Painful Pathos in Art Song

A Graduate Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Music in Music,
Performance

by
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ABSTRACT

Painful Pathos in Art Song

By

Rachel Guettler

Master of Music in Music, Performance

The intention of many art forms is to evoke an emotional response from the audience, and pathos is the evocation of suffering, pity, and pain. This evening of art song exhibited specific compositions by Italian Baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi, German Romantic composer Johannes Brahms, French Romantic composer Hector Berlioz, Spanish Nineteenth Century composer Enrique Granados, American Twentieth Century composer Aaron Copland, and Italian Classical operatic composer Giuseppe Verdi. The recital presented a variety of songs intended to capture a sense of pathos, an exploration of loss in life, love, death, and painful emotions that accompany these uncomfortable yet natural transitions. While the lives of these composers of the selected music do span over several different centuries, with lyrics in multiple languages, and with music composed from the various cultural influences; through the use of elegiac poetry and through unique compositional musical devices and techniques, each composer creates a musical experience that reflects a beautifully artistic journey through various degrees of the evocation of painful emotions and painful pathos in the variety of
languages, eras, and cultures represented.

The recital began with the earliest composer in the group, high Baroque era composer Antonio Vivaldi, which are in the typical Da Capo aria style from solo cantatas. Starting with a short, more light-hearted piece, Viene, vieni, o mio diletto, is calling in the listener as if they are the lover being summoned because the singer’s heart is so full of love and affection. In Vivaldi’s Piango gemo sopspiro, the listener is confronted with weeping, groaning, and suffering sighs in the lyrics which are complemented by Baroque musical devices such as vocal trills and melodic ornamentation indicating overwhelmingly painful emotions. In Piango gemo sopspiro the accompaniment keeps a steady quarter-note in the bass, oftentimes with an octave interval, in the 3/2 time signature, reminiscent of the constant heartbeat underlying all the emotional chaos, pain, and suffering. These painful lyrics also epitomize the Baroque era as it was a time when love, desire, and affections were often represented by sexual euphemisms compared with death, pain, and dying.

A section of the Romantic era composer Johannes Brahms continues the painful themes of pathos due to unrequited love, which continue with the seemingly simple German art song, Wie Melodien zieht es mir, which is a perfect example of how love can be like a fragrance that can disappear as does a breath. Here with the tempo in half common time, the accompaniment is mostly continual chord arpeggios in two groups of eighth notes with the first four eighth notes rising up the scale and the latter four notes going back down the scale, reflecting the rise and fall of climatic love. The lyrics, melody, and harmony remind the listener that they cannot capture love, love is mysterious, love can be fleeting, and love can depart as quickly and as mysteriously as it
arrived. In, *Von ewige Liebe*, by Brahms the painful longing and the insecurities one often finds in love is explored as the song begins in C# minor and is in 3/4 time with roving accompaniment reflecting the fast beating of an excited heart and creates vivid imagery of lovers moving quickly through the dark forest as they express the longing, fear, and struggle in their love for each other. The man expresses his worry that their love is causing the maiden shame and suffering. The music takes a climactic turn with a key change to D-flat major and a time signature change to 6/8 creating a feeling of calm as the maiden assures her lover that their love is stronger than iron and steel. In the final selection by Brahms, *Der Tod, das ist die kühl Nach* , here again love is euphemized through death. In this German art song, the tempo is *molto lento* or very slow and in 6/8 time with the opening measures having the right hand pulsing chords in quarter note then half note patterns with a descending bass below, mimicking the rhythms of the beating heart. Then the accompaniment switches into three eighth note patterns as the momentum builds, while the enharmonic notes create so much tension throughout the piece which is finally resolved with the closing C major chord.

*Le Spectre de la Rose* is a strophic, through-composed piece in D major by Romantic French composer Hector Berlioz which is the second song from the six-song cycle *Les Nuits d’Été*. This piece, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, is a beautiful narration of the ghost of a rose who dies on the breast of its wearer at a dreamy night ball, representing love, beauty, death, and loss of innocence along the journey of love, represented by the death of the rose. The French language in *Le Spectre de la Rose* beckons the audience to grasp this concept of the loss of innocence through the use of the bright and dark vowels. With the last song of the *Les Nuits d’Été* song cycle, *L’île inconnue*, in F
major the listener is taken away with 6/8 time as if it were the wind in the sails on a
boat at sea, also representing the unpredictability of love, as a young lover searches for
a place where love lasts forever, but learns that such a place hardly exists.

