The Performer's Journey as a Student of Music

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THE PERFORMER’S JOURNEY AS A STUDENT OF MUSIC

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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Approved by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Fred and Dale Saliba. Its creation would have been impossible without the work ethic, dedication, and good faith instilled in me by the example of their lives.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Ms. Nancy Maria Balach. Her guidance and support has been unyielding throughout the research, writing, and presentation of this text. Working with her has made me a better musician, student, and person. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Debra Spurgeon and Dr. Debra Young, for their advisement and encouragement. I would like to extend my thanks to Mr. Charlie Miles and Mr. Costa Osadov for their technical expertise.

Special thanks must be given to the faculty and staff of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, along with that of the University of Mississippi Music Department. These institutions defined my undergraduate experience. I will always be grateful for the influence they have had on my life and learning.

Finally, I would like to express my greatest appreciation to my friends and family. My peers in the music department have challenged and supported me on a daily basis. My Sunday night group has provided me with laughter and prayers in the best and worst of times. My roommates have continuously offered love and listening ears. My family has been my stability and foundation. I am who I am because of who you are. Thank you.
ABSTRACT
The Performer’s Journey as a Student of Music

The following thesis is a study of one student’s journey as a student of singing at the University of Mississippi. The author documented her progression through four years of vocal study, culminating in a recital performance that occurred on December 7, 2013. First, the author presents the development of a lifestyle that was reflective of her career as a musician. Next, the author provides a description of rehearsal procedures that enabled technical improvement. Then, the author includes a copy of the program notes that were given to the audience of the December recital. Finally, the author presents an analysis of the recital performance with directions for future growth. Additional materials found with this text include a compact disc containing vocal examples that have been pulled from previous studio lessons and performances. Throughout the chapters, the reader will be instructed to reference this CD as an aural demonstration of topics discussed in the text. There is also a DVD recording of the December vocal recital in its entirety.
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INTRODUCTION

When I was in the third grade, my elementary music teacher asked me to sing a solo for a community event at the school. I had never sung by myself, apart from time spent in games of imagination that took place in the safety and solitude of my childhood bedroom. Without much hesitation, I acquiesced her request and began to memorize “Tomorrow” from the musical *Annie*. I was honored, yet nervous. As the performance approached, I felt an anticipatory readiness. Apart from the red dress that was my “costume,” I do not remember much about the performance itself. However, its importance is very clearly marked in my mind. I entered the stage a young girl looking to evoke pride in my parents and peers. I left the stage a musician.

From that moment on, I became captivated with music. The closer I progressed towards the transition to undergraduate study, the more I desired to continue learning about the art form. I made the decision to attend the University of Mississippi in pursuit of a Bachelors of Music with an Emphasis in Education, Vocal Principal.

While under the tutelage of the university music department, I began to cultivate the musicianship that had been planted during my third grade performance. This was not a painless process. During the first weeks of my undergraduate experience, I became aware of my total naivety and lack of knowledge about music.

Facing the inadequacy I felt in comparison to my peers, I almost switched to a different degree program. However, it became increasingly obvious the extent to which
the music faculty was willing to guide and assist an eager learner. While nothing was handed to me, every effort I made in my studies was matched by that of a highly qualified member of the faculty. Presented with the opportunity to collect every tool I would need to succeed, I progressed through my required courses, becoming more like the musician I desired to be.

Being in the vocal principal program, I was placed in a voice studio during the beginning of freshman year. Thus began my work with Ms. Nancy Maria Balach. Ms. Balach met with me individually for an hour each week in applied lessons. For four consecutive years, she guided my development as a singer.

As I approached my senior year, Ms. Balach and other members of the vocal faculty encouraged me to present a recital. A senior recital was not required in the music education program. Furthermore, I was not confident in my ability to perform a program with multiple works. At that point in my college career, I had only performed three pieces consecutively. I knew that if I were to present a recital, I would more than double that amount. While considering such logistics, I began to doubt my abilities as a musician.

Finally the time came to make a decision. I met with Ms. Balach at the beginning of my senior year. Questioning my ability, I told her I did not consider myself a musician. However, she encouraged me, along with my colleague Allison Stewart, to work towards a recital. We hesitantly agreed.

Because neither of us was in the vocal performance program, we did not face specific recital requirements. Therefore we had more freedom in the creation of our program. It became clear that we each had individual ideas of how that freedom would
be articulated. Therefore, the decision was made to each present a short recital program, one following the other. Her performance would occur first; mine second.

During the preparation of this culminating recital, I began to reflect upon the previous four years. It became increasingly apparent that, despite my insecurity, I had developed the skill set and foundation of knowledge that would be necessary to present a recital program. A moment of self-discovery transpired. I was, indeed, a musician.

This text serves as a summary of my journey towards musicianship, centered on the basis of my vocal training. Throughout the chapters, I examine the different aspects of my work as a vocal musician that led towards my culminating recital. Each chapter discusses the acquired skills, knowledge, and musical preparation that were essential to my recital preparation and serve as a testament to my newly acquired musicianship.

First, I address the lifestyle that I adopted in order to best facilitate my progress as a vocal performer. Then, I address the set of rehearsal procedures that I developed as a result of my studio and academic study. Next, I present the program notes that were written to serve as a contextual and thematic explanation for my recital audience. Finally, I present an analysis of my recital preparation and performance.
CHAPTER I: Lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

Successful performances require a unique type of dedication. Countless hours are spent rehearsing technique and expression. There is a level of maintenance that is vital to cultivating and retaining musical talent. Contemporary concert pianist Bruce Levingston has stated that he spends six hours practicing everyday. While a portion of that time is spent preparing his pieces for performance, much of it is spent refining technique. This occurs with repetition of scales and exercises that will never be performed before an audience. Not only is this a challenge for the fingers and hands, but it is also taxing on the mind, the ears, the eyes, the back, the shoulders, the legs, etc.¹ Like Mr. Levingston, all successful musicians must commit their entire being to their craft. Regardless of the instrument, a musician’s total body is involved in the production of sound.

Furthermore, a singer must adopt a specific lifestyle outside of the practice room. In his book The Structure of Singing, Richard Miller writes that, regarding the singer’s voice, “heat, cold, precipitation, digestion, toothache, bad back, cocktail party, hernia, nosebleed, domestic quarrel, and especially respiratory ailments may be totally

¹ Bruce Levingston, “Year of the Creative Economy: Mississippi Homecoming”
incapacitating.”\textsuperscript{2} While the trumpeter is able to pack his instrument in its case at the end of the day, a singer’s instrument is constantly vulnerable to the environment. Our instrument, the vocal mechanism, dwells within our physical being. Therefore, everything that takes place in a singer’s life has the potential to affect the instrument, ranging from stress to food intake.

In the following chapter, I discuss the progression of my lifestyle through the four years I spent studying voice at the University of Mississippi Music Department. As a freshman, I had very little understanding of the kind of commitment singers are required to make. With the passing of time, I began to adapt my lifestyle to better facilitate quality vocal production. This adaptation can be heard in sound recordings from studio lessons and performances that occurred throughout the four-year period. By the time my recital approached, I had collected a foundation of knowledge about lifestyle choices that enabled me to feel healthy, strong, and rested on the day of my performance.

**FRESHMAN YEAR**

Prior to attending the university, I rarely considered the effect my choices had on my voice. I knew from experience that I did not like to eat a big meal prior to singing, and that shouting at sporting events had an adverse effect on my vocal production. Beyond that, I had rarely considered the depth to which my lifestyle contributed to the quality of my instrument. This lack of understanding resulted in many mistakes.

As a freshman, I faced the task of adapting to the demands of college classes. The defining challenge of my freshman year as a voice student was dealing with vocal

fatigue. In their Journal of Voice article from 2003, Nathan Welham and Margaret Maclagan define vocal fatigue as “negative vocal adaptation that occurs as a consequence of prolonged voice use.”³ My schedule consisted of longer hours in class than those of my peers outside of the music department. All assignments and classwork were completed during the evening. Additionally, I learned that my expectations for practicing were disproportionate to the time I would actually need to spend rehearsing in order to succeed in Freshman Voice.

The fifty minutes I spent singing each day in high school immediately increased to three times that amount when I entered the university’s music program. My vocal chords were not conditioned for the amount of singing required. Miller addresses the danger of sporadic increases in singing and the resulting threat of vocal strain. He writes, “No singer should expect sudden bursts of vocal endurance without a continuing discipline.”⁴ As a young singer, I had such faulty expectations.

The vocal fatigue I experienced was exacerbated by the lack of sleep I received each night, stress, and my disregard for adequate hydration. Homework and practicing took precedence over sleep. Nights of only five hours sleep became the norm. In her book The Performer’s Voice, Dr. Meribeth Bunch Dayme includes a list of requirements for being in appropriate physical shape for healthy singing. “A reasonable amount of sleep” is among the principles listed.⁵

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⁴ Miller, The Structure of Singing, 220.

Welham and Maclagan summarize the commonly reported symptoms of vocal fatigue in their article. Common symptoms that can be heard in the voice include “hoarse/husky vocal quality, breathy vocal quality, reduced loudness range, lack of vocal carrying power.” A comparison of the following clips demonstrates the effect fatigue had on my voice during the first semester of freshman year.

Listen: Track 1 on CD

Track 1 is a vocal exercise from a voice lesson in September 2010. This example will provide the listener with a pre-fatigued context with which to compare the following example.

Comparing Track 1 to Track 2, one will find an increase in the amount of air escaping through the vocal folds during tone production. Air leakage sounds like the onset of a laugh or the letter “h” and muddles the purity of the tone. It has a blurring effect on the sound. This occurs primarily during the first pitch of the descending fifth exercise.

Listen: Track 2

This clip was taken from a voice lesson one month following the previous clip. While the vowel shape has improved, providing clearer tone during the second and third pitches, the first pitch is extremely unfocused and portrays the “breathy” sound and reduced volume and power cited by Welham and Maclagan. This lesson occurred approximately halfway through the fall semester. An increase in fatigue is clearly observable. Track 3 presents the first pitches from each clip for more direct comparison.

Listen: Track 3

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As the year progressed, the musculature involved in tone production developed as I continued to practice and cultivate my technique. This strengthening lessened the amount of air in my vocal tone. Track 4 is a clip from my final freshman voice lesson on May 4, 2011.

Listen: Track 4

Here, the pitch clarity is much improved and reflects the increase of my vocal folds’ articulatory strength.

