max (as Told by the de Kooning Boys)**

This song presents a character portrait of a mysterious underworld figure, set in a seedy version of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century the Netherlands. As the story progresses, the listener is left to wonder just who or what this black-clad figure might really be.

### **Waitin**

The gentle, earnest text of this song is supported by a simple, jazz-tinged chordal accompaniment. The steady, pausing rhythmic motive in the piano reflects the title of the song.

### **Blue**

This is what I want to do my heart  
Is sit real still with you.

After all that cruising  
In around and out of town,  
Put them down who dared refuse me  
And the same old line I threw  
Ah but up up up I grew  
And now all I want to do my heart  
Is sit real still with you.

After all that screeching  
Talking fast and slowing down,  
Only now and then to reach you  
When you'd let me know I knew  
That what I preach is none too true

That's why all I want to do my heart  
Is sit real still with you.

(Cause I do know this about people  
and I DON'T mean some:  
awf'ly smart people are often awful dumb!  
Aren't we?  
We just don't realize  
That behind the eyes, behind the mind,  
You find the sweetest brilliance  
And a stillness of such blue that--)

That's why all I want to do my soul  
Is sit real still with you.  
Ah so sweetly down the hill  
That is what I want to do sweet soul  
Is sit real still with you.

I have included here the text for "Blue," the lyrics for which I find particularly appealing and moving. The laid-back accompaniment has a strong jazz influence and allows the vocal line a great deal of freedom to drive the motion of the song.

### **Amor**

In this rhythmically complicated but exuberantly upbeat song, an attractive young woman tells about the havoc she unintentionally wreaked whilst walking through a town one day. While requiring a great deal of musicianship, "Amor" also gives the performer an opportunity to create a vivid and entertaining scene for the audience.

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