Nineteenth century Spanish composer, Enrique Granados explores the cringes of the
heart when a lover dies with La Maja Dolorosa numbers 1, 2, and 3 using Spanish
styles and joltingly dissonant harmonies. Even the word ‘dolorosa’ means sorrowful,
and in each song the listener is transported to a Spanish setting with a mourning widow
at the funeral of her beloved. The accompaniment suggests the spirit of the dead lover
is still wafting about, which nearly drives the grief-ridden widow mad with delirious
visions of her beloved maja over strikingly dissonant chords. For example, La Maja
Dolorosa 1 in F minor, the accompaniment moves in upward motion on each quarter
beat in the first four measures in 3/4 time, then moving in downward motion in
measures 6 – 8, (all with an F pedal in bass on the first beat of each measure from
measures 1 – 7), arriving at an alarming enharmonic chord on the down beat, with the
singer coming in on the second beat with a minor seventh mournful cry from B-natural
upwards to A-flat crying out about how cruel death is. The deliria truly sets in La Maja
Dolorosa 2 with the last four measures of the A section before the Da Capo return as
staccato notes at varying intervals rise and fall.

Through the pathos in the intriguing words in the poetry of Emily Dickenson,
coupled with Twentieth century American composer Aaron Copland’s virtuosic
compositional techniques, the uncomfortable flux of nature, love, and death are
presented in Heart, we will forget him, The world feels dusty, and Nature, the gentlest
mother, which are three selections from Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson set to music
In *Nature, the gentlest mother*, Copland uses the truth in the laws of nature, as nature will wait for no one, and ultimately nature wills silence on every sound and death on every life. The piece opens with birdsongs, trilling about without clear resolve until the quarter rest at the end of measure 9 followed by the strike of a B note in the Bass and also in the Soprano in measure 10. There is even a time signature change from 4/4 to 3/4 in measures 4 – 5. The song continues to have more changes in key and tempo, continuing this theme of life’s unexpected changes. Unexpected changes in life and music can be uncomfortable, painful, evoking the deepest depths of pathos as beautiful life turns into the darkness of death, despair in the darkest hours after as the sun sets on every day, and death is the ultimately final cadence of every life. With *Heart, we will forget him* in E-flat major there are many dissonant harmonies and unexpected rhythms, such as in measure 29 when the vocal line leaps up a minor seventh from F to an unexpected E-natural on the word ‘haste’ and then the piano moves ahead with quarter notes as the vocal line lags behind that rhythm with a dotted-quarter note on the word ‘lagging.’ The Copland arts songs explore the ebb and flow of nature, pain in life, the ironically beautiful decline to death, the emotions that are evoked throughout these experiences, and the pathos of all that pain involved.

The recital encore selection was a gripping aria *Morró, ma prima in grazia* from the opera *Un Ballo in Maschera* by the Classical era composer Giuseppe Verdi. In this aria, the character Amelia is begging to be understood as she is being accused of infidelity, she is pleading with her husband to spare her life, and she beseeches her husband to grant her one final request to allow her to see her son one last time. The accompaniment builds with nervous and fearful tension near the end of the aria, as
Amelia breaks into a final out-cry in a dramatic cadenza with a vocal run spanning more than an octave. This song epitomizes the deepest pain known to the human race, the fear of a parent never being able to see her son again, and painful pathos is truly brought to the height of intensity.