**SOPHOMORE YEAR**

After gaining one year of experience, I found that I was better able to manage the stress and schedule of college classes in my sophomore year. Sleep remained an issue that I did not adequately address until junior year. However, my lifestyle improved in terms of time-management and coursework anxiety.

During my sophomore year, I encountered many personal challenges and acquired lifestyle choices that were detrimental to my development as a singer. These challenges primarily occurred in the form of an eating disorder I experienced during the spring semester. It is difficult to clearly title my physical and psychological behavior as anorexia nervosa or bulimia. My physical symptoms included a weight decrease of approximately twenty pounds in two months, malfunctions in hormone production, fluid imbalance, and energy deficiency.

My eating disorder negatively affected my voice in several ways. Physically, my body was ill fit as an instrument. Dayme writes, “Your voice and, ultimately your
performance are directly affected by how you treat your body.” I was not providing my body with adequate nutrition to produce energy properly. Therefore, I was tired the majority of each day. This affected my mental wellness. I lost the ability to focus my thoughts and could only work efficiently on a subject for a short period of time. These excerpts from my voice journal demonstrate the lack of mental control I experienced:

April 19, 2012 ...I practiced for 30 minutes from 5 to 5:30. I think I have “O spare” almost all memorized. Still working on “Danse Macabre.” “O del” is moving slowly. It’s like things are taking me so much longer now. I don’t know what’s wrong with my brain.

May 6, 2012 ...I have my mock jury tomorrow. I’m nervous. I just am scared I’m going to have one of the mental blocks that have been happening lately. What if my words just disappear like my piano [test material] did?

Nutrition and mental clarity are both listed among Dayme’s principles for healthy singing. I was lacking in both areas during this period of my study.

While I was not taking in the appropriate amount of sustenance, I was also purging. Miller notes that a singer’s diet should “avoid gastric disturbance.” My singing mechanism was exposed to an inordinate amount of acid due to excessive vomiting. My voice lost vibrancy and fullness of tone. Also, I regressed in the progress I had made to eliminate air leakage.

Track 5 is a clip from two separate voice lessons. The first is from October 24, 2011 and the second is from April 30, 2012. Both clips are rehearsals of Italian art songs.

Listen: Track 5

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9 Miller, The Structure of Singing, 237.
In the first clip, my voice has a desirable spinning quality that is heard in the freeness of the vibrato. This quality is lacking in the second clip, where the voice sounds thin and somewhat lifeless by comparison.

My eating disorder had negative consequences on every aspect of my life, including my development as a singer. After receiving treatment over the summer, I gained the ability to manage these consequences and effectively progress in my craft despite them.

**JUNIOR YEAR**

The first semester of my junior year brought about a partial discovery of the necessary sacrifices one must make in order to properly care for the voice. While my body and mind were rebooting after a troublesome time, I finally realized the importance of rest. I was forced to break the old habits of “all-nighters” and excessive coffee drinking. Additionally, I began to weigh the benefits and disadvantages of attending certain social functions.

Studies remained my top priority. Yet, I also felt a need to take part in other aspects of college life. I wanted to gain as many experiences as possible during my time as a student. Therefore, I attended numerous sporting events and participated in the rich culture that exists within Oxford’s township. These outings often resulted in late nights and loud talking. When speaking to people in a crowded area, one typically begins to exert more pressure on the vocal folds in order to be heard. This is to the detriment of the singing voice. In his book, Miller notes the importance of protecting the voice, even at
the sacrifice of social custom. He condemns situations that result in loud talking and “long conversations.”

Furthermore, I began to learn about the effect that specific food and drinks can have on the vocal mechanism. Certain consumables (i.e. citrus fruits, artificial drink flavoring, acidic vegetables) cause an increase in acid production. I began to notice that this acid was another source of strife. Visits with an otolaryngologist confirmed that, at times, excess stomach acid leaks into my esophagus. This can cause hoarseness and a decrease in range and dynamic control.

With encouragement from my professors, I began to take these truths into consideration. I found myself in situations where I declined social opportunities and eliminated foods from my diet in order to protect the work I was doing in the voice studio. These excerpts from my voice journal exhibit instances where this was the case:

October 1, 2012 ...My voice is still bothering me, unfortunately... I added some plain white grapefruit juice (juice, not cocktail) to my water before I ate a bowl of cereal tonight. We’ll see if that helps keep the acid at bay. I haven’t had any mio [water flavoring] in several days. It is so tempting knowing they’re all sitting in my cabinet!

October 4, 2012 ...My chords hurt constantly and we’re not sure why. There are several different possibilities for what is wrong but there isn’t really a definite way to find out. Our first plan of action is Vocal Rest... Hopefully I will feel better after Monday. I’m not going to go to the grove or the game or talk loud or sing AT ALL.

These adjustments, along with continued technical training in studio, resulted in a sound that was reminiscent of the fall of my sophomore year.

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10 Miller, The Structure of Singing, 221-222.

By the end of fall 2012, my voice contained a ring and fullness once again. My work during the semester allowed me not only to regain the ground I had lost, but also expand upon the progress I had once made. Track 6 is a clip from a voice lesson on November 29, 2012. It exhibits the improvement of tone clarity in comparison to that of the previous spring.

Listen: Track 6

The second semester of junior year brought the revelation of physicality to my singing practice. I spent the semester working with a different member of the voice faculty, Ms. Jennifer Robinson, while Ms. Balach was on sabbatical. Our work focused on involvement of abdomen and back muscles in breathing technique. Daily exercises assigned by Ms. Robinson resulted in an increase of breath efficiency and sustainability. I became a much stronger singer, in the truest sense of the word.

Along with breathing exercises, I began to practice yoga regularly during this time. Yoga is arguably one of the best forms of exercise for a singer. Similarly to singing, yoga is founded on the breath. Dayme and Miller both reference the importance of singers partaking in exercise that results in strength without tension. Dayme deems yoga beneficial for the development of posture and breath support. Miller indirectly promotes yoga when he writes, “Physical activities that produce flexibility and suppleness for light movement are best for the singer.”13 The stretching techniques of yoga provide muscular awareness that is extremely beneficial to a singer who is required

12 Dayme, The Performer’s Voice, 197.

13 Miller, The Structure of Singing, 238.
to engage certain muscles (i.e. the intercostals) while leaving others totally relaxed (i.e. the neck).\textsuperscript{14}

Mental focus and serenity are also developed through yoga practice. This sense of calm despite one’s environment transfers to performance practice in regards to managing nerves. Furthermore, mental well-being is essential for a successful singing career.\textsuperscript{15}

Track 7 is a clip from a lesson on May 2, 2013, demonstrating improvement in breath support.

Listen: Track 7

Improvement in breath support led to richer sound quality. When my breath was the foundation of tone production, my voice sounded fuller and portrayed a more complex timbre than a thin, unsupported voice.\textsuperscript{16} This translates to the ear as a mature or more developed sound.

\textbf{SENIOR YEAR}

By the time I reached my senior year, I had gained knowledge of the lifestyle habits that are most conducive to my work as a student of singing. This year served as a time of expansion on past discoveries and a heightened commitment to living a healthy and disciplined lifestyle. My practice time was more regimented than ever before. With a public recital scheduled for December, I remained vigilant in my rehearsals. Also, my

\textsuperscript{14} Nancy Maria Balach, “Vocal Technique” (lecture, Studio Voice, University of Mississippi, 2010-14).

\textsuperscript{15} Miller, The Structure of Singing, 239.

\textsuperscript{16} Balach, “Vocal Technique.”
yoga technique improved, providing further insight into physical awareness. For the first time, singing became something that felt extremely natural to me.

The path to feeling a natural connection to singing was littered with challenges and mistakes. However, I had finally arrived at a place of comfort with my voice. I was better able to plan my rehearsals in order to meet specific goals each time I entered a practice room. When problems arose and my voice was not cooperating, I was confident in my ability to address the issues. I had collected a skill set that allowed me to experiment and challenge myself with new and interesting vocal experiences. I had become a vocal “risk taker,” reminiscent of the artist Dayme references in her book; the kind of musician who is “not afraid to lose control in order to gain it.”

Track 8 is a clip from my recital, which took place on December 7, 2013.

Listen: Track 8

The quick running notes articulated in this section of the Rossini aria are extremely difficult. Not only do moving passages such as this require a strong foundational breath support, but they also demand a muscular freeness in the jaw and throat. Just as a runner would need to be rested, stretched, and strengthened in order to succeed in a sprint, I needed these qualities in order to succeed in this piece. My lifestyle provided surety that, on the day of the performance, I was indeed rested, stretched, and strengthened.

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18 Balach, “Vocal Technique.”
CONCLUSION

As the years progressed, I learned how to better care for my body, mind, and voice. In doing so, I developed a fondness for my instrument and settled into the once uncomfortable title of “singing musician.” This was a vital aspect of my growth as a musician.
CHAPTER II: Rehearsal Procedures

INTRODUCTION

The ability to prepare repertoire for performance is essential to a musician. No matter the instrument, musicians develop a close relationship with the material they have chosen to master. American soprano Phyllis Curtin once said, “A singer should be so identified with the material that you don’t notice they’re singing.” Finding myself capable of approaching, preparing, and rehearsing musical literature so that I felt an organic connection to each piece was a significant harbinger of my self-discovered musicianship.

I have found that each work has a unique path of preparation. Some pieces require a large amount of speaking and mental study, while others are more reliant on movement and an internalization of rhythm. Regardless of the time spent on each, I found six rehearsal procedures that were common to the preparation of each piece in my repertoire. They are as follows: playing, speaking, singing, studying, moving, and listening.

PLAYING

As previously stated, a singer’s primary instrument and instrument of greatest comfort is the voice. Therefore, it is incredibly tempting for a singer to immediately

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begin vocalizing a piece upon its selection. However, I found that this often led to the development of inaccuracies that are difficult to “unlearn.” Under the guidance of Ms. Balach, I discovered the keyboard a good starting point in the learning of new literature.

My piano experience and skills are limited to childhood lessons and four semesters of college study. I do not consider myself a pianist. However, the required skills learned in university piano courses and the musical literacy developed in five semesters of music theory resulted in my ability to use the piano as a tool for musical learning. The keyboard possessed a helpful balance of comfort and challenge that aided in the careful study of new literature.

