A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music in Music, Performance

By

Anna Avetisyan

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copyright</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The Spectrum of Love:
A Graduate Voice Recital

By

Anna Avetisyan
Master of Music in Music, Performance

This written work, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music degree in Vocal Arts, will analyze selected songs and arias to reveal textual and musical devices used to portray that which links them: love, in all its forms and stages. With the exception of a few songs, chosen for musical reasons and contrast, I will prove how this all-too overused and misunderstood term umbrellas many meanings and categories. What better way is there to explore these meanings than through the analysis of songs which partner words with music, an art used for centuries to convey what cannot be conveyed with words alone?

The first set on my program includes selections from Siete Canciones populares Españolas, a song cycle from 1914, by Manuel De Falla. These songs are unique in that the melodies are not composed by De Falla himself; they are traditional Spanish folk songs passed down aurally from generation to generation. De Falla immortalized them by transcribing the melodies and composing a piano accompaniment, just as Komitas did before him with traditional Armenian Folk songs. He was successful in the difficult task of preserving the cultural essence of the original song and constructing a supporting sound that would make it worthy of the Classical Canon.
*El paño moruno*, features Moorish rhythms evident immediately in the extended piano introduction, the theme of which was borrowed by De Falla himself five years later to represent the miller from Murcia in the ballet, *The Three-Cornered Hat*. The simple narration speaks of a fine cloth in a store which sells for a lower price because it has been stained. It is clearly a metaphor for a completely different kind of depreciation as hinted by the “Ay!” at the end which is infused with sorrow and regret. *Asturiana* continues with sadness but in a more melancholic and reflective way. The vocal line is preceded by alternating octave Cs, the dominant of the key, and is continued obstinately throughout the song. The vocal line, marked *dolce espressivo*, is juxtaposed with longer note values and an ascending, then descending line that repeats continually. The text is: “To see if I could be consoled/I sought the comfort of a green pine tree/seeing me weep, it wept too.” Apparently tired or rejected from worldly consolation, the singer seeks comfort in nature. This magnifies the human need for a spiritual and emotional connection. When not satisfied through conventional outlets it is sought in other things. *Jota* makes for a delightful contrast. The accompaniment imitates folk instruments such as the guitar and castanets. This is also recognized by Scott Wolf who arranged this cycle for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet. He uses various techniques including the *golpe* technique, a percussive guitar effect where the guitarist clicks his nails on the soundboard, to convey castanets just as De Falla meant to portray with certain rhythms. The piano and voice alternate in this dance-song form and the singer addresses her lover with a declamatory attitude. She sings, “They say we don’t love each other/because they never see us talking/ but of your heart and mine they have only to ask.” She sings of love so sure it is not fazed by the skepticism of others and it need not be proven. *Polo*, on the contrary, is about a betrayed love of the flamenco nature.
Of the approximately 380 songs written by Johannes Brahms, I have elected to perform 3; they are German Romantic poems beautifully set to music. *Auf dem Kirchhofe* depicts a rainy graveyard with old stones and crosses. The song is divided into two main sections. The first is quite dramatic and suspenseful. In the second part the speaker of the poem realizes that the dead are peacefully at rest despite the tempestuous whether above. This settles him in a transcendent way. The second section is in the parallel major key; its voicing (in the piano and vocal part) is choral-like and has church-hymn qualities. *Die Mainacht* is a poem about a melancholy man who wanders ‘sadly from bush to bush.’ He laments his love and wonders if he will ever see her again. Brahms craftily omits the second of four verses from the original poem in order to avoid the optimism of the doves who share kisses. *Von ewiger Liebe* expresses a deeper faith in love. It includes three characters: the first is a neutral narrator and the second is a young man who tells his girlfriend that if she experiences ridicule from others for their relationship they should separate as quickly as they were joined. The third character is the girlfriend who subdued his insecurities by saying “Iron is strong and so is steel but our love is even stronger.” Brahms intensifies the music by using *accelerando* and a 3 against 2 rhythm as she sings “Our love shall endure forever!”

The French set features three different composers famous for, not only composition, but orchestration. *Le temps de lilas* by Ernest Chausson is a song set to the poetry of his friend, Maurice Bouchor. It is about love that has fled from two people who are still readily near each other. The music captures this awkwardness with phrases that move toward something, then fizzle, just as a stagnant conversation between two people who have much to say but cannot find the words. *L’île inconnue* is another song whose poet is a friend of the composer. Hector Berlioz brilliantly orchestrates the images set by Théophile Gautier. The main speaker asks a girl where
in the world she would like to go. He describes his incredible ship and gives her eclectic options. She responds sweetly, “take me to the faithful shore where one loves forever.” He replies facetiously, “That shore, my darling, is hardly known in the land of love.” Elegie by Jules Massenet is about love that has fled; it is referred to as ‘spring of a different time’. The singer cannot enjoy the beauty of the blue sky and the happy songs of the birds. He says it is pointless for spring to return if it returns without his love. The poignancy of the text and the sheer melancholy of the melody make for an extremely moving and popular song. It has been rearranged by Massenet himself to include cello and feed to its popularity further.

The Italian set includes selections from a one-woman opera by Frederic Händel entitled Lucrezia. This is based on the true story of the rape of Lucrezia which has been captured in all forms of art in the decades that followed the horrendous event. Händel has chosen text by Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili which is written in first person to highlight Lucrezia’s shame, guilt, and sorrow. Throughout the arias, her thirst for vengeance grows with the realization of the indifference of the gods. Left with no other choice, she takes her own life with a dagger during the last aria and sings of how the pain of the dagger pales in comparison to the pain of knowing her rapist will continue to live without punishment. She then promises to seek his ruin even from the depths of hell. This unusual amount of dramatization in a recital setting is normally surprising for the audience and it forces their engagement.

The final set is comprised of two Armenian songs. Oror by Parsegh Ganachian is simply a lullaby. The mother prays to the mother of God for her beloved baby to get some rest so that she may in turn shut her eyes. The simple text is paired with a melancholic descending melody in a 12/8 time signature. This is a traditional Armenian time signature but in this case the triple subdivisions are conveniently slow enough to lull a baby to sleep. Anor by Hampartzoum
Berberian is sung by a young girl who confesses her love for a boy. She sings, “When I see him
I’ll offer the rose in my hand/if he doesn’t accept the rose, I will give him a golden apple/ if he
doesn’t accept the apple I will pull out my hair and give it to him/ And if he does not take that
either, I will give my soul.” The sweeping piano scales and ascending melody help to paint the
picture of this infatuated woman who loves so blindly.

“The Spectrum of Love,” is a compilation of songs that are somehow connected with
love whether it is a new love, a mother’s love, love lost, and everything in between. It is clear in
each case that the composer has recognized these intense emotions and has been able to convey
them in the instances when words are not sufficient.
Program

California State University, Northridge
Mike Curb College of Arts, Media, and Communication
Department of Music
Present
The Master of Music Recital of
Anna Avetisyan, Mezzo Soprano
In partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree in
Music Performance
From the Studio of Deanna Murray
Accompanied by: Carol Roberts
May 11, 2016
7:30 p.m.
Music Recital Hall

Siete Canciones populares Españolas
El paño moruno
Asturiana
Jota
Polo

Auf dem Kirchhofe
Die Mainacht
Von ewiger Liebe

Intermission

Le temps des lilas
L’île inconnue
Elégie

Cello, David Murray

Lucrezia
(Selections and Excerpts)

Cello, David Murray

Օրօր (Oror)
Անօր (Anor)

Parsegh Ganachian
Hampartzoum Berberian