Many art songs explore the painful pathos, the darkness of life, the struggles of love, and the unexpected beauty that can be found through challenging experiences. Through the selection of choice pieces from composers of multiple eras and varying languages, one can create a journey exploring themes of pain within life, love, and nature equating the evocation of emotionally uncomfortable pathos. Art songs have the ability to create an experience for the listener that represents how the pain in pathos can truly be beautifully moving, strikingly exciting, and emotionally climatic expression. Through the use of emotional poetry, linguistic styles, and through compositional devices such as rhythmic techniques, ornamentation, key changes, tempo changes, birdsong, unexpected harmony, and dissonance in art songs Vivaldi, Brahms, Berlioz, Granados, Copland, and Verdi are able to portray this beautiful painful pathos through music composed for the voice.
PROGRAM

California State University, Northridge
Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication
Department of Music

Presents
Rachel Guettler, Soprano
(also known as Rachel Staples)

In her Master of Music Recital

A student of Dr. Deanna Murray
with Piano Accompanist, Carol Roberts

Saturday, May 9, 2015, 7:30pm
CSUN Cypress Music Recital Hall
Vieni, vieni, o mio diletto ........................... Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1743)

Ingrata si mi svena

Piango gemo sospiro

Wie Melodien zieht es mir ........................... Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Von ewige Liebe

Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht

From *Les Nuits d’Eté*
Le Spectre de la rose ............................. Hector Berlioz (1803-1872)

L’ille inconnue

**INTERMISSION**

La Maja Dolorosa No. 1 .............................. Enrique Granados (1867–1916)

La Maja Dolorosa No. 2

La Maja Dolorosa No. 3

From *12 Poems by Emily Dickenson*
The world feels dusty .............................. Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Nature, the gentlest mother

Heart, we will forget him

From the opera *Un Ballo in Maschera (The Masked Ball)*
Morró, ma prima in grazia ............................ Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

*Al Fine*
TRANSLATIONS

Vieni, vieni, o mio diletto

Composed by Antonio Vivaldi. Text by an Anonymous Poet.

Come, come oh my delight because my heart is full of affection/love; already it is waiting for you, and always it you it is calling. My heart, full of affection/love, already it is waiting for you and already you it is calling.

Ingrata si mi svena

Composed by Antonio Vivaldi. Text by an Anonymous Poet.

Ungrateful one, yes, go ahead and cut my veins, cut my veins, ungrateful one, yes, tear apart that heart in which the arrow of love your charming and beautiful image has carved.

Piango gemo sospiro

Composed by Antonio Vivaldi. Text by an Anonymous Poet.

I weep, I groan, I sigh, and I suffer, and the wound is in my heart. I ask only for the peace of my heart that an even more fierce pain might kill me.
Wie Melodien zieht es mir

Composed by Johannes Brahms. Poetry by Klaus Johann Groth.

Like melodies it moves in me quietly through the mind. Like Spring flowers it blooms and it floats like a fragrance. But when a word comes and grasps it and brings it before the eye, like gray mist it fades and vanishes like a breath. And yet there remains in the rhyme a certain hidden fragrance, which, gently from the silent bud a tearful eye evokes.

Von ewige Liebe

Composed by Johannes Brahms. Poetry by Josef Wensig.

Dark, how dark it is in forest and field! It is already night; the world is now silent. Nowhere a light and nowhere still smoke, yes, and the lark it is silent now also. The lad comes out of the village, accompanying his beloved home, he leads her past the willow grove, talking so much, and of so many things: “If you are grieving and suffering shame, if you are suffering disgrace before others because of me, let our love be ended as quickly, as quickly as we were once united in it; depart with the rain and depart with the wind, as quickly as we were once united.” Says the maiden, the maiden says: “Our love cannot be broken! Steel is firm and iron even more, our love is firmer still. Iron and steel, one forges them into something else, our love, who can change it? Iron and steel, they can rust away, our love, must forever endure!”

Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht

Composed by Johannes Brahms. Poetry by Heinrich Heine.

Oh death is still and cool as night, and life is like the sultry day. The darkness falls, I’m weary; the day leaves me tied and sad. Over my bed a tree lifts its boughs; there sings a lovely nightingale. She sings a joyous love song, a joyous love song. I hear it, I hear it once more in dreams.
Le Spectre de la rose

Composed by Hector Berlioz. Poetry by Théophile Gautier.

Open your closed eyelids that brushed a virginal dream! I am the specter/ghost of a rose that you wore yesterday to the ball. You took me still pearled from the tears of silver of the watering can, and, amid the sparkling party, you wore me all evening. Oh you were the cause of my death, you will be unable to away the specter/ghost rose which every night to your bedside will come to dance. But do not fear anything, I do not demand neither a Mass nor a de Profundis this faint perfume is my soul, and I come from Paradise. My destiny was worth of envy, and for such a beautiful fate more than one would have given his life, for on your breast I have my tomb, and on the alabaster where I lie a poet with a kiss has written: “Here lies a rose, which every king will envy.”