Of the eight pieces presented in my recital, I relied most on the piano method of rehearsal for Rossini’s “Cruda sorte!... Già so per pratica.” This piece contains the most notes of any piece in the program. The opening recitative alone has three notated melismas (“a group of notes sung on a single syllable”\textsuperscript{20}) with over eight pitches. The challenge of this piece was unlike that of anything I had ever studied.

After the first week with the piece, I met much intimidation and discouragement in my attempts at rehearsing. I fell to the temptation of singing too early and found it impossible to articulate each note that was on the page. This frustration and confusion led me to the keyboard.

First, I divided the piece in fourths: the slow recitative opening; the quick, transitional recitative; the aria; and the closing. I began to play bits of each section, searching for melodic and rhythmic themes that would provide a foundation on which I

could build. Feeling the melodic contour in my fingers, I began to develop a sense of how my voice was supposed to articulate the passages. This translated into my singing as an execution of phrase, as opposed to individual notes. As my vocal mechanism trusted the movement of my fingers, comfort and ease began to infuse my rehearsals. I had reached a turning point.

While playing was extremely useful in the beginning stages of learning a piece, it remained a beneficial tactic throughout the preparation process. I transitioned from playing the melody to playing portions of the accompaniment. The process of combining the vocal line and the piano accompaniment can be difficult or awkward. For example, in Jason Robert Brown’s “Still Hurting,” I tended to rush the entrance at the beginning of the piece. In attempts to correct that tendency, I then began entering late. I addressed this in my rehearsal by playing the first four measures while counting the beats out loud. I drilled the entrance until it felt natural.

Likewise, playing the accompaniment contributed to the learning the entrance pitches. William Bolcom’s cabaret song “Amor” is characterized by an unpredictable interaction between the piano and voice, both rhythmically and melodically. Each line is complex, independent and must be exact. If this occurs, they beautifully fit together like a puzzle. Therefore, it can be difficult for the singer to hear the correct pitch for each entrance. In order to counter this difficulty, I practiced playing chords from the accompaniment prior to the vocal entrances. While doing so, I listened for the vocal entrance pitch. Practicing this allowed me to better find the correct pitch within the complicated accompaniment.
SPEAKING

The second rehearsal procedure that was integral in the preparation of my material was speaking. Again, this was a technique that took place before the majority of singing occurred. Ned Rorem, famed American composer, said, “A singer should assume his voice is gorgeous beyond compare, then forget about it; thus he can concentrate wholly on the text.” Often vocal music stems from a composer’s personal connection to a text. Thus, it was beneficial for me to eliminate the act of singing all together and focus on the words.

First, speaking through the text of a piece provided me with a context of the natural speech patterns that were exhibited in each piece. Dr. Dayme addresses the importance of this practice when she writes, “First learn the words in their own natural rhythm and dramatize them as prose or poetry.” Through studio study and courses in choral literature, I have learned that composers often write in such a way that focus is drawn to the syllables of each word that are naturally emphasized in speech. I wanted this to be reflected in my singing as well so that the audience would more easily understand the text.

This declamatory style of text setting is extremely evident in Jason Robert Brown’s writing. Brown composed the music and lyrics for the song “Still Hurting.” A result of this common source is that the text and music are incredibly interrelated. The rhythms within this piece are in compound meter and are mostly variations on a pattern of three eighth notes. However, each phrase contains a slightly different rhythmic

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articulation. It is essential that the performer is meticulous in their rhythmic accuracy. Observance of correct rhythm provides for an honest and raw musical expression that sounds so natural it is easy to believe it is coming directly from the performer’s heart and mind.

Speaking the text of this piece was a crucial step in its preparation. With a metronome sounding, I repeatedly drilled the text until the specific rhythms set with each text phrase became second nature. This process was expedited by the organic declamatory text setting. Brown incorporated speech patterns into his writing. For example, consider the following sentences:

Jamie is over and Jamie is gone. Jamie decided it’s time to move on. 23

If spoken out loud, it is natural for the speaker to emphasize the words “Jamie,” “over,” “gone,” “time,” and “on.” “Jamie” is sung over two eighth notes, resulting in the word sounding for the length of a quarter note. Within the word “over,” the first syllable of the singular “o” sound is emphasized. Both the first syllable of “over” and the word “time” are given the duration of a dotted eighth note. Furthermore, the word “on” sounds for almost two full beats. Essentially, every other syllable in the two sentences has the duration of only an eighth or sixteenth note. Therefore, speaking this text in practice helped solidify correct performance of rhythm.

Speaking the text also aided in the more accurate expression of diction. Dayme explains, “Each language has its own rhythm.” 24 Therefore, speaking was particularly helpful in foreign language repertoire. After researching and notating correct IPA


(International Phonetic Alphabet) symbols for the text of each song, I spoke through them slowly to rehearse proper articulation of foreign and familiar sounds. For example, Schumann’s “Le Secret” contains many nasal sounds that do not exist in the English language. Therefore, speaking through the text was helpful in mastery of these seemingly unnatural sounds.

SINGING

The most obvious rehearsal procedure a singer can use is singing. During my time at the university, I have been taught that we perform what we practice. Therefore, it was essential that I spent adequate time rehearsing accurate and expressive singing of each piece in my repertoire.

My use of singing in the practice room occurred in several ways. When I first sang a new melody, it was most helpful to begin with the use of neutral syllables instead of the written text. Removing the lyrics from the music made “singing the melody easier and also [acted] as the vocal warm up,” as Dr. Dayme suggests.⁵

Next, I found it helpful to use solfege syllables in order to further cement pitch accuracy. Solfege was extremely useful in sections that contain difficult intervals. For example, the line, “da chi spero, oh Dio!” in the Rossini aria leaps from an A₅ to a C-sharp ₄, and then up to a B-flat ₅.⁶ This transition proved to be a challenge in my practice. Often, I lacked confident intonation of the second pitch. I isolated the intervals

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⁵ Dayme, The Performer’s Voice, 187.

and sang them repeatedly with their respective solfege syllables (mi, si, fa). This work aided in a muscle memory that allowed me to perform the intervals correctly.

Finally, it was time that I incorporated the text. Here, the benefits of speaking prior to singing paid off in dividends. I found that if the proper foundation was laid in spoken rehearsal, the addition of the text was somewhat seamless. In order to produce the best tone quality on certain pitches, I had to modify normal pronunciation of the text. Here, the practice of singing on neutral syllables aided in determining where and how this should take place.

**STUDYING**

After carefully laying the foundation through playing, speaking, and singing, I spent time in mindful study of the literature. This was a way for me to progress with the repertoire without using my voice. Mental study was extremely useful in times when my voice was feeling fatigued.

There were different types of study that occurred. French baritone Gérard Souzay once said, “Both creator and performer must be reflected in an interpretation.”\(^{27}\) Thus, I found that researching the composers was an extremely beneficial part of my preparation. Much of said research will be found in the following chapter of this text in the form of program notes. The notes were a result of many edits. I culled through my personal reports to distinguish what information was necessary for the audience to have in order to fully appreciate the program and literature.

\(^{27}\) Kimball, *Song*, 48.
An example of such an edit can be found in the comparison of Robert Schumann’s “An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust” as represented in my program and in my personal writings. The two paragraphs found in the program notes describing this piece come from two pages of information I wrote while studying and researching throughout the semester. Having this information while preparing the piece was essential to my practice of proper performance technique and expression. There was information that was necessary for individual study that could not be included in a recital program.

An example of this type of information is the nature of Robert Schumann’s relationship with Clara Weick. The following is an excerpt from my personal research on Robert Schumann:

In 1828, he began studying piano with Friedrich Wieck. Schumann would attend lessons at Wieck’s house, where he would often interact with Wieck’s nine-year-old daughter, Clara… During the late 1830’s, Schumann developed romantic feelings towards the now-grown Clara Wieck. In 1840, the two were wed. Schumann’s love for Clara caused an influx in musical production and a shift in genre. Schumann began writing Lieder, or German art song. Famous examples include the song cycles Dichterliebe and Frauenliebe und -leben.

This information was extremely helpful in my interpretation of “An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,” because the song comes from the song cycle Frauenliebe und -leben.

Knowing the background of Schumann’s relationship with Clara allowed me to further understand the composer’s emotions and place the composition within the context of his life. The audience did not need the details of their meeting in order to have a meaningful artistic experience. Therefore, the program only presented the following information about the relationship:

In 1840, Schumann married Clara Wieck. Schumann’s love for his new wife caused an influx in musical production. It was during this time that he composed the famous song cycle, Frauenliebe und -leben.
The audience was given a brief overview of the context in which the piece was composed.

Study also occurred in the form of visual review. Just as one might study notes for a written test, I found it helpful to spend time periodically reading through the literature. This often occurred on the days on which my voice felt fatigued. Dr. Dayme explains, “Once you have learned the words and rhythm, you can think or inwardly say or sing your words in rhythm…” While Dayme focuses on text and rhythm, I found this a helpful practice in reinforcing the melody and expression of a piece as well. Furthermore, time spent in this type of study allowed me to refine my audiation skills. I would "mentally hear" the text and melody as opposed to producing them externally. While audiating, I created a mental soundscape (or sound ideal) that I aimed for each time I produced sound.

MOVING

Considering that the body produces sung sound, it follows naturally that physical movement would have some sort of effect on vocal production. As a singer, one of the foundational techniques one learns is proper alignment. That is, the correct posture in which one is to sing. Music lecturer Ivana Pinho Kuhn describes this posture in an article for *Teaching Music*:

Place feet a short distance apart, then sway gently from left to right and back to front to stabilize the position. The posture finishes with the

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28 Dayme, *The Performer’s Voice*, 188.
shoulder blades rotated slightly toward each other, heart up, the head in line with the spine, and the jaw relaxed.\textsuperscript{29}

This posture is the foundation of proper singing technique.

While postural integrity should be kept, it is often beneficial to explore other bodily movement. Dayme encourages such movement, writing, “There is nothing wrong with dancing your song to learn it.”\textsuperscript{30} I found dancing and moving extremely beneficial to my practice.

Movement is a valued technique in the three most popular methods of music education: the Kodály Method, the Orff Approach, and the Jacques-Dalcroze Method. Often, Kodály teachers will specify a portion of their lesson plan for “Movement Development.”\textsuperscript{31} In the “child-centered” Orff Approach, movement is used as a fundamental tool for learning in an Orff classroom.\textsuperscript{32} Through movement, the internal becomes external. This externalizing quality deems movement the “foundation on which all other learning rests.”\textsuperscript{33} The body acts as the primary instrument in the Dalcroze Method.\textsuperscript{34} The Dalcroze student is trained to contract the muscular system in a way that


\textsuperscript{30} Dayme, \textit{The Performer’s Voice}, 186.


\textsuperscript{34} Choksy et al., \textit{Teaching Music in the Twenty-First Century}, 43.
corresponds with what they are hearing. Movement at a “specific time” reflects tempo. Movement in a “specific space” reflects duration. Movement with “specific force” reflects dynamic energy.\textsuperscript{35} Dalcroze movements are characteristically “unstylized” and range from full body motions to simple “postures” or “gestures.”\textsuperscript{36}

It is clear that movement has been proven to be a useful tool in the study of music. I incorporated such movement into my rehearsals in various fashions. While vocalizing, I often used hand and arm motions to encourage lift of the soft palate and direction of the sound. This ranged from a flick of the wrist to a full upward and outward extension of the arm.

Another way I used movement in my rehearsals was to internalize difficult and unnatural rhythmic patterns. This primarily occurred during my preparation of William Bolcom’s “Amor.” In this piece, the singer is required to be considerably autonomous. The accompaniment is largely sporadic and does not provide much rhythmic or melodic framework for the singer. Therefore, rhythmic accuracy on the part of both the singer and accompanist is necessary in order for the two to remain in sync.

The movement I used in the practice room provided a consistent rhythmic scheme within which I could practice the unconventional melodic line. Stepping \textit{right-together-left-together}, I created a physical metronome. I knew that stepping right was the first beat of a measure and stepping left was the third. In doing so, I was more easily able to track my progression through each measure and check for accuracy. Furthermore, I

\textsuperscript{35} Choksy et al., \textit{Teaching Music in the Twenty-First Century}, 44.

\textsuperscript{36} Choksy et al., \textit{Teaching Music in the Twenty-First Century}, 49.
clapped during the oddly placed rests. This aided in my learning the strange entrances that often occurred on the second eighth note of a beat.

While Bolcom worked closely with the poet/lyricist Arnold Weinstein, he chose to incorporate text patterns that did not match those of natural speech.\textsuperscript{37} For example, the first phrase of the piece is “It wasn’t the policeman’s fault…”\textsuperscript{38} If speaking this line, one would likely string the words together without pause. Yet, here is a written representation of how the text occurs in the context of the song:

\begin{quote}
It wasn’t… the… policeman’s fault
\end{quote}

This occurs again moments later with the words “instead of shouting halt when he saw me…”\textsuperscript{39} A written representation of how the text appears in the song is as follows:

\begin{quote}
Instead of… shou… ting… halt… when he saw me
\end{quote}

This rendered the piece extremely difficult to sing in a way that felt natural. The incorporation of claps in the spaces that felt oddly empty served as filler while I grew more comfortable with the piece. This allowed me to develop muscle memory, so eventually I could audiate the clapping and remove the physical action.

\textsuperscript{37} Nancy Maria Balach, “21st Century Approach to Classical Music” (presentation, University of Mississippi Department of Music Colloquium Series, Oxford, MS, October, 25, 2013).


LISTENING

Listening proved to be extremely useful in my recital preparation. While its practice is somewhat self-explanatory, placing it sixth among six rehearsal procedures is intentional and worthy of explanation.

I began listening as a rehearsal procedure after I participated in all of the other procedures to some degree. This allowed me to form my own informed creative conclusions about the piece before hearing another singer’s interpretation. I learned a great deal from listening to performances of experienced and well-trained singers. However, I did not want to copy another artist’s work. Therefore, I made sure to develop a personal connection with each work before listening to other performances.

When it came time to explore listening examples of each piece, I started by searching for performances by popular classical artists. For instance, the most useful recording I studied was a video recording of Marilyn Horne’s “Cruda sorte!... Già so per pratica.” Marilyn Horne is an acclaimed American mezzo-soprano who is famous for her extreme range and versatility. The recording comes from a 1986 production of L’italiana in Algeri at the Metropolitan Opera in which Horne performed the role of Isabella. Watching this performance helped me understand the phrasing of the many coloratura passages within the aria (passages with quick trills and runs). It also provided an example of correct diction, which I could attempt to emulate.

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Throughout my preparation, I collected listening examples of each piece in the recital repertoire. Often, I listened to recordings by multiple performers. After doing so, I would compare and contrast the two, brainstorming what I liked and disliked about each. I would then use that information to make artistic decisions about my own interpretation.

Listening to recordings gave me the opportunity to hear the original accompaniment of each piece. For example, “Cruda sorte!... Già so per pratica” was written to be performed with a full orchestra. My accompanist played a piano reduction of the full score. Similarly, “Still Hurting” has a very active string accompaniment that I did not hear until I listened to the original cast recording soundtrack. Hearing these performances gave me a truer vision of the music that the author set out to create.

CONCLUSION

In her book, Song: A Guide to Style and Literature, Dr. Carol Kimball writes, “We [singers] add our individual vocal sound, our musicianship and vocal technique, our personality, and our unique sensibilities to recreate a work of art.”41 Through the past four years, I have attempted to cultivate the necessary tools to do just that. I believe that acquiring this arsenal of rehearsal procedures was a benchmark in my development as a musician.

41 Kimball, Song, 47.
CHAPTER III: Literature and Program

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned throughout this text, my journey as a musician led to a culminating performance. In essence, this performance needed to serve as a synthesis of all musical learning that I had garnered in the previous four years. Therefore, the literature chosen for this program was of utmost importance.

Dr. Michael Worthy explained in his Teaching, Assessment, and Classroom Management course that a music educator’s curriculum is determined by the repertoire he or she chooses.\(^{42}\) Similarly, a singer’s career is determined by what he or she sings. Furthermore, in her article “The New Music Debate Part II,” Dr. Sharon Mabry notes the importance of “being true to one’s self” when programming.\(^{43}\) We are what we sing. This became increasingly obvious to me as I developed a deep connection to the literature chosen for my recital.

Each piece became personified. Their personalities were as varied as those of the students found in any classroom on this campus. Yet, there was something that unified them all. I set out to discover what could possibly unite Italian opera with contemporary musical theatre, 21\(^{st}\) century American cabaret with Romantic French chanson,

\(^{42}\) Michael Worthy, “Determining Curriculum” (lecture, Teaching, Assessment, and Classroom Management, University of Mississippi, Fall 2013).

Schumann with Shire. What I found was not surprising. Just as each piece contained its own humanity, the bond that tied them together was the same that ties our humanity together as people on this earth: love.

Love, as a theme, penetrated and permeated throughout each composition. The expression was diverse, but the emotion was constant. Having discovered this, I set out to program the recital so that this theme was evident and articulated clearly to the audience.

As I explained in the previous chapter of this text, my first step in the development of program notes was researching each piece. I read articles, books and performance reviews on each composer and composition, taking notes along the way. To fully understand a musical work, I needed to understand the context of its creation. These notes were then organized and typed into documents about each piece. Finally, the documents were meticulously edited and combined into what would serve as my recital notes.

On the night of my recital, this collection of writings was made available to each audience member. In another article titled “Etiquette Rules,” Dr. Mabry instructs singers to “print enough information in the program to describe the essence of each new work.” While she is specifically referring to new music, I desired to provide my listeners with a description of each piece in my repertoire, despite its modernity. Therefore, the notes contained a portion of the context that I had learned about the origin of each piece. The notes also included translations for each of the songs that were sung in a foreign

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language. Lastly, the theme was explained and traced throughout the program. In the following pages, the reader will find these notes as they appeared at my recital.
Love is passionate. It is strong and determined, stubborn in self-preservation.
Love is caring. It is as soft as a mother’s caress, as sweet as a whisper.
Love is innate. It resonates deep throughout the body and soul.
Love is painful. It can often be misleading.
Love is essential.

PASSIONATE
“Cruda sorte!... Già so per pratica”
from *L’Italiana in Algeri*  
Gioachino Rossini  
(1792-1868)

CARING
“An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust”
from *Frauenliebe und -leben*  
Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

INNATE
“Back on Base”
from *Closer than Ever*  
Le Secret  
Gabriel Fauré  
(1845-1924)

PAINFUL
“Someone is Sending Me Flowers”
from *Shoestring Revue*  
Amor  
David Baker  
(1926-1988)

ESSENTIAL
“Woe is Me”
from *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*  
William Bolcom  
(b. 1938)

Dr. Michael Worthy, double bass

Saturday, December 7th, 2013  3:00 PM  Nutt Auditorium

Rachel Saliba is a student of Nancy Maria Balach.
Program Notes

In the past four years, I have learned that I am a musician. I did not always feel this way. Originally, I considered myself a good student, a hard worker, who just happened to like music. Yet now, I realize this is false. When I evaluate the foundation of knowledge I have acquired, the lifestyle I have adopted, the way I approach musical literature, and the ability I have to prepare repertoire, I strongly identify with the title of “musician.” On my path to musicianship, I noticed that the experience a musician has with music strongly mirrors the experience we all, as humans, have with the different facets of love. Indeed, to a musician, music is passionate, caring, innate, painful, and essential.

Love is passionate…

Rossini’s Isabella is a personification of passionate love. Her dramatic declamations in “Cruda sorte!” show the depth of her frustration over being separated from her darling. However, she is confident that their love is strong enough to overcome any circumstance.

“Crude sorte!... Già so per pratica”

Gioachino Anotonio Rossini served as the ruling king of opera for the majority of the nineteenth century. He was most known for his opera buffa, such as the still popular Il barbiere di Siviglia (1816). He also demonstrated a flawless synthesis of French and Italian style, displayed in his opera Guillaume Tell (1829). Rossini’s music was carefully formulized and characterized by virtuosity and quickness of wit and line. His operatic works call for great vitality from the singer. Not until Giuseppe Verdi, did another composer present a similar command of the music world.

L’Italiana in Algeri, Rossini’s first full-scale opera buffa in two acts, premiered in Venice at Teatro S Benedetto on May 22, 1813. The libretto was derived from Angelo Anelli’s text for Luigi Mosca’s opera by the same name (1808).

The translated title “The Italian Girl in Algiers,” refers to Isabella. In the second scene of Act One, we meet Isabella on a beach where she has been shipwrecked. “Cruda sorte!” is Isabella’s reaction to her separation from her love, Lindoro. It begins with a declamatory recitative section and progresses into a more fluid and confident aria.