L’île inconnue

Composed by Hector Berlioz. Poetry by Théophile Gautier.

Say, my young beauty, where would you like to go? The sail swells open its wings, the breeze is about to blow. The oar of ivory, the flag of watered silk, the rudder of fine gold; I have for ballast an orange, for a sail the wing of an angel, for cabin-boy a seraph. Say, my young beauty, where would you like to go? The sail swells open its wings, the breeze is about to blow. Is it to the Baltic? To the Ocean Pacific? To the island of Java? Or rather is it to Norway, to pluck the flower of the snow, or the flower of Angsoka? Say, my young beauty, where would you like to go? Lead me, says my beauty, to the shore of fidelity where one loves forever! That shore, my darling, it is scarcely known in the land of loves. Where would you like to go? The breeze is about to blow.
La Maja Dolorosa, No. 1

Composed by Enrique Granados. Poetry by Fernando Periquet.

Oh cruel death! Why did you by treachery take my majo, my passion? I don’t want to live without him, for it is death to live so. It is impossible now to feel more pain: My soul is dissolved in tears. Oh God! Return my love, for it is death to live so.

La Maja Dolorosa, No. 2

Composed by Enrique Granados. Poetry by Fernando Periquet.

Oh, majo of my life, no, no you have not died! Would I still be alive if that were true? Wildly I desire to kiss your lips! I want in faithfulness to share your destiny. Alas! Your destiny! But oh! I am raving, I dream, my majo no longer exists. The world about me is weeping and sad. I find no consolation in my sorry, but even dead and cold my majo will always be mine. Oh! Always mine!

La Maja Dolorosa, No. 3

Composed by Enrique Granados. Poetry by Fernando Periquet.

Of that beloved majo who was my glory I cherish a happy memory. He loved me ardently and truly and I gave my whole life to him, and I would give it again a thousand times, if he desired it, for when feelings are profound, torments are sweet, and as I think of my beloved majo, dreams come back of the a time gone by. Neither in the Mentidero nor in Florida was a major more handsome ever seen to stroll. Beneath the broad-brimmed hat I saw his eyes fixed upon me passionately, for they caressed the one on whom they rested, in all the world I have never seen a more piercing look and as I think of my beloved majo, dreams come back of a time gone by.
The world feels dusty

Composed by Aaron Copland. Poetry by Emily Dickenson.
The world feels dusty, when we stop to die. We want the dew then. Honors taste dry. Flags vex a dying face, but the least fan stirred by a friend’s hand cools like the rain. Mine be the ministry when thy thirst comes. Dews of thyself to fetch and holy balms.

Nature, the gentlest mother

Composed by Aaron Copland. Poetry by Emily Dickenson.
Nature the gentlest mother, impatient of no child. The feeblest or the wayward-est., her admonition mild. In forest and the hill, by traveler is heard. Retraining rampant squirrel or too impetuous bird. How fair her conversation. A summer afternoon. Her household, her assembly. And when the sun goes down, her voice among the aisles incites the timid prayer of the minutest cricket, the most unworthy flower. When all the children sleep, she turns as long away, as will suffice to light her lamps. Then, bending from the sky, with infinite affection and infinite care, her golden finger on her lip wills silence ev’ry where, wills silence ev’ry where.

Heart, we will forget him

Composed by Aaron Copland. Poetry by Emily Dickenson.
Heart, we will forget him. You and I, tonight. You may forget the warmth he gave. I will forget the light. When you have done, pray tell me, that I my thoughts may dim. Haste lest while you’re lagging, I may remember him.
Morró, ma prima in grazia

From the opera, Un Ballo in Maschera / The Masked Ball

Composed by Giuseppe Verdi. Librettist Francesco Maria Piave.

I will die, but first as a favor, come now! All me now at least my only child to press to my breast. And if you should deny this last favor to me as your wife, do not refuse the entireties of one who is a mother. I shall die, but this heart will be consoled by his kisses, now that my final, fleeting hours have come. The mother is killed by the hand of the father, my child will place his hand over his mother’s eyes whom he will never see again!