Cruda sorte! Amor tiranno! Cruel fate! Tyrannous love!
Questo è il premio di mia fè Is this the reward for my fidelity?
Non v’è orror, terror, né affanno There is no horror, terror, or anxiety
Pari a quel ch’io provo in me That compare to those which I feel now.
Per solo, o mio Lindoro For you alone, oh my Lindoro,
Io mi trovo in tal periglio I find myself in such peril.
Da chi spero, oh Dio, consiglio? Oh God, who will advise me?
Chi conforto mi darà? Who will comfort me?
Qua ci vuol disinvoltura Here we need cool-headedness
Non più smanie, né paura; No more rage, nor fear.
Di coraggio è tempo adesso, Now is the time for courage;
Or chi sono si vedrà Now they will see who I am.
Già so per pratica qual sia l’effetto
D’un squardo languido, d’un sospietto
So a domar gli uomini
Come si fa,
Sien dolci o ruvidi,
Sien flemma o foco
Son tutti simili a’ presso a poco
Tutti la chiedono, tutti la bramano
Da vaga femmina felicità

I know, full well, the effect
Of a languishing glance, of a little sigh.
I know how to tame men;
I know how it is done.
Whether they are gentle or coarse,
Whether they are calm or ardent,
They are all alike (or very nearly).
All that they ask for, all that they desire
Is happiness with a pretty woman.
- Bard Suverkrop & Rachel Saliba

Love is caring…

Schumann’s “An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust” is, quite literally, full of care. It is a first-hand expression of a gentle, yet joyful love from the eyes of a mother. This tenderness is echoed in Fauré’s “Le Secret.” While the mood of the piece is much more subdued, the gentleness behind the lover’s voice is quite similar. The narrator is so careful with her love. At times, she desires to keep his identity a secret for herself only to know.

“An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust”

Robert Schumann was a German Romantic composer. His output ranged from many works for piano (such as Carnaval and Davidsbündertänze), to Lieder (such as song cycles Dichterliebe and Frauenliebe und -leben), to orchestral works (such as his Spring Symphony). Anxiety flare-ups and nervous breakdowns led to his death at the young age of forty-six. However, Schumann left a legacy of music that was deeply emotional and expressive. In 1840, Schumann married Clara Wieck. Schumann’s love for his new wife caused an influx in musical production. It was during this time that he composed the famous song cycle, Frauenliebe und -leben (“Woman’s Love and Life”). The text of this cycle comes from eight poems by Adalbert von Chamisso.

“An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust” is the seventh song in this cycle. It is a mother’s exclamation of love for her child. Its rolling accompaniment and quick tempo demonstrate the mother’s joy. The performance should feature a slight, but constant accelerando between sections, as if the singer is becoming overwhelmed with happiness.

An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust,
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust!
Das Glück ist die Liebe, die Lieb’ ist das Glück,
Ich hab’s gesagt und nehms nicht zurück.
Hab’ schwenglich mich geschätzt
Bin überglücklich aber jetzt.
Nur die da säugt, nur die da liebt
Das Kind, dem sie die Nahrung giebt;
Nur eine Mutter weiß allein,
Was lieben heißt und glücklich sein.
O, wie bedaur’ ich doch den Mann,
Der Mutterglück nicht fühlen kann!
Du lieber, lieber Engel, du
Du schauest mich an und lächelst dazu!

On my heart, at my breast,
Are you, my delight and my joy!
The joy is love and love is joy,
I’ve said it and don’t take it back.
I thought I knew joy before,
But this joy is unlike any other.
Only she that nurses and loves
The child whom she nourishes;
A mother, alone, knows
What it means to love and have joy.
Oh, how I pity the man,
Who cannot feel a mother’s love!
You dear, dear angel,
You look at me and smile!
An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust, 
Du meine Wonne, du meine Lust!

On my heart, at my breast, 
Are you, my delight and my joy!

- Bard Suverkrop & Rachel Saliba

“Le Secret”
Gabriel Fauré was a revolutionary French composer who championed the art of song. His 
expansion of harmony, melody, and tonality bridged the gap between music of the Romantic 
Period and Twentieth Century. His experimentation resulted in his being misunderstood by the French audience until late in his life. However, he continually remained true to his pure, yet complicated compositional style.

Fauré is most famous for his success in the genre of French song. “Le Secret” is an intimate piece, stemming from his Romantic style period. The line and accompaniment are quite simple and straightforward. Yet, the song calls for expressive clarity and skill from the performer. The piece requires a commitment to emotion that is sincere and thoughtful, and avoids reckless passion.

Je veux que le matin l’ignore 
Le nom que j’ai dit à la nuit 
Et qu’au vent de l’aube sans bruit 
Comme une larme il s’évapore 
Je veux que le jour proclame 
L’amour qu’au matin j’ai caché 
Et sur mon cœur ouvert penché 
Comme un grain d’encens il l’enflamme 
Je veux que le couchant l’oublie 
Le secret que j’ai dit au jour 
Et l’emporte avec mon amour 
Aux plis de sa robe pâlie

I want the morning to ignore 
The name that I have whispered to the night; 
And silently, in the wind of dawn, 
The name evaporates like a tear. 
I want the day to proclaim 
The love I have hidden from the morning; 
And, leaning over my open heart, 
The day bursts into flame like incense. 
I want the sunset to forget 
The secret that I have told the day; 
And that it carry my love away 
In the folds of its paling gown.

- Bard Suverkrop & Rachel Saliba

Love is innate…

David Shire’s “Back on Base” is a tale of instinctive and raw love. Throughout the piece, the narrator struggles with the insecurity that her love might not be reciprocated. However, she resolves to accept the current state of her relationship. The inexplicable attraction she feels to the bass player is so strong that it outweighs any concerns she has about his intentions.

“Back on Base”
David Shire is an Academy Award-winning American composer. His music often exhibits influences of jazz and popular music. This influence is featured in the revues Baby (1983) and Closer than Ever (1989), collaborative works of Shire and lyricist Richard Maltby Jr. Shire’s ability to produce catchy melodies that effectively capture a specific mood ability render his compositions incredibly suited for the theatre and the screen.

The revue Closer than Ever premiered in 1989. Later that year, the show had a run of 312 performances at the off-Broadway Cherry Lane Theatre. Completely free of dialogue, Closer than Ever serves as a collection of independent songs about realistic issues ranging from marriage to growing-old.
Shire wrote both the music and lyrics for the number “Back on Base.” The song is performed from the perspective of a woman whose sense of security comes from her love-interest, the bass player. This song calls for a great amount of communication and trust between the performers. In the scat sections, the singer neglects normal vocabulary in order to participate in a more direct conversation with the bass.

**Love is painful…**

This set functions as a story of painful love. In “Someone is Sending Me Flowers,” our narrator portrays a youthful naïveté. Her view of love is simple and flawed, but hopeful. We next meet our narrator in “Amor.” Her naïveté has matured into vanity. Instead of hopeful, her view of love is now overly confident. The final time we meet our narrator, she has experienced the entire life span of a relationship. She has been wounded and her view of love has been altered. Now, she understands the painful nature of failed love and is left to deal with the consequences.

**“Someone is Sending Me Flowers”**

David Baker was an American Broadway composer and pianist. He led a somewhat modest career, often working as a collaborator or arranger. Those collaborations were often with lyricist, David Craig. Together, they composed two full-length musicals, *Phoenix ’55* and *Copper and Brass*, and several songs that would be featured in off-Broadway revues.

“This song is a light-hearted piece that requires thoughtful execution by the singer. The performer must maintain the appropriate space for vowel production while still sounding conversational.

**“Amor”**

William Bolcom is an award-winning American composer, pianist, author, and teacher. His vast output is impressively diverse in style and genre. His work ranges from popular to “serious” music, integrating characteristics of one into the other. Bolcom has contributed to the genres of opera, symphony, chamber music, ragtime, cabaret, film score, and more. His concert-length work, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, is a setting of William Blake poetry for soloists, choruses, and orchestra. Receiving five Grammy Awards in 2005, *Songs* has proven to be one of Bolcom’s most popular compositions.

“This song is a humorous tale of a woman whose beauty is acclaimed by everyone she meets. The voice and piano are extremely reliant on each other. Each must commit to rhythmic precision in order to align correctly. The oddly placed rests and accents give the piece a lively feel.

**“Still Hurting”**

Jason Robert Brown is an American songwriter who specializes in musical theatre. The prowess and thoughtfulness of his compositions have been likened to that of Stephen Sondheim. Already, Brown has received high praise from prominent sources such as *Time* Magazine and *The New York Times*. One of his most popular productions, the musical *Parade*, received the Tony Award
for Best Score in 1999. Other famous works include his theatrical song cycle Songs for a New World (1995) and his musical The Last Five Years (2002).

The Last Five Years opened off-Broadway in 2002. The musical follows the story of a five-year relationship between two young New Yorkers, Jamie and Cathy. The plot unravels in an interesting juxtaposition of backward and forward motion; Cathy begins the show at the end of the relationship and progresses backward, while Jamie begins at the beginning and moves forward.

The show opens with Cathy singing “Still Hurting.” It is a reflection on the failed relationship. The performance must present an overall arc that begins and ends in simple numbness and ranges to deep pain, anger, and confusion.

Love is essential.

“Woe is Me” is a humorous depiction of an individual struggling with self-acceptance. The narrator bases her worth on the approval of others. She is desperate to do whatever it takes in order to gain said approval, demonstrating the intense need to feel loved. We can hope that she will learn that often the most important love to receive is self-love.

“Woe is Me”

William Finn is a contemporary musical theatre composer and lyricist. He has won numerous Tony Awards, including Best Book (with James Lapine) and Best Original Score for Falsettos (1992), a two-part combination of his short musicals titled March of the Falsettos and Falsettoland. Finn often collaborates with director/writer James Lapine. Their most recent project, a musical adaptation of the film Little Miss Sunshine, is currently playing at the Second Stage Theatre off-Broadway.

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee is a musical parody of an elementary school spelling competition. Since its Massachusetts open in 2004 and Broadway debut one year later, Spelling Bee has been an audience favorite. The show won Tony Awards for Best Book of a Musical and Best Featured Actor that season.

“Woe Is Me” appears about two-thirds through the one act play and is sung by Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre, a spelling bee contestant. Logainne is a type A people pleaser who has reached her wit’s end. Within this song, she cries out in distress but ultimately resolves to win the bee!
CONCLUSION

Preparing for my recital, it became important to me that the audience catch a glimpse of the theme that pervaded each piece of literature and drove my work through the years I spent at the University of Mississippi. After thorough study, writing, and editing, I believe I accomplished that goal. The preceding program illuminates the love that threads each work together, just as it binds each of us together.
CHAPTER IV: Preparation and Performance

INTRODUCTION

As mentioned in the introduction of Chapter II, each piece of music in my repertoire had a unique progression through the preparatory process. While each work related back to the theme discussed in Chapter III, the literature chosen for my recital spanned across the spectrum of musical era, genre, and style. This diversity contributed to the differentiation of the preparatory process.

In the following pages, I discuss the learning process of each piece and analyze how that progress culminated in my recital performance. I chose a specific set of challenges to elaborate on for each piece. These challenges characterized my work with the literature throughout the semester. The program analysis then examines how I dealt with the particular challenges during my recital. Finally, I address how I would approach a future performance of each work.

CRUDA SORTE!… GIÀ SO PER PRATICA

Upon first acquaintance with Rossini’s aria “Cruda sorte!... Già so per pratica,” I was captivated by its declamatory recitative introduction. The rapidly moving coloratura passages that followed only served to increase the fascination I felt for the piece. Unbeknownst to me, the two musical aspects that originally attracted me to the work would be two of the biggest challenges I would face during my senior vocal study.
This aria was the first piece I worked on during the fall semester of senior year. After spending a week with the song, it was clear that it would require much time and attention in the practice room in comparison to the rest of my repertoire. My voice journal demonstrates the formation of a timid (and ill-earned) confidence in that first week of work on the piece. I claimed to become “more and more comfortable” as the week progressed. However, I received a deserved dose of reality in my voice lesson at the end of the week. My journal entry from my lesson on September 20, 2013, reads as follows:

*It was a difficult lesson. Cruda is very recit-y in how it interacts with the accompaniment. I need to work it with the metronome. Pick notes in the runs to bring out but keep the overall run in tempo. I can stretch but then I have to give that time back somewhere. There are a lot of different sections in this one. I need to do some listening work and see how it all fits together. Start with the aria. Then go back to the beginning and use a metronome. Add some rhythmic parameters. Play it on the piano. Work on getting it in my fingers. Think about the accompaniment while playing the vocal line.*

As the reader can see, I left with a formidable list of “to-dos” for the following week.

The list was almost entirely dedicated to working out the recitative and coloratura sections of the aria. Never had I sung a piece with the multitude of notes that exist within Rossini’s aria. The sheer number was intimidating and exacerbated by the speed with which they were to be articulated. I found myself overwhelmed during the preparation of ceaselessly moving notes.

As noted in the second chapter of this text, playing the piano heavily contributed to my initial understanding of the melody. At the recommendation of Ms. Balach, I also began to add supplemental rhythms to the sections of straight eighth or sixteenth notes. Adding weight and length to different members of the patterns provided some structure to
operate within and a target to sing towards. I used this technique as my primary means of singing the melismas and coloratura passages of the aria for approximately four weeks.

As time moved on, I removed the supplementary rhythms and chose specific notes within the patterns to emphasize. This provided a similar, yet more musical, type of structure than the added rhythms. On October 8, 2013, I wrote, “I got back in the score to study the runs and pull out the important notes. They are so much easier to sing when they have some shape to them.”

The first performance of this piece occurred at a Vocal Area Meeting on October 30th. I noted that it was the “best vocal area performance I [had] ever had,” and described it as “really fun.” Prior to the area meeting, I asked a colleague to record my performance on her phone. While the quality of the recording is quite low, it is a useful reference for reviewing the progress I had made. I successfully articulated the melismatic and coloratura passages with ease and clarity.

During the month between the Vocal Area Meeting performance and my recital, I worked towards incorporating the technique I had developed in the difficult passages of the Rossini aria into the rest of the recital repertoire. The aria’s quick movement required precise articulation that occurs by combining a relaxed vocal mechanism with a steady foundation of breath support. Furthermore, the rapid notes called for a light, heady placement. These concepts were extremely transferable to my other pieces. Therefore, the progress I made with the Rossini aria served to better my general musicianship.

During my recital performance, there was an increase in precision as the piece progressed, but my singing during the slow recitative was not quite as clean as I would
have liked. The melisma on the word “chi” at the end of this section was especially unfocused and lacked a clear arrival at the top note.

Listen: Track 9

There was significant improvement in the presentation of the aria. The clean articulation in the opening of the aria foreshadowed the relaxed energy that occurred in the coloratura passages throughout the rest of the piece. During this section, the vowels remained consistent over the rapidly changing notes.

Listen: Track 10

Lightness in the coloratura aided in the placement of the high notes within the piece.

I am incredibly happy with this performance. Looking back to the beginning, I remember thinking it impossible to learn such a vast work. While there are aspects of the performance that could be improved, I am proud to have progressed through the difficulties and to have presented a hard-earned product. Were I to perform this piece in the future, I would continue to work on pitch accuracy and vowel purity in order to improve intonation.

AN MEINEM HERZEN, AN MEINER BRUST

Following “Cruda sorte!,” my program transitioned to a set of two more foreign language pieces. The first piece was German Lied “An meinem Herzen, an meiner Brust” by Robert Schumann. I was drawn to this piece because of the passion and excitement portrayed throughout the vocal and piano lines. The vocal line nimbly dances atop rolling sixteenth notes in the accompaniment, resulting in an overwhelmingly joyful effect. When executed correctly, it sounds as if the melody is coming directly from the
singer’s heart. However, combining the accompaniment and the vocal line proved to be quite challenging.

Prior to beginning my studio work with this piece, I used it as the basis for a choral arranging assignment. I arranged the solo song as a choral work for a three-part women’s choir. While I used chords from the accompaniment to harmonize the melody, I primarily retained the rhythm of the vocal line. Therefore, when I began addressing this piece in studio, I was considerably comfortable with the melody, yet considerably uncomfortable with the accompaniment.

This issue was not immediately evident. My work on the piece commenced with a study of the text. As previously stated, the melody itself was not extremely challenging. The first roadblock I encountered was the German text. There are several diction rules and sounds in the German language that are not congruent with those of Italian. Having spent so much time with the Rossini aria, I had to focus on correct pronunciation of the German text.

November 5th was the first lesson in which I attempted to sing the piece with the text (note: I had not yet attempted to sing it with the accompaniment). My notes from the lesson are as follows:

November 5, 2013 …An meinem - spend time in the book. There were a lot of text issues today. Work it slowly and be very intentional with the text. We outlined the phrasing today but that’s not the primary focus for this week. Mostly we are working on text. End consonants are important.

I spent the following rehearsals working on accurate pronunciation of the text. As the weeks progressed, my diction improved. I was then ready to begin working with the accompanist.
Once the vocal and piano lines were added together, I had a very difficult time distinguishing the downbeat within the sixteenth note pattern. This caused me to rush the first verse. I continued to struggle with this and consistently noted in my journal phrases such as “DO NOT RUSH.” Luckily for me, the accompanist I worked with noticed my struggle and reacted to it in her playing. She played so that the first and fourth eight notes of each measure were emphasized. This musical architecture encouraged me to lean into the downbeats and refrain from moving too quickly. My performance improved immensely when I remembered to situate myself according to the emphasized beats.

In my opinion, the most successful articulation of tempo and diction I experienced with this piece occurred during my recital. I was able to remain in sync with the accompaniment throughout the difficult first section. Furthermore, we moved together through the tempo changes in the third and fourth sections, as demonstrated in Track 11.

Listen: Track 11

Compared to the Italian Rossini aria, the German diction in this piece was a crisp and delightful contrast. The vowels that appear in this language can be difficult to form for the unfamiliar English-speaker. Yet, my rehearsal work with the text provided a muscle memory that allowed me to sound comfortable articulating the strange vowels during my recital. In particular, I spent much time working to correctly pronounce the German uumlaut. Take, for example, the following line:

Das Glück ist die Liebe, die Lieb’ ist das Glück, Ich hab’s gesagt und nehm’s nicht zurück.\textsuperscript{45}

This line proved to be significantly challenging because of the three u-umlauts. Additionally, the third u-umlaut follows a standard “u” vowel. During rehearsals, I often had difficulty placing the [y] sound of the u-umlaut in the close, forward space for which the vowel calls. However, I articulated the line quite nicely in my recital.

Listen: Track 12

In the future, I would continue to better my German diction. There is definitely room for more authenticity. I would take a German diction course and listen to more performances of German Lieder and examples of native-Germans speaking in order to increase my accuracy.

LE SECRET

Fauré’s “Le Secret” represented a different set of challenges than the majority of my recital repertoire. The entrancing nature of this piece is an effect of its carefully sustained line and I tend to gravitate towards literature with movement. This work provided the opportunity for me to develop the ability to create movement without the crutch of changing notes. Motion was not inherently present in the melody or the accompaniment, necessitating movement in the production of vocal tone.

As a precaution to the challenging sustained line within the piece, I began learning the melody with lip trills. Typically, I learn new music on sung neutral syllables. However, I anticipated the trouble I would have correctly producing a supported but relaxed tone over long phrases. This facilitated freeness in the vocal mechanism while I became familiar with the melody and occurred frequently between
October 14th and October 24th. The following journal entries demonstrate the use of trilling as a tool for learning the melody:

October 14, 2013  ...I started slowly by playing and trilling Le Secret.

October 23, 2013  ...Then, I worked on Le Secret. I mostly trilled and played the melody.

October 24, 2013  ...I switched to trills for work on Le Secret.

Eventually, the time came to add the text. This transpired during my studio lesson on October 25. Next, I practiced speaking the text separately from the music for several weeks. Like the German song, this piece contained troublesome diction that was unfamiliar to my English tongue. Treating the text like a monologue allowed me to focus on correct articulation of the unnatural sounds.

As I added the text to the melody, I was faced with a convergence of problems in sustaining phrases and executing diction. I attempted to create energy under the held notes by feeling a continuous pattern of sixteenth notes. Adding this imaginary rhythm helped me feel a forward motion, which kept the tone from feeling or sounding stuck or pressed. Studying the text also aided with the idea of movement through the line. The poem expresses such passion and longing. I was able to connect to those emotions and found that they inspired a propelling force. The desire translated into a sort of reaching, as if to pull the beloved closer to one’s self. I noted this in my journal in the following passage:

November 1, 2013  ... Apart from memorization [of Le Secret], I’m working on keeping the 16th note energy moving the whole time. I think that that is getting better each time I come to the practice room. I can feel the excitement underneath the gentleness. A lot of that comes from the text. Studying that really helped me understand how to sing it.
In-depth analysis of the text and the composer gave me a context and effect with which to relate, aiding in the interpretation and articulation of the piece. This, along with the feeling of rolling sixteenth notes, provided for a higher quality tone in sustained notes.

While my tone continued to improve, my French diction progressed at a much slower rate. Multiple journal entries from various points in the semester reference specific sounds that I misarticulated. The following entries display such discrepancies:

November 5, 2013... *Le secret - penché is mostly an “ah” with minimal nasal. That should help with the E flat. Move forward through the high notes and then pull back slightly.*

December 4, 2013... *Le Secret: schwa’s don’t have to be long, color them like previous vowel, “s’évapore” open o.*

In the first entry, I address the challenge of finding the correct balance of nasalization and resonating space. While the German song presented the challenge of the u-umlaut, the French presented the challenge of nasalized vowels. As an American, it is tempting to phonate nasal consonants that occur after a vowel, such as the “n” in “penché.” However, French diction calls for the “n” to be treated as a nasalization of the previous vowel. The word “penché” is phonetically spelled [pɑ̃.ʃe]. Here, the “n” is completely disregarded as an individual consonant and instead is used to color the preceding vowel. This concept was difficult for me to master. I often put too much nasal into the vowel, causing the “n” to have too much sound. This was only one of the many diction issues that came up in rehearsals. The second journal entry was written after my dress rehearsal. Clearly, I still struggled with diction up until the point of performance.

The time I spent working on tone quality through sustained lines paid off immensely in my recital performance. I created a phrase that extended through the entire first verse. Yet, the phrase was not a simple arch. It had many peaks and valleys before
landing on the final word “s’évapore.” For example, the downbeat is emphasized in each measure, while the second beat is pulled back in the lines “le nom que j’ai dit à la nuit.”

Listen: Track 13

In terms of diction, the accuracy is lacking somewhat. The “schwa” vowel should have been more consistent. Take, for example, the word “proclame” that is sung at the beginning of the second verse. The final “e” vowel is a “schwa” sound denoted by the symbol [ə]. Phonetically, it should have had more [oe] shape and, in modification, should have had more [a] space.

Listen: Track 14

This inaccuracy in vowel placement caused a slight discrepancy in intonation. Had I been more precise with the diction, the intonation would have improved.

Overall, the recital performance illustrated the progress I made in the production of an energized sustained tone. In the future, I would continue to refine my French diction, in hopes of producing an even clearer sound.

BACK ON BASE

“Back on Base” originally served as part of my Voice 322 exit jury. At the end of six semesters of studio study, music education majors must present an exit jury to the voice faculty. This piece fulfilled the requirement of a chamber work, as it is collaboration between a singer, acoustic bassist, and pianist. The original performance occurred at a Vocal Area Meeting on April 24, 2013. The following journal entry contains notes on that performance:

Back on Base went great!! I am really very happy with it. I said “inspiration” correctly for maybe the first time ever. My mom really enjoyed it and all of my professors congratulated me. Also, Dr. Robinson said that the technique and diction were still there and showed through even though it was a piece with jazz influence. There were a couple of spots that went just a little flat. I think that some of the bass tuning was a little off so it was hard to hear some of the intonation. Overall, I feel really good about it though!

Many of my initial struggles with this piece were addressed in the semester within which it was initially performed. For example, I often had difficulty finding the correct balance between formal technique and jazz influence. While this piece requires much skill, it also requires a performance with a relaxed jazz feel. Artistic authenticity calls for slightly shorter vowels and a more colloquial diction than much of my repertoire. As I noted in my journal, I was able to fuse technique and authentic expression in a way that was pleasing to the voice faculty and myself.

The decision was made to incorporate “Back on Base” into my recital on account of the amount of work spent on it during my junior year and the entertaining nature of the piece. Also, inviting another musician on stage would add interest to the recital program. Dr. Michael Worthy so graciously agreed to play the acoustic bass for this performance.

Returning to this piece gave me the opportunity to further the progress I had made in the previous year. I continued to work on the diction. After the penultimate lesson of the semester, I noted the following in my journal:

November 22, 2013 ...Back on Base - “tall” and “walkin’” “talkin’” don’t need to fall back or be shaped too formally.

With only two weeks until my recital, I was still striving to produce vowels that sounded natural yet spacious.
During the recital performance, my vowels generally worked very well. I refrained from modifying certain vowels that are often adjusted in classical singing to provide for more resonating space. Specifically, this can be heard on the word “couldn’t” in the first verse. Instead of rounding or bringing the vowel forward, I placed it so that it sounded true to spoken English. Furthermore, the words “talkin’” and “walkin,’” which were addressed in my journal entry, sounded natural and not too formal. Each of these is demonstrated in Track 15.

Listen: Track 15

While I am generally happy with the diction in this performance, I mispronounced “inspiration” in the first verse. The second vowel is sung too forward as if it were supposed to sound like an [i] instead of an [ə]. This is an old habit that I had worked to extinguish during my junior year. However, I failed to correct my tendency to do so during my recital. If I were to perform this piece again, I would attempt to solidify the correct pronunciation of this word even further.

In addition to the diction, I faced another challenge during my recital performance of this piece. After singing the interlude of scatting, I could not remember the words to the next verse. I became very aware of this as I neared the verse’s entrance. In the moment, I decided to skip the lines that had vanished from my memory and move forward with the piece. Instead of singing the correct line, “At times he seems a bit elusive, way off in his private place,” I proceeded to the following line, “I guess he can’t be my exclusive when he’s back on base.”

Listen: Track 16

Luckily, my accompanying musicians were skilled enough to meet back up with me before the piece closed.

Obviously, I would have preferred to remember all of the words. However, a reality of live performance is that mistakes will happen. In the context of this recital, the decision I made to continue on with the song was appropriate and functioned to finish the piece. I am proud of my ability to remain calm and invested in the piece as I progressed through my mistake.

**SOMEONE IS SENDING ME FLOWERS**

Like “Back on Base,” I had worked on “Someone is Sending Me Flowers” in a previous semester of vocal study. This song was originally chosen for the fall of my freshman year. Therefore, a sizeable amount of time had passed since I first performed the piece. This distance allowed me to build upon my previous knowledge of the song without falling into old tendencies.

This song required the least amount of preparation of my recital repertoire. The first time I referenced the piece in my senior vocal journal was after a lesson on October 28, 2013. I noted that I had instructions to “dust off ‘Someone is Sending Me Flowers.’” I spent the next four weeks reviewing the material, reacquainting myself with the details of the piece.

The previous work I had accomplished allowed for more developed musicality in this updated performance. After three years of vocal study, I had progressed technically and expressively. Therefore, I could set a higher standard for how I wanted the performance to sound.
During my studio lessons, a scheme was drawn out as to how the tempo should deviate within the piece. There is a give and take that occurs between the pianist and the singer. This especially occurs at the end of each complete phrase. The end of the first verse and beginning of the second verse contain more emphasized tempo changes. Prior to this section, the song bounces along at a steady tempo until the ending of verse one. The last three words of the verse, “I’ll go mad,” are set to a ritardando, which leads into the free tempo at the beginning of verse two.\footnote{David Baker and Sheldon Harnick, “Someone is Sending Me Flowers,” in \textit{Sarah’s Encores: A collection of songs compiled by Sarah Walker and Roger Vignoles.} (Great Britain: Novello Publishing Limited, 1989) 4.} These tempo shifts called for trust and understanding between the singer and pianist so that the two would remain in sync. Each entry contained a reference to the song made some type of comment about practicing the changing tempos. They are as follows:

November 22, 2013 ...\textit{Someone is Sending Me Flowers went really well. Just practice the rit[ardando]s and tempo changes.}

December 3, 2013 ...\textit{Someone is Sending Me Flowers went much better... there needs to be more of a complete stop before “Since I cannot afford...”}

The second and final entry occurred four days prior to my recital. However, I had no notes on this piece after my dress rehearsal.

During my recital performance, I handled the phrase endings nicely by giving them a little extra time. The accompanist and myself were very connected and comfortable.

Listen: Track 17
However, there were a few places in the second verse that I would have liked to be even freer in terms of tempo. For example, I could have given more stretch to the notes of “they were grey.” In Track 18, one will hear that the tempo is somewhat slowed.

Listen: Track 18

I could have produced even more length to the word “they” to emphasize the free tempo indicated by the composer. If I were to perform this piece in the future, I would work towards a more versatile presentation of tempo and set up each change with the inhalation.

AMOR

William Bolcom’s “Amor” presented a unique set of challenges that I had never met in studio repertoire. The unusual rhythm combined with the independence of the vocal line from the accompaniment rendered this piece quite difficult. I spent countless hours attempting to learn the strange rhythmic patterns and unnatural entrances.

As noted in the Rehearsal Procedures chapter of this text, I applied many different learning techniques to this piece. A defining characteristic of my “Amor” rehearsals was the diversity of tools I used in a single practice session. For example, the following journal entry from an early October rehearsal displays the use of a variety of rehearsal procedures:

October 7, 2013  …I really dug in to Amor today. I worked on it in many different stages. First, I stepped/clapped and conducted while speaking. Then, I played and conducted to hear how the melody fits with the rhythm. Next, I played and tapped the beat. Then, I tapped the beat and trilled to begin internalizing the melody. Then, I trilled while conducting, trying to feel the beat even though I wasn’t literally tapping it. Then, I finally got

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into singing while conducting so that I could see how the beats lined up. Then I sang while tapping. It was a tedious process but I think it was really important to sequence it that way so that I learn it correctly and really feel it instead of just trying to sing it.

During that rehearsal, I discovered it was more beneficial to spend short amounts of time working the song in different ways, as opposed to attempting to master the piece while using a single technique.

As the semester progressed, I continued to experiment with the combination of different rehearsal procedures. Eventually, the less conspicuous procedures (such as speaking and moving) became internal motives that did not require an external action. This transition from the external to the internal is discussed in the Movement section of Chapter III.

While individual rehearsal was necessary to acquire a knowledge of the melodic line, the most beneficial aid in meeting the challenges of this piece were the combined rehearsals with the accompanist. Initially, the autonomy of the vocal part and accompaniment was extremely uncomfortable. The first time we combined the voice and accompaniment, I had a great deal of trouble staying in tempo and feeling secure in the melodic line. I noted this struggle in a journal entry following that lesson:

October 28, 2013 ...We worked Amor today with Ms. Nancy [the accompanist]. That one is really tricky. The rhythm has to be so so exact in order to fit with the accompaniment. I need to practice it with the metronome. It never slows or ritardandos. It’s very similar to Still Hurting in that the rhythm is so organic but so meticulously composed. They both have to be articulated correctly in order to function how they were meant to.

The entry serves as my constructive assessment of a somewhat failed attempt at singing with the accompaniment.
As time progressed, I gained more confidence in the vocal line and understanding of the overall structure of the piece. Practicing with the accompanist gave me insight that was not available in an individual rehearsal. While singing with the accompaniment, as well as listening to other performances, I developed a grand image of the finished product. I grew to understand more and more how the puzzle pieces that were the voice and the accompaniment came together in an exact and beautiful union. That union served as my performance goal. I wanted the voice and accompaniment to participate in a dance, taking turns and finally joining together.

The performance of this piece during my recital was the most successful combination of voice and accompaniment I have ever experienced. From the very first entrances, the piano and voice both sound confident and self-sufficient.

Listen: Track 19

Through alternating bursts of notes and rests, we participated in a game of musical toss. Self-sufficiency and independence does not go so far as to render either the voice or piano capable of performing the piece on their own. However, the performance is more coexistence than marriage. This is further illustrated in the scat section where the voice has a repeated pattern of eight notes while the piano has a separate pattern of climbing dotted quarter notes. The juxtaposition causes the singers entrances to be difficult to feel. Yet, as one can hear in Track 20, we articulated the section while projecting ease and comfort.

Listen: Track 20

I would thoroughly enjoy performing this piece again. It is adventurous in its very nature. My hope would be to meet the same success as was met in my recital.
STILL HURTING

“Still Hurting” had been on my studio wish list for several semesters prior to the fall of senior year. The honesty and simplicity of the text intrigued and attracted me. I desired to step into the world of the woman whom Jamie had left. Finally, the time had come.

Upon first rehearsing this piece, it became apparent to me that the honesty by which the piece was characterized did not solely stem from the text. The composer had arranged the rhythm with a degree of intention that is difficult to hear as a member of the audience. Yet, the singer looking at the page is privy to all of the meticulously placed sixteenth and dotted eighth notes. The rhythmic variance is subtle, yet vital to the organic expression of emotion that occurs within the piece.

Learning the intricacies of this work’s rhythm posed a challenge. I recognized this early on in my practice. I noted the following in my vocal journal after my first attempts in the rehearsal:

September 19, 2013 ...Also, I worked on the notes and rhythms of “Still Hurting.” It’s still in the early stages but I can tell I will need to pay close attention to the small changes in the rhythm of this piece.

Therefore, my work on this piece started with intense rhythmic study, which included techniques such as singing the melody with the use of rhythm syllables as opposed to text. By doing so, I developed muscle memory for correct and precise rhythmic articulation. An entry from my journal further demonstrates the type of continuous rhythmic study this song required:

October 8, 2013 ...Then, I worked on Still Hurting. I marked bar lines so that I can see clearly which syllables are supposed to fall on the beat or before or after the beat. This was so helpful. After marking, I worked on
playing the rhythm and singing/speaking the rhythm syllables in the
difficult places.

When it came time to leave the book, the memorization process occurred more
quickly than I had expected. Because of the natural, speech-like quality of the rhythm
and the time I spent studying said rhythm, much of the piece was engrained in my
memory prior to my intentional work in memorization. I noted this in my journal on
November 4, 2013:

I finished with “Still Hurting.” Every time I sing it I learn at a new level
how connected the text is to the rhythm. It is almost totally memorized (the
connection between the text and the rhythm makes it easier to memorize
even though the rhythm varies slightly between each phrase).

As time moved on, I grew more and more comfortable with the details of the song. The
rhythm became second nature, which serves as a testament to the talent of the composer.

In the midst of my preparation, a second challenge presented itself. Because of
the decrease in formality of this piece in comparison to the rest of my recital repertoire
(excluding “Woe Is Me”), I had difficulty determining where to send resonating sound.
Musical theater typically does not call for the tall vowels of classical singing. However, I
was decreasing the space slightly too much and the sound was falling back. I noted this
first on October 14, 2013, when I wrote the following:

While working on Still Hurting, my palate wanted to drop. I tried to use
phrasing, intonation, and vowel purity to keep the pallet lifted. I then
worked on character interpretation that doesn’t affect the instrument.

Allowing for enough space to provide proper intonation while still portraying a
believable character was challenging. I worked to achieve the proper balance between
space and a natural sound. However, the piece sits in the upper part of my middle range.
Therefore, often my placement wanted to settle lower than was necessary in order to have proper intonation.

From the very first phrase during my recital performance, it is clear that my placement was off during this piece. The tone is slightly flat and not quite centered on the correct pitch, but I did correct the placement somewhat as the first verse progressed. In the statement “I’m still hurting” at the end of the verse, the pitch wavers on the “I’m” before settling on “hurting.” The second verse is much improved and that can be heard in this clip of the second statement “I’m still hurting.” This improvement is evident in Track 21.

Listen: Track 21

The rhythm is articulated nicely throughout the recital performance. I would have liked for it to sound a little less studied. At times, the organic nature of the rhythm is lost and my performance sounds somewhat contrived. Were I to perform this again, I would work on relaxing my instincts and focusing more on feeling the character. I believe this would contribute to a more natural sound.

WOE IS ME

“Woe Is Me” was chosen to be included in my studio repertoire during the fall semester of my junior year. However, timing complications resulted in the decision to postpone work on this piece until my senior year. Therefore, I anxiously waited for the time when I would embark on my first extreme character piece.

This time came at the beginning of my senior year. Immediately, I was exposed to the challenges of musical theater singing that called for such an involved character and
text driven performance. “Musical theater is fundamentally driven by text, while classical music is driven by music.”

It was difficult to ascertain the proper balance between technique and theatrics. Quickly, it was decided that the piece called for a shift in placement. This would mean that I would need to direct the sound more forward and higher than in the previous song. However, certain notes called for an expanded space, meaning I would need to transition back and forth between the modified “character” placement for the majority of the song and an expanded placement for the notes that required more resonating space. This would have to be a conscious adjustment that I would make during the performance.

Furthermore, the character traditionally has a lisp. I do not naturally speak with a lisp. Therefore, I had to practice incorporating this impediment into the text of the song and this did not come easily. I spent the first month of the semester practicing the text as a monologue. Disregarding the notated rhythm, I experimented with different interpretations of the monologue in attempts to find a natural, yet characterized spoken sound. While in this stage of preparation, I played the melody on the piano as a means of getting acquainted with the tune.

When I began singing the piece, I did so with a more classical placement than I eventually used in the performance. As time moved on, I combined the spoken monologue and the melody. This is when I started to work on specific placement adjustments throughout the piece. For example, the word “dads” in the first verse was to be sung with heavy use of the “character” placement. Soon after, the word “me” called

50 Balach, “Vocal Technique.”
for extra space. This shift proved to be difficult. On November 6th I noted the following in my journal:

*I worked on the right placement and resonance that Ms. Balach talked about - feeling like a French nasal. I'm having a hard time switching for the word “me” like we discussed. It’s so close to the word “Dads” in some of the lines. I think maybe it’s more of an open than a total adjustment.*

This experimentation continued through several weeks. Eventually, the placement shifts became more and more comfortable. I was then able to really focus on the character.

Then, I faced a new challenge. This piece was more physically involved than the majority of my recital repertoire (barring “Back on Base”). The question arose of how to express this character to her fullest personality without crossing the line into excessive dramatics. Ms. Balach blocked the scene in a studio lesson on November 5th. I rehearsed the movements in silence while speaking and singing. Quickly, I had the blocking memorized. However, in our lessons, it became obvious that what I felt in terms of gesture grandeur was not translating directly to the audience. I believed my motions were large and fully active, but there was still more that needed to be done in order to communicate effectively with the audience.

I struggled with this concept all the way up to the recital. All of my notes from the dress rehearsal contain a directive to increase the size of something. The notes read as follows:

*Woe Is ME: DAD’S bigger the first time, Mother of Pearl bigger and then bring it in very small, physical on the first Woe is Me, bigger “vomit.”*

I attempted to keep the notes in mind as I embarked on my final recital performance.

When reviewing the performance of this piece during my recital, I find that I have mixed feelings. There is a vocal commitment to character that I think is lacking in
physical expression. All of the work I put forth in regards to articulating a natural
sounding lisp paid off greatly for the performance. The diction is clear but characterized.

Listen: Track 22

Adjusting the placement worked nicely to create a younger sound, which is fitting for the
character. However, the video recording displays movements that are slightly too fluid to
fit this piece. If I were to continue to work on this piece, I would focus on the physical
actions that occur. I would attempt to bring more rigidity and purpose to each motion I
chose to make.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter III, I explained that each piece in my repertoire became personified.
This look into the particular paths that each song progressed along further demonstrates
the characteristics and uniqueness of those personas. Like encountering different people
increases one’s perspective of the world, I believe that encountering this diverse set of
literature opened my eyes as a musician, encouraging me to grasp beyond what seemed
reachable and feel what seemingly could not be felt. Each of these works was a true
reflection of my talent, taste, and musical journey.
CONCLUSION

Dr. Dayme writes, “Performing well involves a balance of creativity, spontaneity and knowledge of basic, healthy vocal principles and of keeping your voice healthy.”51 During the four years I studied at the University of Mississippi Music Department, I acquired and developed each of these necessities. My senior recital was a culminating demonstration of the musicianship I cultivated while at the university and was possible because of the lifestyle I adopted, the set of rehearsal procedures I collected, the research and writing I performed while creating program notes, and the preparation I committed to each piece in my repertoire. Additionally, my musicianship is demonstrated in my self-analysis of the recital performance and ability to distinguish direction for future practice.

While concluding this thesis, I feel a sense of nostalgia. There is a part of me that longs to return to my first days in the department. However, my time at the university is coming to an end. As I prepare to face another phase of my life, I find comfort knowing there is a new class preparing to face four years of musical learning in the very same department. With the passing of years, the building and faculty may change; however, the spirit of developing musicianship will ring throughout time. I am eternally grateful to the faculty of the university music department and all others who I met during my undergraduate tenure. It is because of the skills and knowledge that you adorned me with that I can now say with confidence, “I am a musician.”

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